

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 10 June 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children, Education & Social Care

SUBJECT: Early Outcome Fund (EOF)

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The report aims to outline the Early Outcomes Fund and Halton's successful bid in receiving a part share of this fund. It summarises the context of the bid, the evidence of local self-assessment which underpins the bid and the proposed content of the bid.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) **Members welcome the award of the Early Outcomes Funding for Halton; and**
- 2) **Members ask for a report on the progress of the project at the January 2020 PPB.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 In July 2017 Damian Hinds, Secretary of State for Education, set an ambition to halve the proportion of children who do not achieve at least expected levels across all goals in the 'communication and language' and 'literacy' areas of learning at the end of reception year by 2028. This ambition built on the work announced in 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential: a plan for improving social mobility through education, published in December 2017, which set out plans to close the word gap in the early years.

3.2 The Government emphasized the need to tackle these development gaps at the earliest opportunity, so that children begin school ready to thrive. The government also emphasized that this task should not fall solely to education but should involve a range of local services that go beyond early education and childcare; for example, early help, family support, public health and primary care. In other words, a multiagency approach. It was recognised that local authorities sit at the heart of what a locality offers disadvantaged families and have an important role to play in coordinating the efforts of different

support partners.

3.3 Following on from this the Department for Education established an 'Early Outcomes Fund' worth approx. £6.5m. Local Authorities were invited to undergo a lengthy bidding process in order to access a part share of this money.

3.4 The overall ambition of the fund is to increase the number of local authorities starting a transformation journey to improve the collective operation of local services in securing good early language outcomes for children.

The aims of the fund are:

- To increase leadership focus at local authority level on the key issue of early language;
- To enable Local Authorities to undertake work to improve their services and how they are delivered;
- To resource evaluation and partnership working amongst Local Authorities that will spread innovations around the wider system.

3.5 To do this, the fund would be allocated, for a twelve month period to support activities which would help Local Authorities to either:

- a) Kick-off and/or progress system change that addresses leadership, funding, commissioning, workforces, data, accountability and/or evaluation, with the ultimate aim of improving good early language outcomes in a local area; or
- b) Assess and codify existing approaches to improvement which are thought to be effective and might be shared more widely.

3.6 Halton submitted a multiagency bid around Activity a) – to look at developing fundamental system changes at a strategic level within the authority, right down to changing practise at an operational level.

3.7 Halton were one of only 8 authorities that were successful in receiving funding, and only 2 out of the 8 authorities were single bids.

4.0 **SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL**

4.1 Halton's project is a Priority A project, entitled 'TALK Halton'. The proposal builds on the recommendations in the Bercow Review (2018), to implement a strategic system-wide approach for supporting children with SLCN in the Early Years and the successful joint commissioning of Speech and Language Therapy by the Local

Authority and Halton Clinical Commissioning Group.

Drawing on the self-assessment and review of current evidence and local need, partners agreed to focus on the following key areas, supported by the Nesta 'Theory of Change' (See Appendix 1).

4.2 **Strategy**

To set up a task and finish group. This group will have three main roles:-

- To develop the strategy that will underpin TALK Halton and engages all partners;
- To devise an action plan. This action plan will set out a common pathway to create a blueprint for how future assessment and intervention services work together across all early years providers;
- To review the strategy and action plan at agreed intervals.

To set up a strategic board. The strategic board will have four main roles:-

- To monitor and evaluate the ongoing work that is being undertaken to achieve the strategy;
- To report to accountable bodies;
- Responsibility for marketing strategy to deliver Project's key messages;
- To develop an exit strategy;

The project will be driven by a dedicated, project lead to ensure sufficient capacity to achieve successful outcomes. Alongside the project lead, we will appoint four specialist Speech and Language Therapists, three education specialists, two Adult and Family Learning Tutors, and a health visitor. These roles will ensure sustainable system and culture change within their own organisations and at an operational level with all front-line practitioners. An Administrative Officer will also be appointed to provide admin support. Adult and Family Learning practitioners will provide a range of workshops, training courses and extension activities to support effective and sustainable family and community engagement in the Project.

4.3 **Workforce Planning and Culture**

- To carry out a skills audit across all early years' service providers in order to produce a gap analysis to inform the delivery plan and meet the requirements of the strategy;
- To produce a dedicated programme of whole workforce training and to co-ordinate delivery of this programme, including training

in the use of the Wellcomm Toolkit. This will be developed as part of a total communication approach and will be supported at an operational level by SALT, Health and Education partners;

- SLCN to be incorporated into the Health Improvement Award for Early Years settings;
- Parents whose children are not in formal childcare can access the system through Children Centre groups and outreach;
- To establish links with 'BestStartInLife' and ensure coherence with other assessments, such as ASQ, and interventions used in Halton;
- To develop and enhance a collaborative two-year old integrated review and partnership care planning;
- To deliver the SLCN components of the universal ante-natal and 'readiness for school' programmes to highlight the importance of communication, speech and language across all ages;
- To involve Midwifery in the project through training, representation on working groups and Health promotions.
- To provide support for operational staff during the process of culture change.

4.4 **Information and Data**

- To establish a user friendly, common information sharing system across partners with a central reporting point. This will ensure robust, borough wide, monitoring and evaluation of children's early language needs and provide a mechanism by which the effectiveness of assessments and interventions can be measured;
- To use this information sharing system to identify emerging trends. This will enable Halton to put in place effective prevention and early intervention;
- The Wellcomm Toolkit will be used by all partners to screen every child in Halton and will form the basis of our information and data sets, and will inform our strategic direction. Case studies from Lancaster and Staffordshire evidence Wellcomm to be an effective tool. Wellcomm best fits our local context, providing information around early identification and interventions to be carried out. It is a user friendly and appropriate tool for the early years workforce;
- We will determine specific points at which all children will be screened, in addition to those already mandated from the Healthy Child Programme.

4.5 This funding will allow us to appoint staff to embed and implement new systems and processes. After the funding has ended the roles of the staff will be undertaken by SALT services, Education and Health. The capacity to undertake this will be achieved by a reduction in the current high level of inappropriate referrals to SALT and the upskilling of the early years workforce, enabling children's early language difficulties to be identified and addressed at a universal level.

4.6 The Wellcomm Toolkit builds on our total communication approach and provides a sustainable resource for the future.

5.0 **EVALUATION**

5.1 In addition to the Local Evaluation a centrally appointed evaluation partner, Ecorys, have been appointed. The role of the evaluation partner is to help the DfE to better understand how much impact the funding has had. To achieve this they will identify areas of learning for potential dissemination after the completion of the TALK Halton project, as well as offer challenge and support throughout the lifetime of the project.

6.0 **CURRENT POSITION**

- 6.1
- Halton have been awarded a total amount of £582,750.77 to be paid over the programme lifetime;
 - The project will run from 1st April, 2019 until 31st March, 2020. However, there is some flexibility within these timescales; TALK Halton will fall under the strategic direction of the One Halton Steering Group;
 - The Task and Finish group has been established. Two sub-groups have been convened – one to oversee development of the communication pathway and one to oversee the marketing campaign;
 - Recruitment of staff to the TALK Halton team in process; Adult and Family Learning programme commenced;
 - Wellcomm Toolkits purchased;
 - Briefing held for Head teachers and Managers;
 - TALK Halton settings identified and Wellcomm leads appointed;
 - Training for Wellcomm leads to commence June 2019, followed by sample screening.

7.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None identified

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Project will be funded by a grant awarded by the DfE through the Early Outcomes Fund.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

9.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Raising children's achievement in Communication, Language and Literacy impacts on their long-term outcomes, including career opportunities and mental health and will improve outcomes for the more vulnerable children and young people in the borough.

9.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Greater confidence in speaking and listening, together with improved communication skills will increase the Education, training and employment opportunities for pupils and students.

9.3 A Healthy Halton

A total communication approach will have a positive impact on the emotional health and wellbeing of challenging pupils and students.

9.4 A Safer Halton

None identified.

9.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified

10.0 RISK ANALYSIS

10.1 Improved communication and language skills within early years settings should reduce incidents of challenging behaviour.

11.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

11.1 The screening of all children around the development of speech and language will ensure that they are able to receive timely support and intervention, thereby reducing inequalities in their life chances.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Early Outcomes Fund Guidance –	DfE Website	Operational Director – Education Inclusion

November 2018		and Provision & Operational Director Resources
Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential: a plan for improving social mobility through education – December 2017	www.gov.uk	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources
The Bercow Review (2018)	www.bercow10yearson.com	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources