

# DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

14<sup>th</sup> January 2014

ITEM NO 5

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## EARLY YEARS EDUCATION PROVIDED BY: PVI (NON-MAINTAINED SETTINGS)

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### Purpose of paper

To increase PVI hourly rate for the delivery of Funded places to £5.18 for 2 year old children and £3.80 for 3 and 4 year old children.

Forum was made aware last year of the very grave difficulties being faced by many settings in connection with underfunding and financial instability. Darlington playgroups and pre-schools are operating in the town dependent on top-ups from church collections to keep them open, which is shameful. Other settings subsidise funded places with extra wrap around services paid for by parents whose family budgets continue to be squeezed resulting in unregistered childcare being accessed. Many of Darlington's settings are good, high quality providers offering a valued local community service that benefits children and families in this town and consequently also those providers of the next phases of education.

Ofsted's tougher inspections came into force on Monday November 4<sup>th</sup> 2013, designed to make it clear that only provision that is 'good' or better is good enough for very young children. None of us here in Darlington would disagree with that. The Schools Forum should be aware that across Darlington in recent months several settings have failed to achieve this grading (and 20 percent nationally) even under the previous, more lenient, framework. A significant contributory factor in this is a failure to match the level of funding deemed appropriate by this panel to the actual cost of providing high quality early years nursery education.

Historically links have been made between the rate of funding per hour and the National Minimum Wage, the cost of utilities and then other general inflation. What forum has perhaps failed to consider is the impact that a high quality nursery education has on future school achievement and the fact that Good and Outstanding settings will always have strong leaders/managers as well as a highly qualified staff teams. Forum may not have been made aware of the ground work that has been quietly going on in Darlington over the last six years to ensure that we do in fact have staff with the appropriate high level qualifications that match, if not rival, those of many teachers in schools.

### Qualification range

Level 3 – this is the minimum entry point for a Good or Outstanding settings

Level 4 – the level all staff are encouraged to reach

Level 5 - preferred level for senior staff e.g. sector endorsed Early Years Foundation Degree

Level 6 – For example Honours degree in relevant subject (BA Early Childhood Studies/ B Ed) and post grad certificate including Early Years Professional Status/Early Years Teacher

Level 7 – For example a Masters degree in relevant subject or a PGCE or Qualified Teacher Status

The salaries demanded for these qualifications cannot be aligned to minimum wage whatsoever and nurseries have seen a rise in salaries of 11 per cent since 2010/2011.

Alongside rises of 13 per cent in other general costs and 15 per cent in utilities the increase in the hourly rate falls short for an Early Years Sector that has developed rapid growth in higher qualified staff to meet the challenge of growing demands from Ofsted.

Other significant increased cost bases include the additional man hours required for the planning, assessment and recording of children's development. For example, a child may be in attendance for three hours but, as most of you will be aware, time has gone into preparing to meet that child's needs prior to their arrival and continues afterwards.

PVI would also like forum to acknowledge that non-maintained settings pay VAT on all resources and services, business rates, and increased pension contributions which will be mandatory from 2015. Financial support to increase degree level staff has been withdrawn and access to training (via early years team) has been reduced to a minimum.

Early Years settings ask that the members of school forum should recognise the needs of the whole of the education community by funding early years as adequately as it does the next phases. And considers that a funded session whether it is for a 2, 3 or 4 year old is fully funded and not subsidised by church collections or contributions sliced off other services paid for by parents. Forum must acknowledge the settings that have closed in the last financial year, as they were financially unsustainable, and the other settings that were kept open with significant subsidies of £92,000 for each stand alone maintained nursery. PVI asks that Forum recognises the strain other settings have been put under and again consider raising the hourly rate to ensure the youngest children in our community can always access provision and it is the best provision Darlington can provide.

PVI would also like forum to clarify the decision making process for funding for 2, 3 and 4 year old children with Special Educational Needs as additional funding will be required for the 2 year old children.

Prepared by Lindsay Long and Lynne Waldon, PVI Representatives  
December 17, 2013.