

## **Report of the Cabinet Member: Children, Schools and Skills**

I have been asked to report by Councillor's Hannaford and Owen on '*Exeter's Children Centre contracts and restructure, including the move to one provider, impact on other organisations and age range change*'.

I have also been asked to report, by Councillor Hannaford on '*Apprenticeships Levy & Schools*'.

### **Exeter's Children Centre Contracts and Restructure**

The planned procurement of the Exeter/East and Mid Devon Children's Centre was delayed by one year to explore the possibility of jointly commissioning the Public Health Nursing Service and the Children's Centre Service.

Commissioning of the public health nursing service was consulted upon recently and the decision was made to continue to deliver the service until March 31st 2019 through the Integrated Children's Service contract (ICS) with Virgin Care. Therefore the Children's Centre contract will be re-commissioned independently taking fully into account the intentions for public health nursing.

Plans for public health nursing from April 2019 are in development and we expect to align the re-commissioning of the Integrated Children's Services for community health and care support services to the re-commissioning of children's centres; setting out a development plan to improve joint working and aligned outcomes for families with young children.

The Children's Centre pre-procurement work is currently underway and it is anticipated that the tender for one county contract will go live at the beginning of July with contract award by December 2017. The decision to move to a single contract model followed the evaluation of the two recent tenders that brought six district council areas under one provider, and was an operational matter. The change will generate the efficiencies which will be used to extend the service to more children and families, providing better and more targeted support with the expectation of improved social and health outcomes. As part of the pre-procurement a Market Warming event will take place to stimulate providers to look at partnership/collaborative bids. Smaller providers who want to continue but don't want to scale up can explore and instigate partnership working with other interested providers. There will be opportunities for briefing sessions for the new council and local members prior to the award of contract.

The Children's Centres have been working with families with primary age children for many years through the targeted families programme. Formalising the age range within the Children's Centre contract will allow us to capture the valuable work they do and evidence that their intervention improves outcomes for families with multiple

age children. The proposed changes to the contract, including raising the age range to children under 8, have been very well received by current providers and education colleagues through the Devon Education Forum.

### **Apprenticeships Levy & Schools'**

The new apprenticeship levy applies to any employer with an annual pay bill of £3m or more. 0.5% of the annual pay bill has to be paid into an online digital levy account, which the employer can then only use to fund apprenticeship training and assessment for its employees.

Community and Voluntary Controlled schools will collectively contribute £0.42m to the Council's levy.

Voluntary Aided, Foundation and Academy schools are treated separately and their eligibility for payment of the levy will depend upon whether or not their individual annual pay bill is more than £3m per annum.

The Local Government Association (LGA) have been lobbying to exempt schools, but to date we are not aware of any change in policy.

We have been communicating with schools about the changes. Community and Voluntary Controlled schools have been provided with an indicative figure to include within their budgets. HR will advise schools on how they can access the money in the Council's digital levy account to fund apprenticeship training, early in the summer term.

We are suggesting that schools might want to use the reforms as an opportunity to review their workforce resourcing and existing development needs and how they could use apprenticeship qualifications to support those needs. Within the schools sector, there are national developments to enable schools to make better use of apprenticeship qualifications, including the development of new Teaching Assistant, Business Management and a Teacher Apprenticeship Standard.

The Department for Education have also recently issued guidance to schools, which stresses that 'Apprenticeships are a great way for schools to improve the skills base of their employees... to recruit new staff, and to re-train or upskill existing staff of all ages and levels of experience, in a wide variety of roles'. Their guidance includes an appendix which maps the schools workforce to current and developing apprenticeship qualifications.

We appreciate that schools will inevitably be concerned, but the Council has to comply with the Government's policy and we are doing all we can to clarify the position for them.

**Councillor James McInnes  
Cabinet Member for  
Children, Schools and Skills**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-reforms-guide-for-schools>