



Open Report on behalf of Martin Smith, Assistant Director – Children’s Education

Report to:	Lincolnshire Schools’ Forum
Date:	06 October 2022
Subject:	Children with Disabilities Early Support Learning Provision

Summary:

To seek support for the Dedicated Schools Grant to continue funding Early Support Learning Provision which provides targeted support for Children with Disabilities aged 0-5 years.

Recommendation(s):

That the Schools’ Forum supports the funding of £234,828 per annum from the Dedicated Schools Grant for Early Support Learning Provision starting from 1st October 2023 for up to five years to 30th September 2028.

1. Background

The most recent Children with Disabilities (CWD) support service contract has been in place since 1st October 2018 and it includes three countywide services:

- Early Support and Learning Provision (ESLP)
- Targeted Positive Activities (TPA)
- Domiciliary Care (DC)

The total annual contract value payable by the Council is £1.082m of which £0.229m is apportioned to ESLP from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) of the High Needs block. The Council’s core budget funds the remaining services. The contract will cease on 30th September 2023 with no further options to extend.

Schools’ Forum is asked to support the continued DSG allocation of funding for ESLP as part of a new contract from 1st October 2023 for up to five years to 31st March 2028. The requested funding of £0.235m is in line with the 2021/22 ESLP cost (£0.230m p.a.) plus an inflationary uplift of 2% to support supplier delivery in ensuring required minimum volumes of support can still be met going forward.

ESLP service

ESLP is for children aged 0 to 5 (statutory school age) with a disability and/or complex health needs. The service is delivered from 11 children’s centres across Lincolnshire, with

coverage in each District. Families do not need a referral to access the service and are mainly signposted by the CWD Team, Early Years Care Co-ordinator (ESCO), Portage, or health care professionals (e.g. Health Visitors).

The service prepares children for education through:

- Alignment with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum, using this as a tool to support CWD to develop their communication, social, sensory, imagination, concentration, and physical skills, with a focus on closing the attainment gap between CWD and their mainstream peers; working towards as many children as possible being able to fully access mainstream provision thus minimising the need for targeted intervention.
- Providing a range of stimulating play, development, and socialisation opportunities in a safe and structured environment. Parents are not required to stay with their child.
- Providing individual and group support to parents/carers whose children attend the provision and assist them to meet their child's needs. Individual child records of achievement are maintained and shared with the parents/carers.
- Allowing families facing similar disability related experiences to come together to benefit from peer support and from the support and signposting by KIDS and other professionals.

Whilst there is not a requirement for the Council to provide ESLP specifically for CWD, this offer does support the Council's Early Years statutory duty and has the added value of offering suitable respite provision for the parent/carers of CWD.

In 2021/22, 681 sessions were delivered (more than contractual requirement, 33% were virtual due to Covid 19 restrictions). On average 83 children accessed ESLP per week, six children per session. Under the new contract it is proposed the quantity of ESLP sessions will remain the same: 13 countywide sessions a week over 46 weeks a year, each session lasting 1hr 59 mins (Ofsted registration is not required under two hours).

56 CWD were placed on a waiting list between April – June 2022. Waiting lists can form throughout the academic year but generally reduce as children move on to nursery or school; in September 2022, the waiting list reduced to 40 CWD. Approximately half of CWD accessing ESLP move on to a mainstream setting.

Feedback from parents/carers:

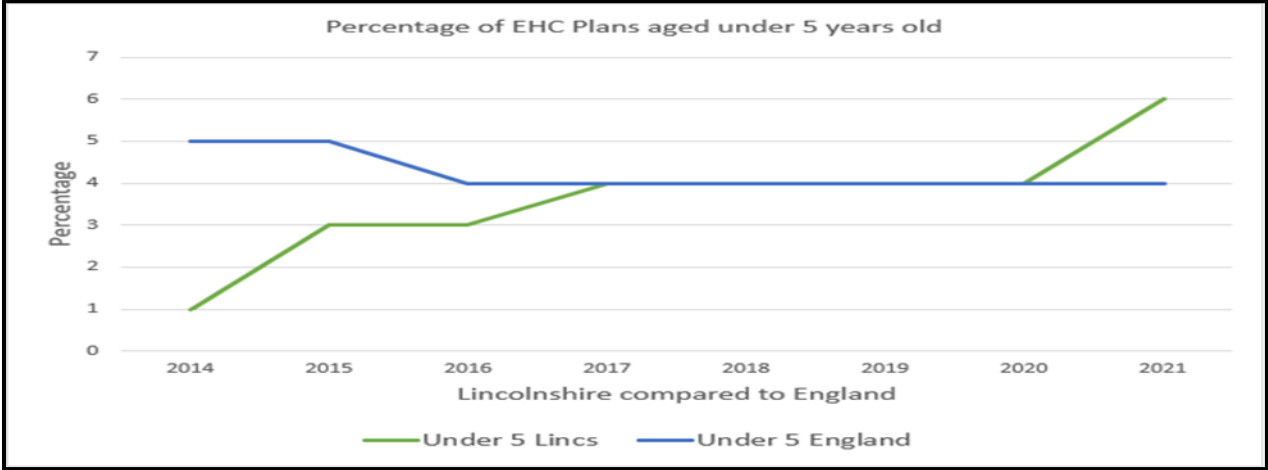
- *We are really starting to see the benefit at home of R coming here.*
- *Loves coming to sessions and I feel very confident leaving him with the wonderful staff.*
- *Thank you so much you have been a life saver.*
- *We can see a very big change in D when he comes here. Thank you very much.*
- *ESLP has been amazing for W, he has come on so much since starting here.*
- *He has learned and got more from his 2 hours a week here than he gets from nursery because you support his needs.*

Local demand

Lincolnshire has seen an increased demand on services for CWD aged 0-5 years alongside a steep increase in the amount of EHC Plans for age 0-5 years over the last seven years.

Fig.1 shows this increase in comparison with national statistics. Although only a small percentage of total Lincolnshire EHC Plans are for CWD (3.5 %), the increase in Plans is likely to increase demand of specialist services, including those for CWD.

Fig.1



If early support services such as ESLP are not provided, there is a probability more children aged 0-5 years would require additional, more costly specialist services, including education. Anecdotally, this service helps prevent children’s and families’ needs from escalating, without which may later lead to more intensive Social Care and SEND involvement.

Recommended changes

The following changes are proposed to ESLP in future:

- There is a need for improved joint working across Early Years settings to develop a more integrated model with the new Best Start contract due to start 1st April 2023. Key targets to include:
 - Ensuring the targeted ESLP service is delivered to those who need it most by widening the scope of the Best Start offer to allow those CWD that can attend the universal offer to do so. This will ensure they access the right support, by the right people, at the right time and should reduce waiting lists for ESLP.
 - Partnership working between the Best Start supplier, the ESLP supplier, and Locality Leads in Early Years to help support families to access and/or transition to the universal offer wherever appropriate i.e. not rely solely on the targeted ESLP offer and help to reduce further the number of children on the waiting list for the targeted ESLP service.
- For the ESLP offer to be more time-limited with targeted sessions, wherever possible, to support the CWD and/or family either when new to provision or for a specific occasional need e.g. a parent goes into hospital.

Conclusion

The Schools’ Forum is requested to support the continuation of DSG High Needs block funding to maintain ESLP sessions for CWD, from 1st October 2023 up to 31st March 2028, at £0.235m p.a.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

There is no change to provision therefore no new risks or detrimental impact to report.

Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	None

Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Rosemary Akrill, who can be contacted on 07920 182307 or rosemary.akrill@lincolnshire.gov.uk.