

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Cabinet Member for Children and Education – Councillor Alex Sanderson

Date: 25 March 2024

Subject: Maintained Nursery Funding – Academic Years 2024/25

Report author: Satwinder Saraon, Head of Service, Early Years and Specialist Services

Peter Haylock, Operational Director for Education and SEND

Responsible Director: Jacqui McShannon – Director of Children’s Services

SUMMARY

This paper seeks approval to adjust the allocation of funding from the Early Years block to improve the reach of Enhanced Early Years Provision within Hammersmith & Fulham, beginning in the 2024/25 academic year.

Randolph Beresford nursery in the North of the borough and Bayonne nursely in the South currently provide enhanced support to children. The majority of the children supported are in the North and Central regions, and Randolph Beresford provides most of the additional support. However, there is a need for funding to go to provision in the South of the borough to ensure children and families do not have to travel across the borough to access provision.

The overall funding has increased from £614,000 to £686,000 which includes funds for the - & 4-year-old offer, 2 year old offer and the new under 2 year old offer coming in September 2024. However, the proposed funds to be given to Randolph Beresford and Thames Federation is to remain at 2023/24 levels and use the additional funds, £143,000 to allow spot purchases across all settings where needed.

£543,000 of the 2024/2025 budget is proposed to be allocated and split across maintained nursery schools at previous year’s level 80%, £434,400, to Randolph Beresford and 20%, £108,600, to Thames Federation:-

Hammersmith & Fulham’s maintained nursery offer has an outstanding Ofsted rating. The new approach means the council will continue to support the provision of affordable and flexible childcare across the borough, and in more areas with high levels of need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Approve the allocation of funding of £543,000 from the Early Years block for 2024/2025. Proposed split of funding is 80%, £434,400, to Randolph Beresford and 20%, £108,600, to Thames Federation.

2. Approve additional £135,750 funding for the summer term 2025 from Early Years Dedicated Schools Grant to cover places at Randolph Beresford and Thames Federation for the full academic year to end July 2025. This will be split 80%, £108,600, to Randolph Beresford and 20% £27,150, to Thames Federation.
3. Approve £143,000 funding to be retained for spot purchasing across all settings.

Wards Affected: (All)

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	Preventative targeting of support in Early Years has been shown to improve life chances of young people and adults later in life, including economic and social wellbeing.
Creating a compassionate council	Preventative targeting of support in Early Years has been shown to improve life chances of young people and adults later in life, including economic and social wellbeing.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	The Early Years Service will continue to consult with local residents as to how their offer is targeted to suit the needs of nursery age children and their families.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	Officers will be closely monitoring these adjustments to the offer to ensure they are making best use of the available money.
Taking pride in H&F	Providing a targeted preventative offer in Early Years to those families in need ensures we are fulfilling our value of taking pride in H&F
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	The nursery schools fall within the overall programme of works to reduce the carbon impact of the school estate

Financial Impact

The funding for these proposed payments is from Early Years block DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) for the financial year ending March 2025. A budget of £686,000, is available to fund lump sum payments to maintained nursery schools, and for additional support across all settings with respect to additional help and support to families in Hammersmith and Fulham that they provide.

As in previous years, funding is proposed to Maintained Nursery Schools for the Summer term 2025 which follows the current funding period. Early Years grant

values and conditions of funding for 2025/26 financial year will not be known until late Autumn term 2024. There is therefore some risk around the commitment to 2025/26 funding in the summer term 2025 ahead of confirmed funding and operational guidance. However, this risk is considered very low given the stability of the early years funding regime and ongoing Ministerial commitments to support the Maintained Nursery sector.

Implications written by Tony Burton, Head of Finance Children's Services and Education, 29th February 2024

Implications verified by: James Newman, AD Finance, 11 March 2024

Legal Implications

The Council has the power to make these payments under the Childcare Act 2006. Since this report is seeking the reallocation of funds for nursery places for reasons explained within the report, it does not have any legal implications.

John Sharland, Senior Solicitor, Contracts and Procurement, dated 6 March 2024

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Proposals and Analysis of Options

Option 1 - recommended

1. Approve the allocation of funding of £543,000 from the Early Years block for financial year 2024/2025. Proposed split of the funding is 80%, £434,400, to Randolph Beresford and 20%, £108,600, to Thames Federation. This funding will include children with SEND.
2. Approve additional £135,750 funding for the Summer term from Early Years Dedicated Schools Grant to cover places at Randolph Beresford and Thames Federation places for the full academic year to end July 2025. This will be split 80% to Randolph Beresford £108,600 and 20% Thames Federation £27,150
3. Approve £143,000 funding to be retained for spot purchasing across all settings. This funding will be focused on children with SEND, 2 year olds and under 2s.
4. Currently the Council fund one setting in the North of the borough, Randolph Beresford Maintained Nursery School (MNS) to provide enhanced early years provision for Children in Need (CiN), children subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) and/or children at risk of exclusion due to a vulnerability or emerging special needs. This setting is well placed for identified families in the north and central localities of the borough. While recognising the important position and role of Randolph Beresford in currently providing the majority of the borough's EEYP for children who require it, the Council needs to ensure that provision is equitable and available to families in the south of the borough.

5. The Council also provides funding to Thames Federation in the South of the borough. They currently provide support to children with a social worker attached to the family and the same qualifying needs as those at Randolph Beresford, however these families live in the south locality and are unable to travel to Randolph.
6. Funding has been allocated to Randolph Beresford and Thames Federation based on information reviewed from EEYP Panel data:
 - There are currently 41 children at Randolph Beresford receiving enhanced support who have been referred from external services (e.g. Health, Children's Social Care, Early Help etc).
 - There are currently 10 children receiving enhanced support at the Thames Federation in the south of the borough and 2 to be referred (referred by Child in Need, Children Looked After and Child Protection teams within H&F).

Option 2 - Not recommended

7. Do not approve the allocation of funding and provide Randolph Beresford or Thames Federation the full £543,000 for the financial year 2024/25 and the additional £135,750 to cover the Summer term from the Early Years block.
8. Failure to provide the additional funding of the Early Years Enhanced Provision would mean children in the borough would be disadvantaged because they would need to access expensive paid for provision with the borough, or not be able to access additional support at all.

Reasons for Decision

9. Although the standard of provision is outstanding at these settings, they must use existing resources to provide this enhanced offer. Allocation of funds to Randolph Beresford and the Thames Federation will better reflect the additional costs of providing their offer, ensure greater certainty and enable leaders to better plan for enhanced provision.
10. In addition, approving a continuation of funding now will allow the nurseries to set a balanced budget and advertise their offer ahead of the next academic year.
11. There is an increasing need for additional support for children with SEND in nursery settings. With the expansion of the working parents entitlement we will see an increasing identification of children with SEND as they will come to settings at an earlier age. We will review the funding allocations through the year to ensure children with SEND are supported through this process.

Equality Implications

12. This proposal is in line with the Council's responsibility to ensure equality of service provision for all of the borough's families regardless of location and is subject to approval at the January 2024 Schools Forum.

*Implications verified/completed by: Alistair Ayres, Head of Programmes,
Children's Commissioning 28/02/2024*

Risk Management Implications

13. The report recommends the funding allocation from the Early Years block for 2024/25, for Enhanced Early Years places at Randolph Beresford Nursery and Thames Federation, along with a reserve to be held for additional spot purchasing across all settings as required. This is in line with the Council's priorities, particularly to ensure preventative targeting of support in Early Years by providing access to affordable provision to improve the life chances of young people and adults later in life, including economic and social wellbeing.

Implications completed by: David Hughes, Director of Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance, 28 February 2024

Climate and Ecological Emergency Implications

14. The maintained nurseries are included as part of decarbonisation plans covering the school estate as a whole, the entirety of which is funded in a similar manner via the DSG.
15. Officers are currently working with the GLA Retrofit Accelerator Scheme to identify a cohort of schools that are suitable for more detailed feasibility studies that will identify a range of decarbonisation measures and associated energy cost savings.
16. In addition, 300K is allocated in the proposed 2021-24 school maintenance and capital programme for specific decarbonisation works and officers are incorporating a core response to the climate emergency within the scoping of wider school maintenance and capital works.

*Implications verified by Hinesh Mehta, Assistant Director Climate Change,
06/03/2024*

Social Value Implications

17. This report is seeking approval to release funds to schools, and it is part of H&F schools funding agreement. As a result, Social Value requirement does not apply.

*Implications completed by: Paul Clarke, Economic Development Officer,
28/2/24*