

New project: DfE LA childcare sufficiency support.

A briefing for local authorities

14 March 2023.

1 Introduction.

We would like to introduce you to a new Hemp'sall's project commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) April 2023 to March 2025. This briefing has been prepared for local authority early years teams and sets out how you may become involved in the project.

2 Project aims.

The project's aim is to provide a package of delivery support to local authorities in fulfilling sufficiency duties, ensuring there is enough available childcare places across local areas. So all young children are enabled to access high-quality early years provision and to meet the demand for childcare for school-aged children.

3 Project scope.

The scope covers LA sufficiency duties for high-quality childcare supply for early years and childcare places 0-14 years old, or 0-17 for disabled children, including activities to support:

- change, sufficiency and sustainability
- childcare market management
- funding and the economic climate
- responding to the continuing effects of the pandemic
- and sufficiency duty reporting (annually).

4 Project activities.

The project activities include:

- a) *Reactive* work with LAs through referral from DfE where there is clear evidence and identified challenges or current risks in the LA meeting its sufficiency duties.
- b) *Proactive* work with LAs for preventative or improvement support through self-referral from LAs, where there may be emerging risks in the LA meeting its sufficiency duties.
- c) The enabling, facilitation, and coordination of one-to-one (and/or small group) *peer support*.

- d) The coordination of a *fund* to help unblock some financial barriers (where they exist) and enable progress of specific actions identified and recommended through the reactive and proactive action planning support functions.

The project activities do not include:

- allocating named contact advisers to LAs on an on-going basis
- general helpdesk support for questions, clarifications and queries.
- regional group meetings.

5 DfE role.

The department will retain the following functions:

- Maintain named contact relationships with all LAs, holding regular keep-in-touch meetings, and being available for questions, clarifications and queries.
- Identify risk and challenge via contact activities and refer support needs to Hemsall's as necessary.

6 How to get involved in the programme.

- 1) Speak with your named DfE contact if you have sufficiency challenges and needs during your regular one-to-one catch ups (or regional meetings). DfE may make a referral on your behalf or ask you to make a self-referral for any support needs.
- 2) Complete the self-referral form and return to Hemsall's.
- 3) Become a peer supporter of other LAs.

7 Project processes.

- 1) Referrals and self-referrals will be checked against the agreed criteria, and prioritised according to need and demand, and potential difference to be made by the support. A decision will be made about approving the referral. DfE will then make the final decision on whether to agree to the support work.
- 2) Hemsall's will undertake an initial assessment with the LA, with a detailed diagnosis and RAG rating of the issues, to determine the nature and level of support required. This will include an overview of recommended actions and timescales. DfE will agree the final action plan.
- 3) The LA will be allocated a suitable Hemsall's adviser to further develop the action plan and support the LA through the action plan.
- 4) The adviser will connect the LA with peer support if appropriate.
- 5) The adviser will assist the LA in applying for funding to support specific measures identified through the support phase, where financial barriers exist. The application will be signed off by a Hemsall's senior expert adviser and provided to DfE for approval.
- 6) At the end of the action plan and support, an evaluation meeting will be held with the LA, DfE and Hemsall's adviser to review the impact of the support, and any next steps.

- 7) The LA will be required to complete a service satisfaction survey and return it to Hemsall's.
- 8) A final report will be submitted by Hemsall's to the LA and DfE. This may include agreed case study content for the benefit of other LAs in the programme.

8 Contact.

If you would like to request some support, please contact us for a proactive support referral form sufficiency@hemsalls.com

Appendix One: Application for Proactive Support (Local Authority Self-Referral Process)

