

POLICY FOR THE EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE CAPITAL GRANT

25 June 2021



Working for a brighter future together

OFFICIAL

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty to ensure all eligible children aged 2, 3 and 4 years can access their free early education entitlement, and there is sufficient childcare available to support the needs of parents accessing work and training.
- 1.2. Increased support from the government for children to access childcare increases the demand for places:
 - funding 15 hours a week of free childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds – an increase from 12.5 hours
 - funding 30 hours a week of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds in households where both parents work – an increase from 15 hours
 - funding 15 hours a week of free childcare for all disadvantaged 2 year olds – for 40% of all 2 year olds
 - legislating for tax free childcare which will save around 1.9 million working families with children under age 12 up to £2,000 per child per year
 - increasing child tax credit entitlement up to £2,780 per year for families with one child, £480 more a year than 2010.
- 1.3. Over 80% of the free entitlement in Cheshire East is delivered by the private / voluntary / independent sector, and less than 20% in schools. These sectors are responsive to change but their opportunities to expand are often limited by access to capital. The DfE recognises this and has made capital available.
- 1.4. The introduction of the 2 year old entitlement was supported by a capital programme from the DfE where each locally authority area was awarded an allocation.
- 1.5. The DfE capital programme to support introduction of 30 hours free childcare was via a bidding process where local authorities were invited to submit a maximum number of project proposals. Cheshire East was invited to submit 6 proposals and all 6 were successfully funded.
- 1.6. It is not anticipated that the DfE will make further capital available. However, the demand for 30 hours childcare can not be met from 6 projects alone; children eligible to 30 hours will be dispersed across the whole borough.
- 1.7. Capital funding to address childcare sufficiency may be made available by the Council to assist in meeting statutory duties and support the following corporate objectives:
 - Support all children to have the best start in life
 - Increase the opportunities for children, young adults and adults with additional needs
 - Ensure all children to have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential
 - Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all.
- 1.8. Capital may be awarded to childcare providers to extend existing or create new provision. The key criteria for funding being the creation of additional capacity in areas of need. The capital can not be used to improve the quality of existing provision.

2. LEGAL AND BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

2.1. The budget for 2021-22 is £66,354.21.

2.2. All grant decisions will be made based on the set of principles, set out in this Policy, and within the agreed budget approved by Council each year. The budget for the grants is managed carefully and flexibly to ensure that the Council has money available throughout the year. As far as possible the Council tries to ensure that no one is disadvantaged due to the time of year they apply.

2.3. Given the fixed budget and the Council's aim to benefit as many organisations as possible, the Council cannot guarantee to fund the maximum amount applied for; therefore organisations must ensure that they have procedures in place to cover the balance of funding required. The Council will not pay a grant unless the organisation can demonstrate that the balance of the funding is available.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

3.1. The Early Years and Childcare Capital Grant scheme operates within set criteria, agreed by the Director of Children's Services and relevant Council Officers in line with the Council's Corporate Outcomes.

How to apply

3.2. Applications for Early Years and Childcare Capital Grants must be made using the Council's current Early Years and Childcare Capital Grants application form and associated guidance notes that are available on the Council's website and as a paper version on request.

3.3. The application form must be completed in full. Incomplete application forms will not be considered and will be returned to you, which could cause a delay or deferral to your application. A copy of the organisation's up-to-date signed Governing Document and Safeguarding Policies must be sent with the application form. If this is not received the application will be deferred to the next round of evaluation and may result in the application being declined. Supporting documentation (listed on the application form) may also be requested prior to the application being fully considered. Failure to supply all required documentation will result in the application being treated as incomplete.

3.4. An organisation can only apply for one project per application and one application per financial year can be submitted.

3.5. The closing dates for receipt and acceptance of complete applications are published on the Cheshire East council website and the CHEST at the time when applications are invited. Applications are not invited at any other times.

3.6. Grants cannot be paid retrospectively therefore any work commenced prior to acceptance of the grant offer will not be eligible for funding.

3.7. All successful applicants will be required to complete a post grant monitoring report as per section 5.0 of this Policy.

3.8. What can be funded

3.9. Capital schemes to create additional early years and childcare places in Cheshire East in areas of need identified in the latest Childcare Sufficiency Assessment conducted by the council.

3.10. What cannot be funded

- Work which has already taken place before acceptance of the grant offer;
- Vehicle purchase;
- Loan against loss or debt;
- Running Costs i.e. salaries, rent, utilities, etc.
- Paying someone to write your application or applications to other grant funders;
- Land purchase;
- Items that are purchased on behalf of another organisation.

3.11. Who can apply

3.12. To qualify for a grant organisations must meet the criteria listed below:

- Operate within the Cheshire East area;
- Provide value for money;
- Have a set of audited accounts, or as a minimum an organisation bank statement, and are able to provide such information as the Council reasonably requires in order to satisfy the Council as to the organisation's financial position and its need for the assistance requested;
- If a voluntary sector organisation, have a management committee with an up-to-date Governing Document which must be signed by at least two members of the committee who are unrelated to each other;
- Have appropriate safeguarding policies relevant to their organisation, which must include a requirement that staff / volunteers are cleared with the Disclosure and Barring Service where appropriate;
- Have a bank or building society account in the name of the organisation applying with at least two signatories;
- Complete the current application form in full, providing all required information;
- Have not already received a grant from this programme within the current financial year.

3.13. Criteria for Funding

3.14. Priority will be given to organisations and projects that:

- 3.14.1 Create childcare provision in areas of need identified in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment or any other supplementary assessments conducted by the council
- 3.14.2 The project is easily reached – close proximity to families requiring childcare attracts a higher score
- 3.14.3 Have attained a high Ofsted grade at last inspection
- 3.14.4 Have a low level of grant funding per childcare place created
- 3.14.5 Request the lowest proportion of the budget available
- 3.14.6 Have a high level of applicant investment
- 3.14.7 Create a high number of new childcare places

3.15. There is a limited amount of funding available. The funding is intended to benefit as many organisations as possible over time, provide one-off funding for projects and to support new initiatives. It is not intended that grants will provide repeat funding or that organisations become reliant on this grant funding as a regular source of income.

3.16. General Conditions

- 3.16.1. All grants will be subject to a contract.
- 3.16.2. Grants are classed as one-off and should not be seen as repeat funding;
- 3.16.3. Annual applications from the same organisation for the same purpose will not be considered;
- 3.16.4. Grants are valid for a period set out in the contract and will be paid in advance of completion of the project. A report and invoices or receipts must be forwarded to the Council on completion of the project in accordance with the contract;
- 3.16.5. If the project involves work on land or a building, including refurbishment, the applicant must own the freehold of the land or building, or hold a lease and landlord approval that cannot be brought to an end by the landlord for at least 5 years;
- 3.16.6. The Council may ask for confirmation that planning permission is not required, or that it is required and has been granted. If planning permission is required, planning permission must be approved before the grant is paid;
- 3.16.7. Organisations must be able to participate in a monitoring process and provide monitoring information to evidence how the grant money has been spent and adherence to the conditions of the grant. This must include receipts or invoices and a written report of the project, plus photographs, on completion;
- 3.16.8. Organisations must acknowledge the support of Cheshire East Council in press releases, publicity and advertising etc.;
- 3.16.9. The organisation will allow Cheshire East Council to use details of the grant award, together with any relevant photographs supplied, in newsletters and on the Council's website;
- 3.16.10. Expenditure must not be incurred on the project prior to the grant decision being given. In these circumstances the Council will withdraw the grant offer/rescind the grant decision;
- 3.16.11. Organisations must notify the Council of any changes in circumstances which affect their financial position throughout the period in which the grant monies are being used;
- 3.16.12. The grant must only be used for the purposes specifically stated in the application form, should it be spent in any other way, without written approval from the Council, the organisation may be asked to return some or all of the monies paid;
- 3.16.13. If the project is cancelled or only partially achieved, or if the organisation is wound up, some or all of the grant may be recovered by the Council;
- 3.16.14. All conditions under which the grant has been awarded, including any Special Conditions, must be met. Failure to do so could result in the organisation being asked to repay the grant monies to the Council.

4. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- 4.1. The grant applications will initially be assessed by the Early Start Manager and Childcare Development Manager, in consultation with officers from other council departments as appropriate, against a scoring criteria based on the priorities outlined in 3.11.1.
- 4.2. Having assessed all applications a Recommendations Report is prepared for consideration and approval by
 - Amounts up to and including £50,000 (where grant is within approved grant policy and fully funded) – Head of Service, Early Help and Prevention
 - Amounts between £50,000 and £100,000 (where grant is within approved grant policy and fully funded) the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Chair of the Children and Families Committee and Chair of Finance Sub-Committee.

- 4.3. Organisations will be notified to inform them of whether they have been recommended for approval or not within 12 weeks after the closing date for each round of applications.
- 4.4. Complaints about any aspect of the grant process will be dealt with under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. A copy of the Council's Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Policy is available from the Council's website.

5. MONITORING AND RECORD KEEPING

- 5.1. Following a successful application and in order to ensure that monies are used in an appropriate manner, as set out in this Policy and the funding contract, a monitoring report will be required following project completion. This report shall include, but shall not be limited to, how many people benefitted from the project, how the grant money was used and what difference the project made to local people.
- 5.2. Invoices, receipts and photographs must be made available to the Council on request.
- 5.3. Invoices or receipts dated prior to the date of the funding contract will not be accepted or reimbursed.
- 5.4. The Council reserves the right to monitor the use of the grant and ask for evidence to support an application.
- 5.5. The organisation must allow reasonable access to premises/accounts upon request from the Council.
- 5.6. Organisations must retain records relating to the grant for an appropriate period (to be confirmed in the contract).
- 5.7. If organisations do not supply satisfactory monitoring reports and supporting information in full and within the set time scale they may be asked to repay the grant funding to the Council. Failure to comply with the conditions of this grant may be taken into account when considering any further applications for grant funding made by the same organisation in the future.