

Agenda Item 7 – 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 including recent consultation findings
- Outline funding options for the role for 2019/20.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Children's Hub is a partnership between Hartlepool Borough Council, Stockton on Tees Borough Council, Cleveland Police, the NHS Foundation Trust (North Tees and Hartlepool/ Harrogate and District) and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust. It began operation on June 1st 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. *Specifically it deals with children not active to social care.*
- 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 where required.
- 2.5 During the period 2016/2017 Hartlepool Borough Council funded the post. During 2017/18 Stockton on Tees schools funded 66% of the post and Hartlepool funded the balance through school reserves. During 2018/19 Hartlepool and Stockton Schools shared the cost of the post proportionately.

3. Costs

3.1 The current DEO funding expires in March 2019. Ongoing costs for the role to continue are as follows: Band 13 role - £52,723 including on costs.

4. Consultation and activity

4.1 In January 2019 all education providers were contacted and asked a number of questions with regards to the DEO role. Appendix 1 shows a summary of the findings and the actions that the Hub will be taking as a result.

4.2 It was clear that there is some confusion around the role of the Children’s Hub and children’s social care generally and where one team’s duty starts and ends. It was also clear that some schools find the role invaluable and have used the DEO proactively where others have not. This would appear to be due to the specific school and the cohort of children they have on role.

4.3 The following is a summary of Hartlepool schools activity in relation to the DEO role:

- The Children’s Hub receives approximately 450 concerns a month from Hartlepool referrers relating to children and young people and the DEO contacts **all** education settings to understand more about the child. This supports decision making in what’s best for the child.
- The DEO has had regular contact with 100% of schools and colleges in Hartlepool including those of maintained, academy and free school status.
- Over 85% of contacts with schools and colleges have been initiated by the DEO seeking crucial information on children and young people at risk of harm.
- The DEO has responded directly to 47 concerns specifically raised by Hartlepool schools in which they sought DEO advice and guidance.
- 15% of the DEOs engagement with Hartlepool education providers were RAG rated ‘red’ – Child in Need of Protection
- 81% of the DEOs engagement with Hartlepool education providers were RAG rated ‘amber’ – potentially a Child in Need or a Child in Need of Protection
- Wherever possible education providers are encouraged to attend Child Protection ‘Strategy’ meetings. On occasion, the DEO attends on their behalf and to date the DEO has attended 20% of all strategy meetings held within the Children’s Hub.
- The DEO has been involved in cluster meetings and attends Designated Teacher meetings when requested.
- The DEO undertakes regular audits of referrals that come from education providers in order to support appropriate and good quality referrals.

5.0 Options

5.1 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. Ongoing inspections have highlighted the role as excellent practice. National research	To cease funding an education presence in the CHub 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. The CHub will no longer have a dedicated

		<p>consistently shows that a dedicated education specialist is vital to the effectiveness of a safeguarding hub (CHub).</p> <p>The current DEO is a qualified teacher and has a clear understanding of the education system.</p>	<p>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 CHub with all information relevant to a safeguarding enquiry.</p> <p>DEO would no longer be able to contribute to training for Designated Safeguarding Leads.</p> <p>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.</p>
2.	<p>Stockton schools to fund 66% of the role and Hartlepool schools to fund 34% of the role.</p>	<p>If all schools agreed this would equate to - Hartlepool schools £505 per school if ALL schools contribute.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Not all schools would necessarily use the role fully if they had no safeguarding concerns in that year.</p> <p>Some schools may have low levels (or no) contact with the DEO if the majority of their cohort was already a CiN as the DEO only deals with children with no current active worker.</p>
3.	<p>Schools choose to 'buy back' into the DEO role.</p>	<p>Schools can buy the service if they feel it adds value to their safeguarding duties.</p>	<p>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.</p>

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 xxxx**