

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

24/00016

For publication *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

Key decision: YES

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Funding Process for Free Entitlements Capital Funding and Wraparound Provision Capital and Programme Funding

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills in consultation with Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, I agree to

1. approve the proposed process for the management and awarding of capital funding related to deliver of the extended early years funded entitlements;
2. approve the proposed process for the management and awarding of capital funding and revenue monies related to deliver of the wraparound childcare aspiration;
3. authorise the Director of Education and Skills to adapt these processes, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Education and Skills and Integrated Children's Services, as necessary to ensure effective delivery.

1. Reason(s) for Decision:

- 1.1 The Spring Budget announced a range of measures to support early education and help parents with childcare so they can return to work more easily. This included new funded entitlements:
 1. From April 2024, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds can access up to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year.
 2. From Sept 2024, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-year-olds can access up to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year.
 3. From Sept 2025, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-year-olds can access up to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year.
- 1.2 The Government also announced its ambition that, by 2026, all parents and carers of primary school-aged children who need it will be able to access term time childcare in their local area from 8:00 AM- 6:00 PM. This is known as wrap-around childcare.
- 1.3 Funding, of approximately £40m, is being made available to the County Council via the Early Years Funding Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant to deliver the new entitlements from 1 April 2024, this includes payments to the early years providers and council services to deliver the entitlements and support early years providers. .
- 1.4 Additionally, a Wraparound Childcare grant is being provided by the Department of Education (DfE), during the three financial years of 2023-24 to 2025-26 to support delivery of this priority. The County Council is to receive a maximum of £52k in 2023-24, £4.1m in 2024-25 and £1.9m (provisional) in 2025-26.

- 1.5 The County Council has also been allocated £2.6m capital funding to help ensure the new entitlements and wraparound childcare ambition can be secured. The DfE are expecting approximately 80% of this grant to be spent on supporting delivering of the new entitlements and 20% is to be spent on extending wraparound childcare.
- 1.6 The processes and criteria for awarding capital funding to providers to enable them to deliver these services, and the revenue funding to help set up sustainable wraparound childcare provision need to be approved. This is to ensure consistency, transparency and fairness.
- 1.7 The proposed decision supports the key priority “Levelling up Kent” within the ‘Framing Kent’s Future (2022-26)’. Supporting the Kent economy to be resilient and successful depends upon having a flexible, adaptable, talented workforce. Enabling parents to be active in the workforce is an essential component of this.
- 1.8 The proposed decision supports “Securing Kent’s Future – budget recovery strategy”. The additional activity is funded by Government Grant, with allowances within these for the County Council’s delivery costs. No additional funds from KCC are required. Supporting families to work and be independent of state support assists the County Council’s budget position.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The revenue and capital funding referenced in 1.4 and 1.5 above are grant allocations to the Authority and must be spent in accordance with the grant conditions. The processes set out above will ensure these grants are spent accordingly, and are not overspent to ensure there is no financial pressure on the Authority.
- 2.2 The Authority’s delivery costs were covered in the paper presented to this Cabinet Committee on 26 January 2024. For ease of reference these are:
 - the Authority’s cost of delivering the current and new entitlements are expected to be fully covered by the early years block funding in 2024-25 through retention of up to 5% of the grant. For 2023-24, the DfE has provided a separate one-off grant of £233,579 to support the Local Authority’s activities required ahead of the 1st April to deliver the new entitlement offer.
 - The 2023-24 Wraparound provision grant allocation is expected to fund the Authority’s central delivery costs for this initiative, and 11% of future year grant allocations can be used for this purpose in subsequent years.

3.. Legal implications

- 3.1 The LA has a duty to ensure families can access their funded early years entitlements, and as far as is practicable to access childcare for 0-14 year olds to enable them to work or access education and training. Delivering the extended funded entitlements and wraparound childcare ambition is necessary to discharge these duties.
- 3.2 The existing provider agreement provides the revenue contracts required for the new entitlement. It will be refreshed with legal support to ensure the new entitlements are covered.
- 3.3 Contracts/funding agreements will need to be entered in to for capital awards, and for wraparound revenue grant funding.

4. Equalities implications

- 4.1 An equalities impact assessment was completed previously for the paper of 26 January 2024 to this Cabinet Committee. There is no change related to the proposals above.

4.2 No data protection implications have been identified.

5. Governance

5.1 A key decision is required to approve the proposed processes for managing and spending these grants. As these are implemented it may be necessary to adapt to ensure these work effectively. Authority will be delegated to the Director for Education and SEND to implement and adjust these processes as necessary, in consultation with the Cabinet members for Education and Skills and Integrated Children’s Services.

6. DPIA

No data protection implications have been identified.

Cabinet Committee Recommendations and Other Consultation:

This decision will be considered at the meeting of the Children’s, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 6 March 2024.

Any Alternatives Considered and Rejected:

Delivery of these new entitlements and widening access to wraparound childcare is important to supporting working families in the County. It will not only help them financially by covering childcare costs, but open opportunities to extend working hours, return to work, or take on new roles. The LA has a statutory duty to enable families to access their entitlement, thus this activity must be undertaken.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

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signed

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date