

**Agenda Item 4 – Designated Education Officer Proposal 2023/24**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek funding for the Designated Education Officer role (DEO) for 2023/24.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The DEO post was introduced into The Children's Hub in September 2016 and up until April 2019 has been funded by Hartlepool and Stockton on Tees Schools. In 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22, it was agreed to use reserves generated from the reduced cost of the Trade Union supply cover de-delegated service to cover Hartlepool's contribution to the post, with Stockton schools continuing their pro rata share.
- 2.2 As reserves funding was no longer available from 2022/23, Schools' Forum agreed that each school would contribute on the basis of pupil numbers at an estimated rate per pupil of £1.41. It was also agreed that contributions (at a flat rate) would be sought from further education and early years settings.
- 2.3 The required Hartlepool contribution to the DEO role in 2023/24 is £19,720.

**3. Purpose of the role**

- 3.1 In summary, the purpose of the DEO post is to provide support to schools to ensure that children receive the right support at the right time. The DEO provides education expertise within the team, contributing to the assessment of referrals received.
- 3.2 The DEO liaises with schools and interprets and shares information as necessary to safeguard and/ or promote the welfare of children. In essence, this means that the DEO contacts all schools to discuss children who are subject to Children's Hub enquiries to ensure both the voice of child and the school is heard.
- 3.3 Hartlepool schools fund 34% of the DEO's time and costs and Stockton schools fund 66% of the DEO's time and costs.

**4. Hartlepool Activity**

- 4.1 The DEO responded to/serviced 206 HBC CHUB Dashboard information requests between June 2022 and November 2022. Due to an IT issue data pre June 2022 has been lost. Taking in to account the months of July and August, when it is school holidays, the average monthly Dashboard information requests for HBC are roughly 68 which is an increase on 2021/22. CHUB Dashboard information requests relate to safeguarding referrals made to the CHUB from various different agencies. The DEO's role is to make contact with relevant HBC schools, share proportionate information about the nature of the safeguarding referral made to the CHUB, gather

schools views/feedback (which can often include the child's views about what happened and about their home life) and report back to the CHUB Social Workers and Team Managers, via the CHUB Dashboard, to assist in decision making.

- 4.2 The DEO also responded to approximately 29 telephone calls (likely to be more) relating to advice and guidance from HBC schools between June 2022 and November 2022.
- 4.3 Between June 2022 and November 2022, the DEO was involved in around 5 HBC CHUB Strategy Meetings (the actual figure for CHUB Strategy Meetings relating to school-aged children is higher than this but this figure relates to the number of CHUB Strategy Meetings which the DEO was directly involved in). The DEO is responsible for inviting schools to and preparing schools for CHUB Strategy Meetings. The DEO also attends Strategy Meetings on behalf of HBC schools when they are unable to attend themselves. Strategy Meeting attendance for HBC schools between June 2022 and November 2022 was 81% however this does include the school holiday period where attendance did dip significantly this year, as mentioned later in this report. During term time, strategy meeting attendance by schools is usually 100%.
- 4.4 In addition to the daily business of the CHUB in relation to safeguarding referrals:
- The DEO attends the Safeguarding in Education meeting for Hartlepool and the Schools Safeguarding forum for Stockton when she provides an update from the CHUB. This can include anything from data and statistics to key messages from the CHUB to schools. The DEO attends planning meetings for both of these forums and contributes to suggestions/items on the agenda.
  - The DEO constantly fields and responds to calls and emails regarding Operation Encompass and has been instrumental in advocating and representing HBC Schools' dissatisfaction and views about the Operation Encompass process adopted by Cleveland Police.
  - The DEO has linked in with the new schools safeguarding supervision managers, to discuss each of their roles and to ensure they were working collaboratively. Prior to these roles coming to an end, the DEO attended a meeting to share key themes identified and areas to look at. These have been fed back to heads of service.
  - The DEO has forged links with counterparts in neighbouring local authority areas and they are looking to create a network meeting to share best practice and discuss any trends or themes across Tees.
  - The DEO carries out audits of SAFER referrals to the CHUB from Education providers to identify any trends or themes and then feeds this back to schools for their learning/development/improvement.
  - The DEO has provided training/guidance at the safeguarding forums around how to complete a good SAFER referral and what schools need to include to ensure that referrals are appropriately triaged in the CHUB and to ensure that children received the right service/response at the right time.
  - The DEO also receives quarterly performance data about how many referrals to the CHUB were made by education providers and then this is used to collate data about the outcomes of those referrals and to identify any themes, areas of weakness and

areas for development/training as well as examples of positive practice/responses by schools.

- The DEO collates a list of 'emergency' school holiday contacts to ensure that the CHUB can invite schools to any Strategy Meetings and/or contact/consult with them in emergency situations during the school holiday periods. Last year, this resulted in the CHUB having almost 100% attendance from schools during the summer holiday period which was relayed to all Head Teachers across HBC. However, in the most recent summer holiday period this dropped despite the invites being sent out as normal by the DEO. Out of the invites sent out during the summer holiday period, 47% were attended by **all** schools invited to the strategy, 71% were attended by one of the settings invited, 12% had an update provided for DEO to share and 29% were not attended by school or provided with an update to share. This will be communicated to HBC schools at the next Safeguarding Education meeting.
- The DEO is well-established in the CHUB and is well-known, respected and relied upon by education colleagues across HBC. The DEO has worked very hard to develop positive professional relationships with HBC schools over the past five years. Views and feedback from HBC schools about the DEO role and the support which she provides has been nothing but positive and the DEO believes that they feel well supported by her and that, when needed, she is an advocate for them.
- The DEO has been involved in visits to neighbouring local authorities to share best practice and highlight any areas where we could improve the way we work.
- The DEO requested all schools to set up a specific safeguarding email address and has collated this list. This list has been shared with social work teams in HBC and SBC. The DEO has developed a new email pro-forma to send to schools in order to gather Dashboard information quickly and to help deal with increase in workload/demand.
- The DEO has been involved in a Rapid Review.
- The DEO has been involved in CHUB multi-agency audit days to represent Education and will continue to be involved in these moving forward.
- The DEO has supported MACE with regards to concerns around Education provision and has linked in with the Virtual school to support this.

## **5. Costings**

5.1 The expected cost of the DEO role in 2023/24 is £58,000. Stockton on Tees Borough Council have agreed to contribute 64% which is £37,120.

5.2 The requested contribution from Hartlepool for 2023/24 is £19,720. After seeking a contribution from other education providers (Early Years and Post-16), the net cost across Hartlepool Schools is estimated at £17,315.

5.3 The contribution could be split using either:

- Option 1: equal share per school at a cost of £481;
- Option 2: charge per pupil at an estimated cost of £1.30 per pupil (to be updated for October 2022 pupil numbers);
- Option 3: use of the former de-delegated service reserves for Trade Union Facility Time (£14.5k as at 1 April 2022), with the remainder being funded using either Option 1 or Option 2 (costs would be amended as appropriate).

## 6. **Recommendations**

6.1 Schools Forum is asked to:

- Approve the 2023/24 contribution to the DEO role – total funding of £19,720 (£17,315 from Hartlepool Schools and £2,405 from other education establishments);
- Agree the preferred option (1, 2 or 3) for allocation of the contribution to each school.

**Please note: All Forum Members are entitled to vote on this item.**