

**Agenda Item 4 – Funding for Designated Education Officer**

**1. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of the report is to –

- Update Schools Forum on the Designated Education Officer (DEO) role within The Children's Hub
- Outline funding options for the role from June 2017/18.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Children's Hub is a partnership between Hartlepool Borough Council, Stockton on Tees Borough Council, Cleveland Police, North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust. It began operation on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 and responds to concerns from professionals and the public regarding the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in both local authority areas. The Children's Hub is funded by the two Local Authorities with contributions from partners as appropriate.
- 2.2 During the months leading up to the establishment of The Children's Hub consultation with Head Teachers and safeguarding representatives from schools made clear their desire for an 'education professional' within the Hub that could support schools in their safeguarding duties and ensure that children receive the right support at the right time.
- 2.3 Hartlepool Borough Council agreed to fund a new role of Designated Education Officer for 12 months with the scope for schools to fund the post thereafter.
- 2.4 The role is not a statutory Local Authority duty, rather it adds value to the safeguarding process with the DEO in a position to –
- Develop excellent relationships with schools offering advice and guidance across the continuum from early help through to statutory assessments
  - Contribute to safeguarding and child protection training programmes for staff within schools
  - Provide challenge to schools to ensure children are supported appropriately
  - Collect vital information from schools which enables the Hub to make timely and effective decisions in a multi agency manner
  - Attend Strategy meetings on behalf of/ with school representatives.
- 2.5 Since the start of the role to present the current DEO's work has been split with 34% of the work focussed on Hartlepool and 66% of the work focussed on Stockton children. The DEO has worked directly on safeguarding referrals with 71% of Hartlepool schools/ colleges and 80% of Stockton schools/ colleges.

**3. Costs**

- 3.1 The current DEO funding expires in March 2017. Ongoing costs for the role to continue are as follows: Band 13 role - £51,000 including on costs.

#### 4. Options

- 4.1 There are a number of options for the DEO role including -

	Option	Pros	Cons
1.	Allow the post to come to an end. No longer fund the role.	Schools will not be expected to fund the role.	<p>To cease funding an education presence in the Hub would not be in line with positive verbal feedback received from head teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads to date since The Children's Hub became operational.</p> <p>The Hub will no longer have a dedicated education specialist in the team. Schools will no longer have a 'go to' contact for general safeguarding advice.</p> <p>Schools will need to participate fully in strategies and supply the Hub with all information relevant to a safeguarding enquiry.</p> <p>DEO would no longer be able to contribute to training for Designated Safeguarding Leads. DEO's combined knowledge and understanding of both education and social care systems currently allows for strong development of referral process for schools and is useful within this training. Current DEO dual qualified as teacher and social worker. Enhanced knowledge and skills.</p> <p>National research consistently shows that a dedicated education specialist is vital to the effectiveness of a MASH (CHub).</p> <p>Ofsted has noted that the DEO role is extremely useful and showing good results.</p>
2.	Stockton schools to fund 66% of the role and Hartlepool schools to fund 34% of the	<p>If all schools agreed this would equate to -</p> <p>Stockton schools £33,660 / £406 per school if ALL schools contribute</p> <p>Hartlepool schools £17,340 / £495 per school if ALL schools</p>	Not all schools would necessarily use the role fully if they had no safeguarding concerns in that year.

	role. This could be reviewed and adjusted annually.	participate.  Ongoing partnership between individual education settings and DEO allows schools to provide evidence of Good if not Outstanding practice in relation to safeguarding within certain areas of School Evaluation Form required by OFSTED.	
3.	Schools choose to 'buy back' into the DEO role.	Schools can buy the service if they feel it adds value to their safeguarding duties.	Difficult for the Hub to administer. The DEO is either an 'all or nothing' role. Cannot offer additional safeguarding support to some children but not others.

## 5. **Recommendations**

- 5.1 Schools Forum is asked to consider the options above and consult with colleagues on a preferred option. Final decision to be made at Schools Forum on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.