EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 15th March 2016
Report Subject	Early Entitlement – Changes to Delivery of Teacher Support to Approved Settings
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early Entitlement is the term which refers to the provision of part time education for three year olds. Children who become three years old between September and Easter are entitled to 10 hours of free early years education in a school or approved setting in the non-maintained sector e.g. day nursery, playgroup or childminder, prior to receiving their nursery education in primary school. Summer born children go straight into school nursery provision following their third birthday.

Funding for the provision of Early Entitlement comes via two main funding streams, the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to the Council and the Foundation Phase grant element within the Education Improvement Grant (EIG). The council's budget provides funding to the setting/school to deliver the free place for the child and the core costs of running the Early Entitlement service. The Foundation Phase grant element of the EIG funds the provision of qualified teacher time into the non-maintained settings where staff are not required to be teachers e.g. childminders, playgroups and day nurseries approved by Flintshire County Council as a suitable providers. This teacher input is designed to ensure high standards of provision as funded settings are required to deliver the Foundation Phase and are inspected by Estyn, against the same framework as schools.

In response to the financial austerity faced by the Council and the reduction in the amount of funding available both through the RSG and the EIG, the number of staff in the core Early Entitlement team available to deliver the statutory teacher input has reduced – staff who have retired have not been replaced, some staff have reduced their hours and voluntary redundancies have also been accessed. By September 2014 the number of teachers required to deliver the amount of statutory teaching time for the number of approved settings in the authority was reaching a critical mass and alternative delivery models needed to be developed.

With the ongoing need for financial efficiencies, the service also needed to continue to reduce its budget and find more cost effective ways of delivering the teacher input. These changes were part of an overall package of efficiencies which included a reduction in the amount paid for each pupil place and a reduction in the amount of financial support provided for resources and sustainability to settings in the voluntary sector.

The new model of teacher input into approved early years' settings has been achieved by the engagement of a number of teachers in schools to work alongside the core Early Entitlement team. Paying supply costs for a member of the school's Foundation Phase team to be released to deliver the support into the funded setting is more cost efficient than employing a member of staff in the local authority, with all the associated 'on costs'. This new model has also brought other benefits which will be outlined in the report below.

This report is a response to an earlier request by the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide a detailed update about this change to the model of service delivery which was run as a pilot during 2014-15. It has proven to be successful so has been expanded to include more settings for 2015-16. It is the view of the service manager that this mixed model of delivery is the way forward to ensure the quality of the service and achieve financial efficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	That members consider the report on the changes to the delivery model for teacher support within Early Entitlement.
2	That members support the new mixed model of delivery i.e. a small central core team of expert Early Entitlement teachers and appropriately identified Foundation Phase teachers in schools.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	**EXPLAINING THE EARLY ENTITLEMENT DELIVERY MODEL**
1.01	Flintshire has a long tradition of providing early years education services in the non-maintained sector. This encompasses private day nurseries, child minders and playgroups. The provision of part time education for three year olds prior to starting nursery class was established by the Welsh Government in 2003 and this was funded initially by a specific grant which was later included in the core funding to councils, the Revenue Support Grant. Since 2003, parents of children born within the parameters of the scheme (between September and Easter) are entitled to 10 hours of free education at a setting of their choice. This provision is classified as education and therefore different to the traditional childcare/play activities provided in the non-maintained sector. Where there is not an approved provider within the non-maintained sector in the community, often in rural areas, schools are encouraged to offer this provision.

	To ensure that Flintshire delivered the requirements of this early education scheme, a dedicated team of qualified and highly experienced early years teachers and learning assistants was established, working out of the Westwood Centre in Buckley. The role of the teachers, supported by the learning assistants, is to ensure that high standards of education are being delivered by these settings. This core team has provided all the teacher input into approved settings since 2003.
1.02	Over the last few years, with the need to make financial efficiencies to balance the Council's budget, the Early Entitlement service has been required to make changes to the way it operates. From an original team of 6.7 fte teachers, by September 2014 the team reduced to 4.6 fte. This has been achieved by not replacing staff when they have retired and allowing staff to reduce their hours. However, by September 2014 the service had reached the point where there were insufficient teachers to provide the statutory teacher input into settings alongside their other core responsibilities.
1.03	The solution was to approach 10 schools where there was excellent Foundation Phase practice, where the local approved playgroup delivering Early Entitlement was either co-located or nearby and the vast majority of children subsequently transferred into that school for their nursery provision. These 10 schools and 10 partnered settings were then approached by letter, followed up with meetings, inviting them to pilot this new way of working where the Foundation Phase teacher in the school would deliver the statutory teacher input to the setting to assure the quality of the curriculum and provide support and guidance, rather than a member of the core Early Entitlement Team. All 10 schools and settings agreed to this new approach for the next round of Early Entitlement funding from January 2015 to July 2015. Over the years, the core Early Entitlement team has developed a comprehensive package of documentation, training and support which has been very successful in supporting approved settings delivering this early education. As Early Years expert practitioners the staff in this team have a wealth of knowledge of the Foundation Phase curriculum and the specific developmental needs of three year olds. It was essential, therefore, that the teachers engaged in the schools to deliver this new model were trained and made familiar with Early Entitlement requirements and processes. This was essential to maintain the quality of the service. The 10 teachers, along with their head teachers, were invited to a 2 day training session during the autumn term of 2015 to prepare them for their new role. These teachers were trained by the Head of Service and the core Early Entitlement team. Visits to the setting were also arranged to start building positive working relationships and ensure a smooth handover. Members of the Early Entitlement team who had previously supported the setting continued to act as a 'buddy' to the new teacher. The new model of support began in January 2015. The 10 schools received funding to cover the required number of visits to the setting and to participate in training and review sessions. This was initially funded at £250 per full day and schools received funding for the equivalent of 12 full

days. Review sessions with the schools and the settings were held during the year to review progress and to deal with any issues.

The schools and playgroups participating in phase 1 of this pilot scheme were as follows:

Setting	**School**
Kinnerton Under 5'S PG	Higher Kinnerton
Sunbeams PG	Ysgol y Waun
Jigsaw PG	Ysgol Bryn Deva
Broughton PG	Broughton CP
Busy Bees	Flint Gwynedd
St David's PG	St David's RC
Tiny Tots	Ysgol Rhos Helyg
Cilfan PG	Cornist Park
Ewloe Green PG	Ewloe Green Primary
Carmel PG	Ysgol Bro Carmel

1.04 Feedback over the two terms of this new method of working provided evidence that it was a successful model e.g.

- The settings appreciated having input from the teachers in the local school and felt this developed a closer working relationship between them which benefited the children, particular on transfer into nursery.
- The setting staff reported that they believed that teachers in the school better understood the challenges they faced delivering this provision and valued the early education they provided to the children.
- Children who had specific needs were identified sooner to the school so that transition arrangements could be better planned.
- The teachers in schools reported that they had a better understanding of how the non-maintained sector worked, the challenges they faced and had greater respect for the work that was being done with the three year olds in developing their skills and knowledge prior to arriving in schools.
- The teachers in schools were able to share some of the latest curriculum developments e.g. literacy & numeracy framework and new approaches to teaching e.g. Numicon, with their settings.
- Some settings were able to have access to facilities on the school site to enhance their curriculum offer e.g. forest area for outdoor learning.
- There were also many examples of resources, planning and other important documents being shared.
- The transition of this group of Early Entitlement children into the school nursery class was reported to be so much smoother as a result of the school and setting working more closely together.

The review meetings provided opportunities for issues and anxieties to be shared and problems resolved. The Early Entitlement Team Leader acted as the main point of contact for the pilot schools and settings and individual Early Entitlement teachers provided support to the school-based teachers who had taken over their setting.

At the end of the year, all schools and settings involved in the pilot scheme agreed it had been a success and that they were happy to continue the following year.

1.05 By July 2015, with the further reduction of the core Early Entitlement team due to an agreed voluntary redundancy, reducing the core team to 3.7 fte, it was agreed with the Chief Officer that this model of delivery be extended to another cohort of schools.

The same methodology was used to identify potential schools and settings. Letters were sent and meetings held to engage the next cohort and from January 2016 these additional schools and settings are working in this way, following a programme of training.

Setting	**School**
Bagillt PG	Ysgol Merllyn
Oaktree PG	Southdown
Little Learners	Ysgol Gronant
Treuddyn Under 5's	Parc y Llan
Cylch Fflint	Croes Atti
Cylch Garden City	Croes Atti
Woodland Imps PG	Mynydd Isa
Argoed PG	Mynydd Isa
Playmates PG	Bryn Coch

In order to continue making financial efficiencies, the day rate paid to schools has been reduced from £250 per day to £220 per day.

This second cohort are now well underway and their progress is being monitored.

1.06 It is the view of the service manager that there may be a small number of schools and settings who could be engaged for phase 3 but that it is essential that a core team of Early Entitlement specialist teachers/assistants be retained to provide the expert support and guidance to settings, provide training and produce appropriate resources for all funded settings.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The financial commitments in relation to the content of this report are already identified within the core council funding and the Education Improvement Grant received by the authority. This model is providing greater financial efficiency.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Consultation regarding this change of delivery model was undertaken with the Early Entitlement Partnership Board and the Primary Headteacher Federation. Both endorsed the new approach.
3.02	This approach was also discussed with Estyn when they visited the local authority as part of a thematic review on the work of the support teachers for Early Entitlement and was acknowledged by the lead inspector to be a positive and pragmatic solution.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	There are no major risks in relation to this report.
4.02	The potential withdrawal of schools from this new approach would present some risk that would need to be managed by the service.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None. **Contact Officer:** Claire Homard – Senior Manager - School Improvement **Telephone:** 01352 704019 **E-mail:** claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	**Early Entitlement** - the provision of 10 hours per week (term time only) of early years education to three year olds prior to accessing nursery education in schools.

7.02	**Non-maintained** – establishments which are not maintained by the Local Authority e.g. private or voluntary sector.
7.03	**On-costs** – the additional employment costs borne by the employer e.g. national insurance, pension contributions etc.
7.04	**Estyn** – Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.
7.05	**Foundation Phase** – the statutory curriculum for all 3-7 year olds in Wales.