

Herts for Learning Ltd

On behalf of

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Martins Wood Primary School

Mildmay Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 5RT

Unique Reference Number: 117285

Inspection Number: 10207184

DfE Number: 919/2341

Inspection Dates: 16–18 November 2021

LA STATEMENT OF ACTION

January 2022



Introduction

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) commissions Herts for Learning (HfL) to deliver the statutory school improvement functions of the Local Authority (LA) by providing a robust and high-quality school improvement and advisory service. Herts for Learning (as the former LA school improvement service) is well-placed to support the school throughout the period of the plan. There are clear, well-established and effective procedures for supporting schools placed in Ofsted categories. All schools in an Ofsted category are monitored by an Action Group (AG), which is established and led by a senior HfL adviser linked to the school. The AG can draw on expertise from across the school improvement service as needed, including governance, finance, human resources, safeguarding, the curriculum as well as school leadership and management.

Description of the School

Martins Wood is significantly larger than the average sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has a pre-school. The nursery provides education for some children part time and others who attend for 30 hours a week.

Support for the school in preparing and monitoring the implementation of its improvement plan

- On behalf of the LA, HfL advisers will support the school to prepare its revised improvement plan.
- The LA has brokered additional advisory expertise from Herts for Learning. This will provide effective support for the school until it becomes a sponsored academy and beyond that time, if the sponsoring academy trust so decides.
- The action group, chaired by a senior HfL adviser, will monitor the impact of the school's improvement plan and the effectiveness of the support provided.
- A senior school effectiveness adviser, the interim acting headteacher and chair of the governing body/interim executive board have oversight of the school's revised improvement plan.

EXERCISE OF LA POWERS - Scope for closure, federation or change of status to academy school

Martins Wood Primary School sits in the Stevenage North East A primary planning area (5.7) where there are four primary schools and a linked infant and junior school, between them currently offering a total of 330 permanent reception places (please note that The Leys Primary and Nursery School applied for an In Year Variation in summer 2021 to reduce the school's PAN from 75 to 60, this has been approved by the OSA – but is not reflected in the primary forecast which was produced prior to this decision being approved – see forecast table below).

Since 2012, an additional 5fe of permanent capacity has been implemented in Stevenage town to meet a rising need and ensure all local children could access a reception place. The county council has also temporarily expanded schools in a number of years providing additional places to meet a local temporary demand.

Martins Wood Primary School temporarily expanded by 30 places in 2011 to assist in meeting this local temporary demand and was permanently expanded from 2012 (to 3fe). The Giles Infant School which sits in the same primary planning area was also permanently expanded from 2014 and the linked Giles Junior School from 2017 to 3fe to meet demand locally.

The 2021 summer forecast for Stevenage North East A is shown in the table below:

5.7 Stevenage North East A										
School Code	School Name	Places Available 2021-22	Actuals			Forecast				
			2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
2341	Martins Wood Primary School	90	87	88	89					
2353	Trotts Hill Primary and Nursery School	30	29	30	30					
2365	Round Diamond Primary School	60	59	59	59					
2394	The Giles Infant and Nursery School	90	91	85	87					
2465	The Leys Primary and Nursery School	75	54	50	52					
Total Year R Pupil Demand			320	312	317	306	311	297	278	295
Total Year R Places Available		345				345	345	345	345	345
Surplus or Shortage of Year R Places (No.)						39	34	48	67	50
Surplus or Shortage of Year R Places (%)						11.3%	9.9%	13.9%	19.4%	14.5%
Surplus or Shortage of Year R Places (FE)						1.3	1.1	1.6	2.2	1.7

The forecast indicates a surplus of places from 2021/22 onwards, even with the reduction of 15 places at The Leys Primary and Nursery School from autumn 2021. There is currently movement of pupils across the north of Stevenage for primary school places. The Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan includes significant housing growth within and around the edge of Stevenage, which will increase pupil demand across the area. The County Council continues to monitor demand closely and will formulate strategies to ensure sufficient school places are made available to meet demand for the remainder of the forecast years.

There are some surplus places across all year groups in the area currently (School Census Autumn 2021):

School Name	PAN	Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Martins Wood Primary	90	77	90	85	86	81	88	79
Trotts Hill Primary and Nursery	30	29	30	29	30	30	30	29
Round Diamond Primary	60	60	59	59	57	59	56	61
Giles Junior					71	86	86	88
Giles Nursery and Infants	90	72	85	88				
Leys Primary & Nursery (The)	60	53	56	57	47	58	70	62
Total	330	291	320	318	291	314	330	319
Surplus		39	10	12	39	16	15	26

*Please note that for Reception to Year 4 at The Leys Primary the PAN is 60, but for Year 5 and Year 6, the PAN currently stands at 75.

Due to the low pupil numbers on roll at The Leys Primary and Nursery School, the PAN has been reduced from 75 to 60, from September 2021. In the long term, the County Council is keen to maintain the current level of capacity available across the town to meet the needs arising from new housing and shifting migration trends, particularly in light of the significant new housing growth proposed to the north of Stevenage.

Given this context, it is considered that all primary places currently available across the area are required to meet forecast need for the future.

Therefore, to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet the demand for primary places in the area, the LA will take action to support the school to become a sponsored academy.

Summary of actions by the LA since the inspection

Given the context outlined above, additional support from the LA (through HfL) began immediately after the inspection. This has included:

- removing the governing board and establishing an Interim Executive Board
- the provision of information, immediately after the inspection, to senior leaders and the governing body about the procedure for schools judged inadequate including the statutory guidance relating to the Secretary of State's duty to issue an academy order within five days of the final inspection report being received
- the immediate provision of advice to ensure that the school took swift and robust action to begin to address the safeguarding issues identified by the inspection team
- the provision of training specifically targeted to address safeguarding issues identified through the inspection process
- swift and substantial help with school improvement planning to draft, with the headteacher and SLT, a revised school improvement plan clearly setting out the intended outcomes and management actions required to bring them about
- advice on managing the press and other communications
- organisation of, and attendance at, a meeting for parents to inform them about the LA's procedures and the implications of the school being judged inadequate and to have serious weaknesses
- advice from the Child Protection School Liaison Officer (CPSLO) team about safeguarding policy and practice
- further exploration of the concerns noted during the inspection by LA CPSLO team.

The LA's support to facilitate the school's change of status to sponsored academy

- The LA is committed to taking all reasonable steps to facilitate the sponsorship of the school by an academy trust by a date determined by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). In order to fulfil its duties to facilitate conversion the LA will:
 - provide reasonable and timely access to the sponsor identified by the RSC and its agents, to information necessary for the conversion and for access to the school premises in furtherance of the conversion process
 - provide data and information, including where appropriate, information on pupil performance and tracking data
 - drafting of, and agreement on, a Commercial Transfer Agreement, ensuring it outlines historic and future liabilities, staff and asset information and contracts and agreements

- arrange for the transfer of any existing contracts that the academy trust will continue with post-opening
- provide financial information, including budget statements, internal school budget information and audit reports
- provide land information, including a site plan, details of any shared use and land registration documentation
- agree land and building arrangements with the academy trust and conclude any shared use agreements
- complete the land transfer to the academy trust using the DfE model lease
- complete the TUPE process, including the informal and formal consultation with staff and union representatives in a timely manner
- provide information on staff to the academy trust in good time to allow for due diligence
- provide information on pension arrangements for teaching and non-teaching staff to the academy trust.
- Immediately after the inspection, advice and information was given to the governing body about the DfE's SCC guidance relating to schools that require significant improvement (serious weaknesses).
- The LA liaises closely with the RSC and will support their decision regarding a suitable sponsor, whoever that may be.

Further Action proposed by the LA

- The Education Services Director (Primary) and Operations Director, HCC will liaise closely with the RSC, a representative from the DfE and the agreed sponsor to ensure swift sponsorship (this is underway).
- HCC will ensure relevant LA departments prioritise the sponsorship process and ensure full co-operation with the identified academy sponsor to facilitate the school's swift change of status to 'academy'.
- A senior adviser will co-ordinate the support provided by the LA team and support in the handover to becoming a sponsored academy.
- A senior adviser will continue to work intensively with the leadership of the school to oversee the implementation of the school's improvement planning, and the integration of LA support.
- A LA action plan follows this statement. It summarises the LA's planned action. It will form the basis for the LA's support for school improvement while the school remains a maintained setting.
- The effectiveness of the LA support will be evaluated against the success criteria outlined in the plan.
- In particular, the effectiveness of LA support will be evaluated by: -
 - the Regional Lead (RL) through visits and action group meetings
 - the Education Services Director (Primary), who will monitor and evaluate reports from the above and review progress half-termly with the RL
 - HCC, which will evaluate progress and judge the effectiveness of HfL's actions. This monitoring takes place termly between the operations director (OD), HCC and the ESD (Primary), (HfL).
- The effectiveness of the LA support will be judged against the successful meeting of the success criteria, or progress towards them, for each improvement priority.
- If the school has not already converted to academy status by the beginning of the summer 2023, the LA will formally review the school's progress. This review will be carried out by a review team consisting of two LA advisers independent of the school.
- The LA is confident that the resources currently available to the school, as detailed at the end of this plan, are sufficient to meet the requirements of the Statement of Action.

The commitment of the LA

While the school remains maintained, the LA is committed to:

- monitoring robustly, including through unannounced checks (not scheduled/dated in the plan below), the school’s safeguarding procedures
- monitoring directly and indirectly the improvements required, at least half-termly
- leading school-based INSET and support, and providing access to other training for teaching and support staff, and governance
- advising governance and leaders on their strategic leadership and management roles
- advising and supporting governance in developing and undertaking their roles
- supporting the school in its own efforts to evaluate the quality of provision
- evaluating progress and feeding back to staff, managers and governance
- underwriting additional expenditure to ensure the quality and continuity of support for leaders, managers and governance
- providing advice and support during the process of sponsorship.

Target Date for Securing Improvements

The school will close when it becomes a sponsored academy. Until such time, the LA is committed to ensuring rapid improvement. The LA’s action plan will support the school to make good progress against the key issues during the period leading up to its change of status. The commitments listed above will enable the school to make sufficient progress to ensure that it no longer requires significant improvement and would be ready to be removed from serious weaknesses and judged good at inspection by summer 2023. This plan below is based on three terms of improvement in the lead up to the school becoming a sponsored academy.

Interim Executive board

An Interim Executive Board was authorised by the DfE during January 2022.

Its members comprise serving and recently retired headteachers, a governance expert. The chair is the local authority’s head of school standards and accountability.

Tania Rawle (chair)
 Carole Connelly
 Mark Lewis
 Robert Staples
 Valerie Hudson

Summary of key issues identified

Priority 1 (from inspection report)

Leaders and governors are not using the most up-to-date legal guidance to take all reasonable action to protect the most vulnerable children. Systems for recording concerns exist, but serious concerns are not being referred promptly or at all. This is because leaders and governors do not have enough strategic oversight of systems or processes. Therefore, the most vulnerable pupils do not get the precise and timely support they need. Leaders need to ensure that all staff, including the most senior leaders and governors, are well trained in the most up-to-date legal guidance and

stay abreast of changes and updates. Leaders and governors need to use this guidance to ensure that systems and processes for safeguarding vulnerable pupils are protected.

Priority 2 (from inspection report)

Governance has not checked leaders' work well enough. Therefore, governors are not secure enough in their understanding of pressing priorities, such as for behaviour and safeguarding. Governance needs to ensure that governors have the skills to carry out their safeguarding duties and responsibilities well. Governors need to routinely monitor and review safeguarding practices in the school.

Hertfordshire Support Programme – Strategic Plan for addressing the areas for improvement recorded in the Ofsted inspection report

Key Personnel

Name	Position	Responsibilities
Tom Evans Andrew Carless	Headteacher (HT) Deputy headteacher and interim acting headteacher (DH)	Ensure that the success criteria in the statement of action are met and annotate the school's plan and self-evaluation documentation accordingly Ensure that all school staff engage with the support and training provided
Ms Tania Rawle	Chair of the IEB (C of IEB)	Report to the LA through action group meetings on the impact of the actions taken to improve governance Ensure that all IEB members engage with the training and support provided
Simon Newland	Operations Director, Education, Children's Services, Hertfordshire County Council (OD)	Monitor the progress made by the school and provide regular reports to the Director of Children's Services, and elected Members
Paula Hayden	Acting Team Manager - Child Protection Schools Liaison Team, HCC (CPSLO)	Oversee the provision of safeguarding training, and advice and guidance by CPSLO team members Contribute to the evaluation of the effectiveness of safeguarding training as manager
Heidi Otranen	Regional Lead for the East of Hertfordshire, HfL (RL)	Monitor and evaluate the school's progress against the areas for improvement in the Ofsted report (and the statement of action) Challenge the school where progress is not urgent enough Align the support provided for maximum effect and broker additional support where needed

		Hold the headteacher, IEB and other partners to account for their actions and the impact of them
Kathy Dunnett	Senior Governance Adviser, HfL (SGA)	Provide support to the IEB in relation to (i) developing its strategic role and (ii) the process of academisation
Tracy Warner	Education Services Director (primary), HfL (ESD)	Hold all partners to account for the school's progress towards the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report Liaise with the LA

<p>Improvement Priority 1</p> <p>Leaders and governors are not using the most up to date legal guidance to take all reasonable action to protect the most vulnerable children. Systems for recording concerns exist but serious concerns are not being referred promptly or at all. This is because leaders and governors do not have enough strategic oversight of systems or processes. Therefore, the most vulnerable pupils do not get the precise and timely support they need.</p> <p>Leaders need to ensure that all staff including the most senior leaders and governors are well trained in the most up to date legal guidance and stay abreast of changes and updates. Leaders and governors need to use this guidance to ensure that systems and processes for safeguarding vulnerable pupils are protected.</p>	<p>Improvement Priority 1: Success Criteria by end of autumn term 2022:</p> <p>Leaders and governance have received training relating to current legal guidance.</p> <p>Leaders and governance have established systems to ensure strategic oversight of the leadership and monitoring of safeguarding.</p> <p>Leaders and governance have established and implemented systems to ensure that safeguarding training and expertise is continually updated.</p>	<p>Evaluation:</p> <p>To be completed as criteria are achieved as the result of action taken. See half-termly Action Group minutes for details</p>
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What will success look like against this key issue? / milestones

Start/Review Dates	Success Criteria
End of spring term 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meeting with parents highlights the IEB's acceptance of the issues highlighted in the Ofsted report and their determination to take decisive action to address the areas for improvement. • Training for leaders results in them establishing a clear system and procedures for the systematic oversight of the leadership and monitoring of safeguarding arrangements. • Training for staff results in a common understanding of the principles and practices set out by school policy (and underpinned by legal requirements) • Training leads to improved rigour in record keeping and referral practices. • Training for leaders and governance addresses 'early help' specifically as well as part of broader safeguarding training. • Key safeguarding policies are reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect legal requirements and changes in governance arrangements
End of summer term 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements for the induction of staff joining the school result in new staff being clear about the expectations of them. • External audit of the procedures linked to safeguarding policies confirms that staff and governance adhere to the policies set out.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents express confidence in leaders' and governors' work through questionnaire responses (analysed externally). Governance, particularly the IEB member with oversight of safeguarding, has a clear understanding of the legal requirements relating to record keeping requirements and of the school's practices, and hold leaders to account. External audit confirms that leaders follow reviewed and improved recording and referral practices.
End of autumn term 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External audit confirms the robustness and effectiveness of record keeping, referral procedures and practice. A bespoke safeguarding check collects a broad range of evidence to reassure leaders and governance of the improved safeguarding culture. Leaders and governance are able to reassure themselves that all pupils, and in particular the most vulnerable pupils, are safe as a result of the systems and procedures in place to lead and monitor safeguarding.

Actions:		HfL/HCC lead	School lead	Resources	Date of action	Monitoring			
						When?	Who?	How?	Reported to
a)	<p>ensure that all staff including the most senior leaders and governors are well trained in the most up to date legal guidance and stay abreast of changes and updates.</p> <p>use this guidance to ensure that systems and processes for safeguarding vulnerable pupils are protected effective.</p>								
a)	<p>(given the implementation of an IEB following the removal of the governing body)</p> <p>- IEB members to undertake training in relation to legal responsibilities, including but not limited to, the content of 'Keeping</p>	HCC	(Given the current absence of the headteacher/ DSL and need to act urgently) DH	CPSLO training cost (HCC)	February 2022	Spring term	RL	Scrutiny of action group minutes	ESD

	Children Safe in Education'								
	- safeguarding leaders to undertake bespoke training in relation to the role of the DSL	HCC	DH	CPSLO cost	(January 2022)	Spring term	RL	Scrutiny of action group minutes	ESD
	- all staff to undertake training in relation to the underpinning statutory requirements set out in KCSiE)	HCC	DH	CPSLO cost	(January 2022)	Spring term	RL	Scrutiny of action group minutes	ESD
	- Leaders to set out procedures for routinely receiving updates to legislation and related training opportunities	HCC	DH	CPSLO cost	February 2022	Spring term	RL	Scrutiny of action group minutes	ESD
b)	- establish clear procedures for the systematic leadership and monitoring of safeguarding matters (this is likely to result in the following associated action: set out a clear schedule of safeguarding activity across the year indicating the range of activity required by those in different roles including, but not limited to, governance, safeguarding leaders, senior leaders, teachers, support staff) This will include thorough induction procedures for staff new to the school	HCC/HfL	DH	RL time (4 days)	February 2022	Spring term	RL	Scrutiny of documentation created, and of action group minutes	ESD
	- undertake a review (and subsequent ratification) of all safeguarding related policies, including, but not limited to, 'child protection',	HCC/HfL	DH	Leadership time	Jan to April 2022	Summer term	RL	Scrutiny of action group and IEB minutes	ESD

<p>'behaviour', 'supporting children with medical needs', first aid', 'intimate care', RSE, 'PSHE', 'staff code of conduct', 'governors' code of conduct', 'staff recruitment procedures', 'attendance'</p> <p>- ensure that all staff are aware of, and understand the implications of, changes to policy (through robust staff interviews with all staff)</p> <p>- carry out an external audit to check adherence to policies, staff understanding and governance practice</p> <p>- Scrutinise the school's curriculum for opportunities to teach safeguarding, ensuring that</p> <p>- Carry out a questionnaire to gather parents' views about their confidence in the school's improved safeguarding procedures</p>	HCC/HfL	DH/IEB	Leadership time	April to June 2022	Summer term	RL	Scrutiny of action group minutes and documentation relating to staff interviews	ESD
	HCC/HfL	DH/IEB	Leadership time	May to July (and thereafter built into routine monitoring activity)	Summer term	RL	Scrutiny of action group minutes	ESD
	HfL	AC	Subject leader and senior leader time	April – July	Summer term	RL	Scrutiny of action group minutes	ESD
	HfL	IEB	Time for analysis of responses	July	Summer term	RL	Scrutiny of action group minutes	ESD

<p>Improvement Priority 2</p> <p>Governance has not checked leaders' work well enough. Therefore, governors are not secure enough in their understanding of pressing priorities, such as behaviour and safeguarding.</p> <p>Governance needs to ensure that governors have the skills to carry out their safeguarding duties and</p>	<p>Priority Target 2: Success Criteria by end of autumn term 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The governing board in place at the time of the inspection is removed and an IEB is implemented Governance understands its statutory duties and has the knowledge and understanding to enact them effectively 	<p>Evaluation:</p> <p>- IEB in place January 2022 To be completed as criteria are achieved as the result of action taken. See Action Group minutes for details</p>
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<p>responsibilities well. Governors need to routinely monitor and review safeguarding practices in the school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance has, and demonstrates, a thorough understanding of the current edition of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' • Governance safeguarding responsibilities are set out clearly as part of an overall schedule • Governance adopts a systematic approach to monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding • Governance routinely seeks and collects evidence to reassure itself of the effectiveness of safeguarding • The documented work of governance shows a clear improvement, including in its leadership, challenge and monitoring roles 	
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What will success look like against this key issue? / milestones

Start/Review Dates	Success Criteria
End of spring term 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance has a more refined understanding of its strategic role as a result of training undertaken. • Governance has a more refined understanding of the principles underpinning effective safeguarding because of training undertaken. • Governance understands its responsibilities in relation to safeguarding as a result of training. • Governance has refined the 'governance action plan' in the light of the training received. • Governance has established a clear programme of monitoring and oversight in relation to their safeguarding responsibilities.
End of summer term 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny of governance work, including review of related documentation, indicates that what has been learned through training is implemented effectively. • Staff interviews indicate improved governance monitoring practice. • Governance monitoring of the effectiveness of safeguarding is robust and thorough. • External scrutiny confirms the effectiveness of governance regarding safeguarding.
End of autumn term 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance fulfils its responsibility in relation to safeguarding. • A broad range of evidence from different sources provides reassurance that pupils, including the most vulnerable, are safe. • External scrutiny confirms that improved governance practice is embedded.

Actions:		HfL/HCC lead	School lead	Resources	Date of action	Monitoring			
						When?	Who?	How?	Reported to
2	Governance needs to ensure that governors have the skills to carry out their safeguarding								

<p>duties and responsibilities well. Governors need to routinely monitor and review safeguarding practices in the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Remove the governing body and implement an IEB - completed] IEB members to undertake training on the topic of 'governors' statutory safeguarding responsibilities' IEB (in collaboration with school leaders) to establish and implement a schedule of activities to check the effectiveness of safeguarding External scrutiny of governance work with a focus on safeguarding Staff interviews to check the extent to which governance practice has improved, 	HCC/DfE	N/A (LA/DfE)	LA time	Autumn 21 /Spring 22	Spring term	OD	Check minutes of IEB	ESD
	HCC	C of IEB	SGA – one day	spring term 22	Summer term	RL	Discussion with IEB members to check understanding Review of minutes and any other relevant documentation incl. training attendance list	ESD
	HCC/HfL	C of IEB IEN SG lead	SGA/IEB SG lead – one day	Spring 22	Summer term	RL	IEB safeguarding lead to present to AG	ESD
	HfL	KD	Half day	Summer 22	Summer term	RL	Report to AG	ESD
	HfL	RL/AC	One day – analysis of responses	Summer 22	Summer term	RL	Findings and next steps presented to AG	ESD

	particularly regarding its monitoring of safeguarding policy and practice								
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Summary by key issue detailed above		
Key issue	Personnel	Resource cost
Priority 1	RL – 4 days for support	£666 x 4 = £2664
	subtotal	£2664
Priority 2	RL – 1 day	£666 x 1 = £666
	Senior governance adviser – 2.5 days	£666 x 2 = £1332
	Release costs for SLT – 5 days	£200 x 5 = £1000
	subtotal	£2998
	Total	£5,662

Summary of other associated costs not included above		
Personnel	Action summary	Cost
RL/ESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at, and chairing of, half termly action group meetings – 6 days Reports for the ESD – 2 days ESD review of reports and follow up – 4 days RL review of reports, questionnaire responses and other miscellaneous tasks related to activities cited above 	<p>£666 x 6 = £3996</p> <p>£666 x 2 = £1332</p> <p>£666 x 4 = £2664</p> <p>£666 x 4 = £2664</p>

Other HfL officers on behalf of HCC	Attendance at action group meetings and face to face support: Governance team members – 3 days HR team members - 3 days LA L&M/Governance Review – 3 days Safeguarding check – 2 days	$£666 \times 3 = £1998$ $£666 \times 3 = £1998$ $£666 \times 3 = £1998$ $£666 \times 2 = £1332$
CPSLO	Provision of training, staff surgeries and other miscellaneous activities cited above	$£666 \times 6 = £3996$
Clerk for action groups	6 meetings @ £333 per meeting	$£333 \times 6 = £1998$
Total		£23,976

Total costs	£29,638
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