

Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 23rd October 2013

Agenda Item – Small steps

1. Introduction and Background

Small steps is a team that are based at Springwell School offering support, advice and training to parents and professionals in relation to primary aged children with social, communication difficulties or those on the autistic spectrum.

It is overseen by Alix Barker (Educational Psychologist) and consists of 2.8 FTE teaching assistants that are employed by Springwell school.

The service offers groups, training, home/school visits and offer of continuing phone or 'one off' support to schools and families and regular home/school visits. The team have supported at least one child in every primary school in the last year. The children being supported include:

- 5 children have Down Syndrome
- 44 have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Approx 20 have Speech Language Communication Needs
- 13 have complex needs
- 13 are in care coordination
- 5 have significant visual impairment
- More than 30 are not yet talking

Current work with schools includes:

- Continuing support into Nursery and through EYFS, including "Little Stars"
- Support for TAs/LSAs working with children with learning delays and additional, complex or Social Communication needs /autism
- Continuing support for "our" parents throughout Primary
- Joint placements and transitions
- Pocket profiles
- Care coordination
- Training – especially around Autistic Spectrum Disorder – for schools, parents, TAs
- Support for families through groups e.g Parents in the Park/Pool

The team have significant expertise in the delivery of courses for parents which includes Early Bird Plus and a new course "Healthy Minds" course for parents of children with ASD. School staff will be invited to attend with parents. The team are the only licensed trainers North of Barnsley

The profile of the children currently being supported is as follows:

Current year group										
Pre	Nur	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7+	Total
10	7	12	10	17	7	4	7	9	2	85

2. Funding

The local authority through the Early Intervention Grant currently funds 2.8 FTE teaching assistant posts. Unfortunately the grant is being reduced by £1.5 million from April 2014 and a significant review of services has taken place. It has been agreed through Children's Services Committee that there will be a reduction in the contribution made to Springwell School for the small steps team of £23,000 which equates to one 32.5 hour post.

Impact of the loss of funding would be considerable and the service would need to refocus on younger children aged under 6 years old.

3. Options to be considered

Option 1 – DSG underspend could fund this one post for one year until a long term solution is agreed. This would allow for Springwell and Primary schools to work on a solution longer term based on presenting needs.

Option 2 – Springwell to continue to employ 2.8 FTE teaching assistants and set up a Service Level Agreement with schools to buy in to the service. This would equate to approximately £767 per primary school.

Option 3 – The small steps team is reduced by one full time post. This would have a significant affect on the amount of work that the team could pick up and the support offered would need to be restricted to children under 6 years old.

Decision required

Forum needs to approve one of the above options.