

The Early Years Pupil Premium and you



Sue Robb, national head of early years at 4Children, explains how investing in children at a young age through the Early Years Pupil Premium can transform their life chances

The data from the Early Years Profile shows the learning and development gap between disadvantaged children and their peers when they start school can be as much as 19 months. Disadvantaged children are less likely to do well during their school career, which can then impact on their employment prospects and future life choices.

Therefore, we need to do more to support all children but especially those who may fall behind during their time in the EYFS. The Early Years Pupil Premium has the potential to do this by playing a vital part in closing the gap among pre-school children. As the funding follows the child, it can be used flexibly to meet their particular needs and move them closer to fulfilling their potential.

£50m funding

The eligibility criterion for three- and four-year-olds to receive the Early Years Pupil Premium is the same as the pupil premium – based on eligibility for free school meals. The funding, totalling £50million nationally, will follow the child and will be allocated to local authorities through the Dedicated Schools Grant. Early years providers will be given extra funding of 53p per hour,

which is just over £300 for a full-time place.

Piloting the potential

The results of a government consultation on the Early Years Pupil Premium last year indicated the early years sector should have the freedom to decide how to make best use of the Early Years Pupil Premium and to be held accountable for this. Ofsted has been asked to monitor the effectiveness of the Early Years Pupil Premium, as it does for the pupil premium, through the leadership and management criteria in their inspection framework.

Early Years Pupil Premium was piloted in seven local authority areas ahead of the national rollout in April: Blackpool, Bristol, Hackney, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, North Yorkshire and Stoke-on-Trent shared £1million to ensure all the systems and processes are in place to enable the potential of this funding to be maximised.

Setting a good example

4Children, the Department for Education's strategic partner for childcare and the early years, was asked by the government to carry out a call for evidence to gather and

share ideas and examples of best practice from across the early years sector, which will be available on foundationyears.org.uk. Key priorities to emerge from the sector on how the money could be spent are personal, social and emotional development, and early language and communication.

Some early years settings may only have a couple of children who qualify for the Early Years Pupil Premium and others might have significantly more. This calls for the sector to think creatively about how the money could be used. It is vital to emphasise that the Early Years Pupil Premium is not about simply buying a piece of equipment – rather it can be used to equip early years staff with the skills they need to support the development and learning of the children they are responsible for.

Providers could pool their money to buy the services, for example, of a speech and language therapist, who would train all the staff on how best to help children develop their communication skills.

The challenge for early years providers is to use the funding to make a positive difference to the progress of identified children, while improving the quality of their provision. ■

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● Sue Robb is national head of early years at 4Children.
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