



## Report to WEXHAM AND IVERS LOCAL AREA FORUM

**Title:** Early Years and Childcare Grant - Small Capital Grants Programme and LAF Devolved Budget 2009/10

**To:** Wexham and Ivers Local Area Forum

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### Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to advise the Wexham and Ivers LAF with an update on the deployment of the grant in the local area.

### Introduction

1. A key element of the Locality Strategy vision is "Genuine and increased influence by residents over local decisions and budgets". LAFs are central to achieving this through greater devolved decision making.
2. In response to this, £95,000 (£5000 per LAF) of Early Years Capital Grant administered by the Early Years & Childcare Service (EYCS) has been devolved to Local Area Forums in 2009/10.

### Background

4. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has provided capital funding to all local authorities that includes specific funding aimed at:
  - Improving the quality of the learning environment in early years settings to support delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), with a particular emphasis on improving play and physical activities and ICT resources
  - Ensuring all children, including disabled children, are able to access provision
  - Enabling private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers to deliver the extension to the free offer and to do so flexibly (see footnote<sup>1</sup>)
5. The grant is governed by a Memorandum of Grant document and statutory guidance. It is prioritised for use within the Private, Voluntary, Independent (PVI)

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<sup>1</sup> The DCSF will also be providing funding to extend the early education provision for 3 and 4 year olds from the current entitlement of 12.5 hours to 15 hours per week, for 38 weeks per year, from September 2010. There is also funding provided for some 2 year old children, who are disadvantaged, to access free early years provision. The grants can be used to enable providers of services to develop premises and resources to meet these changes.

sector although can be used in the Maintained sector (i.e. schools) if there is adequate evidence of need.

6. A high proportion of provision delivering childcare and early education for eligible 3 and 4 year olds (i.e. free nursery education places), in Buckinghamshire, is within the PVI sector. Many operate services from community buildings such as village and church halls. These premises were not built for the purpose of delivering early education and present challenges for the providers in meeting the needs of children. The grants are specifically provided to enable providers to develop their premises and meet those needs as well as the requirements of the EYFS. This includes access to positive outdoor play opportunities and quality indoor environments for their play, learning and development.

### **Grant Management**

7. In Buckinghamshire, the grant is managed within the EYCS, supported by other local authority (LA) and partner agencies. Grants can be for up to £10,000 (£15,000 for provision of canopies over outdoor play spaces due to the average cost of installation). Any grants for built structures (e.g. canopies, fixed play equipment) require approval by a LA project officer and surveyor.
8. Information on the availability of the grant has been sent to all providers in Buckinghamshire. Priority is given to those service providers who have a high level of need due to the condition of the building they operate from or in order to ensure there is sufficient childcare places to meet the needs of parents. There is provision for larger grants to be applied for if need is evidenced.
9. Applications are submitted, usually following discussions with a Childcare Development Officer, to the EYCS for consideration. They are looked at on a first come first served basis to ensure that there is the minimum of delay in the decision-making process to enable projects to proceed quickly.

### **Summary of spend/grant allocation**

10. Below is a summary of all the applications that have been approved up to October 2009 across the county. From this you will note that all LAF areas will have had at least one application supported from a provider in their area. The average level of grant awarded is approximately £6500.

<b>Local Delivery Area</b>	<b>No. of applications</b>	<b>Value</b>
Amersham	4	£31,196
Greater Aylesbury	6	£42,019
Beaconsfield	5	£39,916
Beeches	1	£5,239
Chepping Wye Valley	3	£20,790
Buckingham	10	£87,295
The Chalfonts	4	£34,975
Chesham	5	£23,673
Gerrards Cross	2	£10,000
Great Brickhill, Wing & Ivinghoe	3	£26,775
Haddenham and Long Crendon	6	£38,238
High Wycombe	9	£42,997

Wexham and Ivers	1	£10,000
The Missendens	1	£10,000
Princes Risborough	3	£32,592
S.W. Chilterns and Marlow	5	£25,164
Waddesdon	1	£10,000
Wendover	2	£14,807
Winslow	3	£20,686
<b>Totals</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>£485,511</b>

11. Applications have included the following projects:

- Development of outside areas
- Resources and equipment including sensory resources
- Security and safety items
- Access improvements
- Storage

12. Additional larger grant Applications:

Wendover (1)	£22,600
Greater Aylesbury (2)	£60,500

13. Details of the Early Years providers that have received funding in the Wexham and Ivers LAF area are given below.

Setting Name	Post Code	Application Detail	Amount Awarded
Langley Manor School	SL3 6BZ	Canopy	10,000.00

### Involvement of the LAFs

14. The intention had been that, advised by recommendations from the EYCS, each LAF would have been invited to prioritise schemes. The schemes would then be funded in that rank order from the LAF's £5k delegated budget. However since there has been sufficient funding to enable all eligible applications to be supported from within the total grant budget this has not been necessary. Also, as noted above, the average allocation to each scheme has been in excess of the £5k devolved to each LAF.

15. In the light of this there is a need to review the extent to which the LAFs can influence the decision-making process in respect of this capital grant. Even should there be a circumstance whereby there was only a limited amount of grant still available any prioritisation of applications would need to have regard to the duty on the LA to secure sufficiency of provision and to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage across the county.

16. There is a need to consider more effective alternative ways in which the LAFs can engage in supporting the development of early years and childcare provision in the future. A proposal for achieving this will be developed and reported to the LAFs during spring next year. In the meantime the Early Years and Childcare team will welcome any information or views about provision in each LAF area and will ensure that they are given opportunities to comment on consultations, where appropriate.