

SCHOOLS' FUNDING FORUM

SUBJECT:	Redirection of Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) funding to support Early Help and Preventative Services
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SUMMARY OF REPORT:

To inform members of the Forum of the County Council's proposal to redirect the current Family Liaison Officer funding to support the model of Early Help and Preventative Services with effect from 1 September 2016.

FOR:	Information only
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Authority has for a number of years provided some schools and academies with funding to contribute towards the costs of a Family Liaison Officer. This has been funded from a centrally retained DSG budget. The Forum has reviewed this budget in previous years whilst it sat within the Social Care Directorate, with the most recent review in 2013 by the Forum Executive (see background paper section at the end of this paper).
- 1.2 Attached at Appendix 1 is a spreadsheet showing the payments that are due to be made in the current financial year. In total approximately £1m is distributed and this is currently allocated to 176 schools, with the average amount per school being £5k per annum. The lowest value is £1k and the highest value is £10k.

2. Background

- 2.1 FLOs undertake a valuable role, often being a conduit and interface between schools and Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS). However they are not in place in all schools and many schools ensure this role is undertaken by other pastoral or safeguarding staff.
- 2.2 Previously FLOs were supported by a county support structure (County Manager, Senior FLOs and Business Support) and also provided with some development and training opportunities. Following the 2015 restructure within EHPS these county posts were deleted and Early Help District

Managers now ensure that FLOs are provided with networking opportunities within each district, to ensure the FLOs are linked into the Early Help offer.

- 2.3 Prior to the introduction of the Kent Family Support Framework (KFSF), which replaced the CAF (Common Assessment Framework) the FLO funding supported FLOs in taking on the Lead Professional role, leading TAF meetings, the completion of CAF assessments, reviewing progress and recording on the SKWO data system. FLOs are no longer taking the Lead Professional role.
- 2.4 Following the introduction of the KFSF and the restructuring of EHPS, the delivery of intensive support to families via a family plan is undertaken by Early Help Workers within Early Help Units or, if appropriate, one of the intensive commissioned services. In addition, all schools have a named Early Help link worker who visits on a termly basis, a named School Liaison Officer with responsibility for attendance and inclusion, and Early Help workers attend the weekly LIFT meetings for SEN cases, as required.
- 2.5 The restructure of EHPS is now complete and a clear referral process is in place with notifications for accessing family support being sent to Early Help Triage, one central place aligned with Specialist Children's Services. Feedback and performance indicators are providing evidence of a more efficient and effective service.
- 2.6 Early Help is designed to reduce the need for statutory specialist social care which is often, in the long term, not the most effective intervention for a family. An over reliance on specialist services can also result in high caseloads for social workers and those most in need of protection and safeguarding not receiving the most robust and dedicated specialist services.
- 2.7 EHPS aims to reduce the need for intensive statutory intervention through timely and responsive family engagement. At the heart of the service is the core principle of working systemically with the whole family. Workers in EHPS are focused on building family resilience and strengths to achieve better educational, safeguarding and health outcomes for all children and young people in Kent.
- 2.8 The resource for the EHPS has been carefully targeted based on demographic need and population density, reflecting vulnerable pupils and those in receipt of the pupil premium. This ensures that the pupil premium is enhanced by the availability of EHPS where required. However this resource is thinly spread and we want to maximise the range of opportunities and support available for families and partners to access.

3. What is changing?

- 3.1 As the Forum will be aware, with the continuation of budget reductions over the medium term, the Local Authority is facing one of its toughest challenges. It has to review all budgets and consider whether the funding is

being used in the best way to support the most vulnerable children and young people in Kent. As part of Kent County Council's 2016-17 budget process, we are proposing to cease making FLO payments to schools from 1st September 2016. We propose that the current budget (c. £1m) will be redirected to support the EHPS work within each District. This will ensure the same level of current EHPS provision is maintained in each district and that we provide intensive Early Help support to the most vulnerable families. It will also ensure a more equitable use of this resource for all schools.

4. Rationale for change

- 4.1 The distribution of FLO funding is largely historical and not evenly distributed across Kent, nor is it always in the areas of highest demographic deprivation and need. It is clear from Appendix 1 that the most deprived primary school in Kent (according to their average Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) funding per pupil) receives no FLO funding. There are other examples within the appendix of schools serving the poorest communities that also do not receive any of this funding. Likewise there are examples of some of our schools serving the more affluent parts of Kent who are in receipt of FLO funding. The funding, therefore, appears anomalous and not properly targeted.
- 4.2 The LA is aware that a number of schools who receive no FLO funding from the LA have made the decision to employ their own FLO from their school budget.
- 4.3 FLO funding commenced prior to the introduction of Pupil Premium funding. Pupil Premium funding, which has increased significantly over recent years, now stands at £1,320 per primary age Free School Meal (FSM) pupil and £935 per secondary age FSM pupil. This funding is given directly to schools to support vulnerable pupils. The FSM Pupil Premium funding being provided to Kent schools and academies totals c.£53m in 2015-16.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Members of the Forum are asked to **NOTE** and **COMMENT** on this proposal

Background Papers

Families and Social Care Retained Elements of the DSG paper by Andrew Ireland
30 September 2013



Andrew Ireland
paper for Appendix 2