

REPORT TO: Children & Young People Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 30 January 2017

REPORTING OFFICER: Headteacher of Halton Virtual School for Children in Care

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: A review of the use of Pupil Premium Plus and its expenditure year on year

WARD(S) All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide PPB with an update of the findings of a review into the use of Pupil Premium Plus and its expenditure year on year.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

i) PPB note the information provided

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for Children in Care (CIC) is governed by the conditions of grant published by the Department of Education (DfE). These conditions of grant for PP+ for CIC have always been different to those governing pupil premium for other eligible children.

In February 2014 the conditions governing PP+ changed resulting in significant differences from the conditions applied in previous years. A summary of the major differences were:

- The amount that the DfE uses to calculate the overall budget increased to £1900 per the number of CIC aged 4 – 15 based on the SSDA903 return.
- That the grant allocation must be managed by the Headteacher of the Virtual School (VSHT) and used for the benefit of the child as identified through their Personal Education Plan (PEP).

3.2 The DfE also produced further statutory guidance (March 2014) that described the 'Role of the Virtual School Head in managing the PP+ for Children in Care'. A summary of the key differences were:

- A child is eligible 24 hours after they entered care.
- There is no requirement to distribute the grant allocation on a per capita basis in recognition of the differing levels of need.
- That the grant must be managed by the VSHT and it is the VSHT that is responsible for making sure that the funding is spent effectively and fully, with any underspend being returned to the DfE at the end of each financial year. It is also up to the VSHT to decide the amount and frequency of PP+ payments – this means that there is no set amount that each child is eligible to receive.
- The funding must be used to improve educational outcomes as identified in each child's PEP.
- That there is no requirement for the VSHT to pass on the funding to a school where the child is on roll, but there is a strong expectation that the VSHT will consult with the Designated Teacher (DT) around how to meet the child's learning needs and pass the money to support this.
- Schools cannot insist that they get the full PP+ grant for each child on their roll as it is up to the VSHT to manage the PP+ grant allocation.
- The VSHT can pool some of the budget allocation and keep this centrally for activities that are of holistic benefit to the LA's CIC.
- The PP+ must not be used for activities that the LA would normally be expected to fund as the corporate parent, including transport, support for foster carers, or for administering the grant.

3.3 In response to these changes Halton adopted a 'child's individual needs driven model' of allocation that was linked to the completion of effective, timely and high quality PEPs. This also coincided with the move to termly PEPs as outlined in the revised statutory guidance for Local Authorities on 'Promoting the education of looked after children' (July 2014). This is a summary of the key overarching principles of the model adopted by Halton:

- The core question guiding the decision making of the VSHT, Social Worker (SW), and DT, regarding the use of the PP+ must be - 'would this be good enough for my child?'
- The PP+ must be used to improve the educational outcomes for all CIC, wherever they live.
- The PP+ must be responsive to the identified needs of each CIC as each one will have a differing set of needs and these individual needs may vary over time.
- The PP+ must be clearly linked to each PEP. Any PP+ funding allocated must be used for the specified child in a way that has been clearly identified within the child's PEP. The PP+ must make a difference to the educational outcomes of the child. Therefore, the impact of the PP+ must be

- rigorously monitored and evidenced.
- The VSHT will have a constructive dialogue with schools regarding improving the educational outcomes for each of their CIC, as schools are accountable for the educational attainment and progress of all disadvantaged pupils on their roll who attract pupil premium.
- The VSHT wants to fully and appropriately utilise the PP+ grant and not return any underspend to the DfE at the end of the financial year. However, it is for the VSHT to manage and deploy this funding in accordance with the identified needs of the children within the Virtual School.

This model was deemed to be good practice by Ofsted during Halton's SIF inspection in 2014 and also by the DfE in a review undertaken for Ministers in 2015.

4.0 **FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS EXPENDITURE 2015-16**

4.1 The VSHT undertook a review of PP+ processes and expenditure over the last 2 years in order to:

- Ensure that the PP+ expenditure was meeting the needs of children and young people in care, and
- To gain feedback from key professionals as to the efficiency and robustness of the process.

4.2 Positives highlighted in the review:

- The PEP allows for both a request for PP+ linked to the child's individual targets and a review of the impact of the expenditure.
- There is flexibility in terms of what can be requested, with the provision that requests to support academic improvement are prioritised.
- As it is an individual child needs led approach, each child can access the funding s/he requires to support their educational outcomes.
- Schools understand and agree with the principles of the model and utilise the funding appropriately. On only 2 occasions has the VSHT had to have a discussion with a DT regarding the request and on each occasion, a suitable alternative was agreed that met the needs of the child.
- A number of children who have experienced prolonged times of difficulty have been supported and maintained in their school whilst assessments and further long term appropriate support is provided.
- Training for school staff and resources have been funded which enables a broader support for CIC in each school.

- A high percentage of the funding has been spent directly on the children rather than being distributed across budgets.
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4.2 Areas of difficulty highlighted in the review and identified resolutions

4.2.1 **Issue:**

PEP completion rates remain a concern – as this is the key document for requesting, allocating and monitoring the impact of PP+.

Action/Suggested Resolution:

- Halton Virtual School (HVS) has funded additional admin hours to ensure that PEPs are typed and loaded for review within a 2 week timescale.
- HVS has employed a Primary and Secondary PEP Coordinator to monitor PEP completion rates, provide details of PP+ requests to VSHT for review and quality assure the PEPs.

4.2.2 **Issue:**

The timing of PEPs can also be an issue with some meetings only taking place towards the end of the term, which can reduce the possible requests of PP+.

Action/Suggested Resolution:

- Additional PEP admin will provide the PEP Coordinators and VSHT with a list of PEP meeting dates so any late PEP meetings can be discussed and changed where appropriate.

4.2.3 **Issue:**

A number of schools do not provide the costings for PP+ interventions at the PEP meeting – this creates delay and then requires additional officer time to follow this up to prevent the child not receiving the intervention.

Action/Suggested Resolution:

- PEP admin and Coordinators will chase missing information initially within 1 week and then escalate to VSHT/Principal Managers CSC for resolution.
- Resolutions will be reported as part of performance monitoring processes to Children's Senior Management Team.

4.2.4 **Issue:**

As the funding runs on the financial year cycle and any underspend can be clawed back by the DfE, it does not fit easily with academic terms so there is often a need to utilise an additional pro-forma to request PP+ within March to ensure that the money is fully spent.

Action/Suggested Resolution:

- PEP Coordinators will review Spring Term PEP dates and discuss moving meetings to earlier in the term to ensure maximum time for PP+ request. This is to ensure that the PEP remains the key PP+ impact audit document and to eliminate additional paperwork.

4.2.5 **Issue:**

Due to Council financial payment systems, although HVS does indicate what each payment is for and for which child, this does not get translated accurately into the school's accounts by the Council's automated payments system. Therefore, schools are not always aware which PP+ payments they have received.

Action/Suggested Resolution:

- HVS will ensure that all DTs receive an email as soon as a PP+ request has been authorised for payment.

4.2.6 **Issue:**

Schools often say that they do not know what to spend the funding on for individual children, so the child may lose out.

Action/Suggested Resolution:

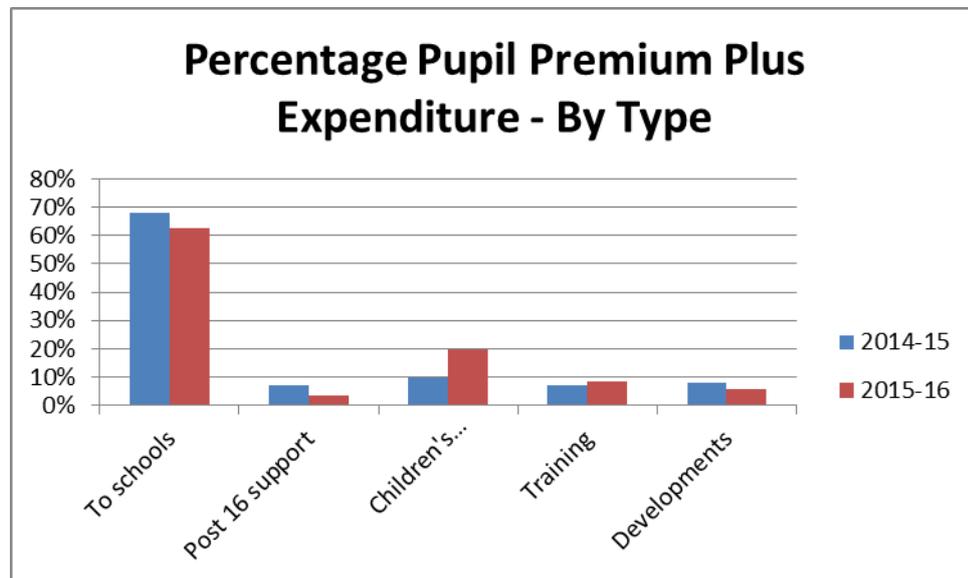
- VSHT has been to Schools Forum on a number of occasions to highlight examples of good practice.
- HVS has developed a list of examples of how schools have used PP+ - this has been disseminated through DT networks and placed on HVS website.
- DTs will be asked to send in any examples of how they have used PP+ so that this list can be constantly updated.

5.0 **YEAR ON YEAR PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS EXPENDITURE**

5.1 As each year's grant allocation is calculated using the number of CIC aged 4 – 15 based on the SSDA903 return, the overall amount for each financial year may be different.

5.2 The following graphs present summaries of the expenditure of the PP+ funding for CIC for the previous 2 years:

5.2.1

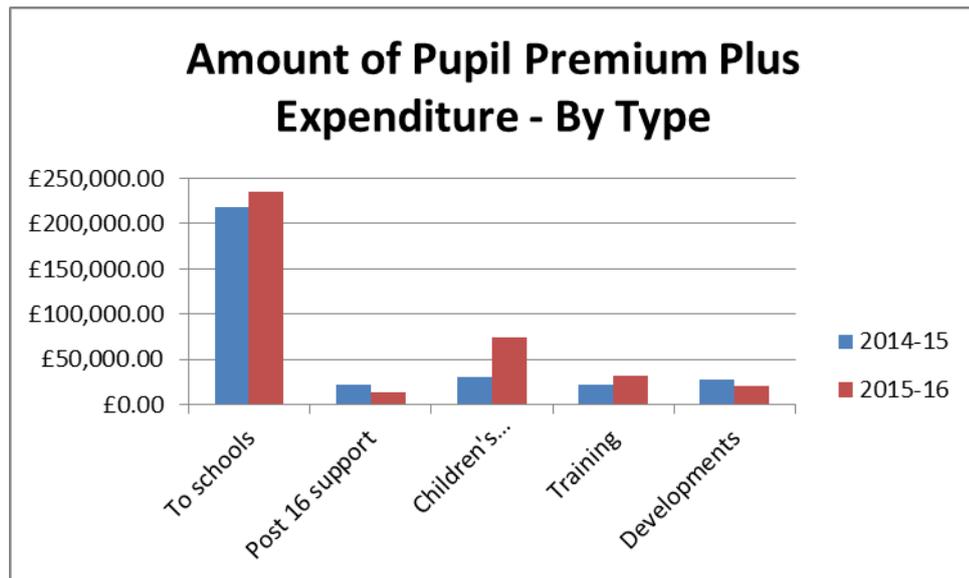


As can be seen the largest percentage of expenditure for PP+ is delivered through schools. This is largely through PEP requests but also includes:

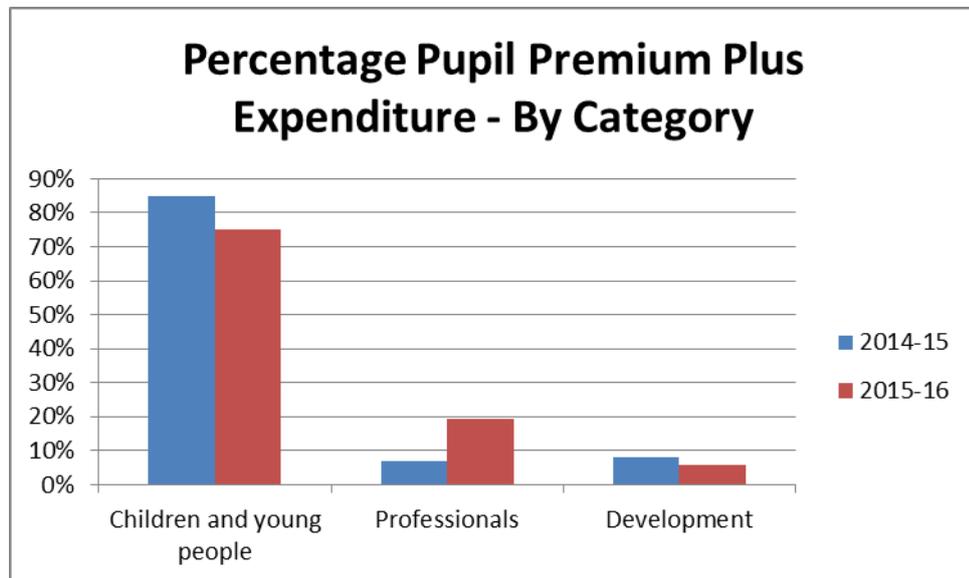
- Additional funding for schools that have an increase in the numbers of CIC during the year.
- Additional funding to support transition planning and preparation for key tests/exams.
- The Attachment Focused Schools Award
- Bespoke packages to support individual children in crisis.

The percentage of expenditure on children's resources includes a high level of 1:1 tuition and the additional learning activities and support that HVS provides.

The increase in the allocation for training has been as a result of HVS providing a comprehensive programme to increase the awareness and improve the practice of professionals in meeting the attachment needs of CIC in schools.



5.2.2



As can be seen from the graph above the largest percentage of funding goes directly to children and young people. The increase in funding directed at professionals is due to the comprehensive training programme that has been delivered. However, this work will also benefit children and young people by more appropriately meeting their attachment needs within their learning environment, so enabling them to more fully access the curriculum and achieve their potential.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Please see other implications below regarding national policy changes both current and future.

7.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The DfE has confirmed that Children in Care will receive Pupil Premium Plus for the next 2 financial years. However, there has been no guarantee beyond March 2019. If this funding ceases then it will have a negative impact upon the positive interventions that both schools and Halton Virtual School provide to diminish the attainment difference and support our children in care to achieve their full potential.

8.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

8.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The educational attainment of children in care remains a key priority for the Council.

8.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

If children in care do not achieve their expected educational outcomes there is a high risk that they will become NEET and therefore not achieve employment which fulfils their aspirations or enables them to be active participants in the community.

8.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Research has demonstrated that issues related to the emotional health and well-being has a significant impact upon the educational outcomes for children in care. Timely and effective services are vital in providing emotional support for our young people to enable them to have positive engagement in their learning and achieve their potential.

8.4 **A Safer Halton**

Due to their lived experiences children in care can be at higher risk of child sexual exploitation, and episodes of missing from care or school. Research does indicate that these factors all have a negative impact upon educational outcomes for our children and young people in care. Therefore, all agencies need to provide proactive support in order to keep children in care safe.

8.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

9.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

9.1 If the outcomes for our Halton children in care do not improve then there is a continued risk that they are more likely to become NEET and not become active and positive partners in their

community.

10.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

10.1 Children in care continue to be a vulnerable group whose life experiences of trauma, neglect and abuse mean that they have not had the same start in life as other young people.

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

None.