

Executive

17th November 2009

Report of the Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services

'Quality and Access for all Young Children' – Allocation of Early Years Capital Grant

Summary

1. This paper seeks a decision on applications for amounts of £50,000 or more from early years and childcare providers in the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector from the local authority's allocation of the 'Quality and Access for All Young Children Capital Grant'. A consultative panel was established for this purpose this paper reports its recommendations. They have also been considered by the Executive Member, who has approved a number of applications below the £50,000 limit.

Background

2. In November 2007 the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) announced the '**Quality and Access for all Young Children – Early Years Capital grant**'. This grant has three aims:
 - a) To improve the quality of the learning environment in early years settings to support delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage, with a particular emphasis on improving play and physical activities; and Information, Communications and Technology resources;
 - b) To ensure all children, including disabled children, are able to access provision;
 - c) To enable PVI providers to deliver the extension to the free offer for three and four year olds and to do so flexibly.
3. While the Maintained sector was not precluded, the DCSF has emphasised that the majority of this capital grant should be used for the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) early years and childcare settings.
4. This capital grant must be used for the three broad purposes set out above, but it is for the Local Authority to decide how best to deploy the grant for maximum impact and value for money. For example, the grant can be used to fund 100% of the cost of work/equipment or any proportion as appropriate.

5. On 17th July 2008, the Executive Member and Advisory Panel (EMAP) approved a process for inviting all eligible providers to bid into the fund. Three dates were announced as closing dates for batches of bids to be considered. 96 bids have already been approved in the first two batches, none of which was over £50,000. The total sum allocated in the first two rounds was £730k. Most of the funding has been for outdoor play equipment – 52%. Building works received 13%; another 13% went for IT equipment, and 11% for canopies. The rest was for resources, furniture, etc. Robust monitoring arrangements have been set in place to ensure that funds allocated have been properly spent.
6. At her Decision Session on 13 October 2009, the Executive Member for Children and Young People’s Services approved a further 115 bids that had been submitted under the third funding round. Some were approved in principle, but officers were invited to seek further information or clarification before finalising the approval on her behalf. Full details, including a Ward breakdown of schemes approved in the first two rounds, are available online. This paper seeks Executive approval for 4 bids that exceed £50,000.

Consultation

7. The criteria for application into the funding stream has always emphasised the need for applicants to provide clear evidence of consultation with key partners, particularly through their Shared Foundation Partnerships – York’s community-based partnerships of local private, voluntary and maintained sector service providers. The bids must also be consistent with the local Child Care Sufficiency Assessment for York, a document produced following major consultation with all stakeholders including users of childcare services.
8. The assessment panel convened to consider the bids was drawn from membership of the ‘places sub-group’, which is part of the Early Years and Extended Schools Partnership. Members of the panel included the Pre-School Learning Alliance, the National Childminding Association, the National Day Nurseries association, as well as representatives from Education Planning, Finance, the Training and Development Unit and the Early Years and Children’s Centre Service. All bids were assessed against a set of agreed criteria.

Options

9. The Executive has the option of approving or rejecting the recommendations in this paper on applications from the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector for amounts of £50,000 or more.

Analysis

10. Research shows that children will only benefit fully from early education and care if it is of high quality: a high quality setting also needs the right built environment and adequate and appropriate resources. This means providing enough space for larger group sizes, which can also be used flexibly, and up-to-

date facilities and equipment to support children’s learning and development. This Quality and Access grant is allowing City of York Council to invest strategically to ensure that the PVI sector is able to deliver high quality learning and development for all children. This is particularly important for York given that most of the city’s three and four year old children are in the non-maintained sector, which had not previously been able to access similar types or levels of funding.

11. The four applications for £50,000 or more are set out below . Each of these schemes has been visited by the Head of Early Years and Children’s Centres, and we are confident that they represent high quality and innovative projects that are consistent with our strategic aims. Executive Members will note that in all four cases, planning permission will be needed before the project can commence.

Table 1

Ref no	Setting	Post code	Ward	Recommendation	Amount (£)	Application Summary
207	The Wendy House	YO24 1HR	Dringhouses and Woodthorpe	Approval	77,100	Alterations to premises to create new creative area and staff facilities. Alterations will develop free flow and self-selective play plus IT equipment. Subject to planning permission
168	Home to Home - Fulford	YO10 4DZ	Fishergate	Approval	50,000	Support moving outdoor equipment to new premises and some internal changes. All subject to planning permission being granted for new premises
215	Ladybirds Kinder Class Ltd	YO32 9PY	Huntington & New Earswick	Approval	170,171	Log Cabin' style build to develop Forest School. Subject to planning permission plus written confirmation of landlord's permission.
166	Home to Home - Strensall	YO32 5TD	Strensall	Approval	120,000	Remove old pre-fabricated building and replace with 'log cabin' build. Subject to planning permission and detailed costings
Total					417,271	

The Executive is invited to approve these schemes in principle.

Corporate Objectives

12. This paper clearly contributes to the Corporate Priority aimed at ensuring that local people have access to world-class education and training facilities and provision, helping them to develop the skills and aspirations they need to play an active part in society and contribute to the life of the city.

Implications

13. The table below indicates the total number of applications received and considered under all three rounds, allowing for a £90k contingency fund, and assuming the Executive approves the four schemes above £50k.

Table 2

	Total number applications	Number approved	Amount approved
Round 1	43	41	£302K
Round 2	46	41	£428K
Round 3	125	119	£1,298K
Contingency			£90K
Total			£2,118K

14. We recommend that we maintain this contingency fund, based on experience of a small number of unforeseen events in some of the projects that were supported within tranches 1 and 2, as well as advice from Planning & Resources and the consultant firm Atkins.

15. If the Executive agrees with these recommendations, we will have committed almost all of the available funding rather sooner than we had at one time anticipated. This should be regarded as a sign of success – and we have been encouraged by DCSF contacts to commit as much of the funding as possible, given that some of the projects will take a while to get off the ground, particularly if they involve planning permission. We will keep open the possibility of a final small scale bidding round in the New Year, using the contingency monies if they are unspent, plus any other funds that may have become available, eg because a project falls through or is underspending. That said, our contacts with the local PVI sector suggest that everyone who has had a project in their minds has in fact made a bid into the current tranche, which is why it has been so heavily subscribed.

16. The DCSF has allocated York £706k for each of the three years 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010/11. The following table explains the **financial implications** in more detail.

	2008/09 £k	2009/10 £k	2010/11 £k	Total £k
Quality & Access Capital Grant Allocation	706	706	706	2,118
Brought Fwd		404	15	
Available in Year		1,110	721	
Phase 1	302			302
Phase 2		428		428
Phase 3				
Annex E		329		329
Annex F		338		338
Annex G			214	214
Table 1			417	417
Contingency			90	90
Total	302	1,095	721	2,118
Carry Fwd	404	15	0	0

There are no Human Resources, Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder, IT or Property implications.

Risk Management

17. Risks will be minimised by the application of recommended and clear criteria, by the transparent process of bidding and by the level of consultation undertaken around the use of the capital-funding stream. The additional capital work such funding stimulates will carry some risks but they are minimised given the relative scale of the developments, through clear project management and through regular reporting arrangements. There will also be a three-staged payment system linked to the project management. It is recognised that working through the PVI sector will require particular support arrangements and these are in place within the Early Years and Children's Centre Service.

Recommendation

18. **That the Executive should:**

Approve in principle the four applications for amounts of £50,000 or more from early years and childcare providers from the authority's allocation of the "Quality and Access for All Young Children" capital grant that are set out in Table 1, paragraph 11.

Reason: to enable the further development of early years provision in York, in accordance with government guidelines and to manage the fund within the available budgets.

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Report Approved Date 14 October 2009

Approved by Pete Dwyer, Director, Learning
Culture and Children's Services.

Report Approved Date 15 October 2009

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

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Wards Affected: *(All wards are affected by the totality of the proposals, including schemes already approved by the Executive Member.)*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: For more details on the schemes already approved by the Executive Member, copies of the letters to potential applicants, and a Ward breakdown of the schemes approved in the first two rounds, please see the online papers for the Decision Session on 13 October 2009.

Annexes: None