
SUBJECT: Specialist SEND Early Years Provision

DATE: January 2023

RECIPIENT: Schools Forum

SUMMARY:

Southampton City Council have identified the need for specialist early years intervention provision for children in the city with SEND.

This is reflected in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and is a high priority.

A possible provider has been identified to deliver this provision and a possible site has also been identified.

BACKGROUND and BRIEFING DETAILS:

Possible Provider

Dingley's Promise is a Berkshire based registered charity which already has an early years training presence in Southampton.

[About Us – Dingley's Promise](#)

Dingley's Promise aims to:

- Seek excellence in specialist early years intervention
- Develop a greater inclusion and enable more children to access mainstream settings
- Help families to access the appropriate support services for their child's needs
- Ensure every child transitions into the best educational setting for them

Dingley's Promise currently operates from three centres in Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham with a fourth centre due to open in Gloucester at the end of January 2023. Their model builds close links with existing mainstream providers and aims to ensure that children, and their families, are supported to move between mainstream and specialist provision as their needs evolve.

Southampton SEND Team have already been in conversation with Dingley's Promise with a view to considering the procurement of a provision in Southampton.

Possible site

YMCA Fairthorne Group are seeking new providers for 11 of their 18 Hampshire early years settings, including four settings in Southampton.

This decision was taken unexpectedly and at short notice and was announced to the press on September 30th:

[Important message from YMCA about Early Years - YMCA Fairthorne Group \(ymca-fg.org\)](#)

Currently the date for Fairthorne withdrawing as provider is January 31st 2023 although we are in negotiation with them to continue the service until the 1st March 2023 to allow the decision making regarding Dingley's Promise to take place and the correct procurement routes to be followed, possibly for a two year pilot

The provision at the setting in Newtown is located in a purpose built £1.8m facility commissioned and owned by Southampton City Council. The site includes:

- 60 place nursery across two rooms that can operate separately or together
- office
- outdoor space
- storage
- accessible toilet,

Currently only 18 of the 60 registered places are filled.

The CEO of Dingley's Promise has met with the existing staff and is confident that they would form a sound staff base for the new specialist provision were it to be approved.

Current position

Dingley's Promise have expressed an interest in working with Southampton City Council to lease the building from them on a full repairing lease to deliver the specialist service.

In taking on the lease they would commit to supporting the transition to alternative suitable early years provision for those children who are not assessed as needing the specialist intervention.

Specialist services would then be offered to up to 50 Southampton families per year with an average of 20 accessing the provision at any one time owing to the high levels of need.

RESOURCE/POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

As things have moved extremely quickly given the sudden availability of the Newtown site, we do not have exact costings for the provision. However, the provision in Gloucester is a very similar programme and is c£170k p.a.

In the first year this is likely to be funded through family hub funding and high needs funding thereafter but should be cost neutral in terms of the funding already attracted by these children in their early years setting.

OPTIONS and TIMESCALES:

Pending the support of the Schools' Forum the current timeframe would see Dingley's Promise take over the site and the staffing from March 1st 2023.

From March the existing mainstream children would continue to be supported until mainstream places can be found for them.

From September 2023 the provision would be solely specialist SEND.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The main risk to the programme is the successful transition of the existing mainstream children to a suitable new setting.

Darrin Hunter is currently in liaison with Maytree School and believes that this is achievable within the given timeframe.

Appendices/Supporting Information:

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