# AGENDA ITEM 4

## Title of report: Schools’ Maternity Pooling Arrangements

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**Details of who has been consulted with on this paper to date:** Head of Strategic Finance, Children & Culture

**Executive Summary:** The report sets out the proposal to seek consultation with schools on the intention to withdraw the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Schools’ Maternity Pooling Arrangements

**Details of recommendations and timescales for decisions:**

Schools Forum is asked to:

Agree the proposed four-week consultation with schools on the intention to withdraw the Schools Maternity Pooling Arrangements from the 2023-24 financial year

## Background

## For some years, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) have offered schools the option to purchase an annual Service Level Agreement (SLA) to join the Schools’ Maternity Pooling Arrangements Scheme, which is managed by the Schools Finance Team (SFT)

## These pooling arrangements were originally set up at the request of schools to reimburse for the supply (or other) rate for designated permanently employed staff on maternity leave for a period of 75 days. The scheme was not intended to operate as an insurance scheme

## Financial data shows that over the last 2 years, the scheme is paying out in claims more than it is collecting in contributions. If this trend were to continue, there is a risk to all schools participating in the scheme as this shortfall would have to be met

## With the large number of companies now offering staff absence insurance schemes, it is proposed to consult with schools over a four-week period on the intention of withdrawing the LBTH Schools’ Maternity Pooling Arrangements Scheme from the 2023/24 financial year

## Current Maternity Leave Pooling Arrangements for Schools

## Contributions to the scheme are based on the number of teachers or/and nursery nurses (full time equivalents) who are permanently employed by those schools which choose to opt-in to the scheme at the beginning of the financial year

## Reimbursements are submitted by scheme-member schools termly in arrears and claims are paid out for 75 weekdays from the commencement of maternity (excluding school holidays). Maternity claims to cover teachers, nursery nurses and a senior admin officer/bursar are eligible within the scheme

## The number of schools participating in the Maternity Pooling arrangements has declined in recent years, falling from 42 schools back in 2011 to only 27 schools in this current financial year.

## Contrary to the decline in participation, the number of schools which have claimed in the last two years has increased, from 5 in 2019/20 to 16 in 2020/21 and so far there have been 12 schools claiming in 2021/22. This led to an £11k overspend last year and the SFT are anticipating another overspend for this financial year

## Alternative Options for Schools

## A simple search online shows that there are numerous companies which offer staff insurance policies, some which are specific to schools.

## Standard staff insurances provide maternity, adoption and paternity cover.

## Many policies also provide additional benefits such as a wellbeing service, mental health service and consultation etc.

## The Department for Education provide an approved framework for insurance and related services for public sector schools, and which includes staff absence insurance. This can be accessed via the following link:

[Staff Absence Protection & Reimbursement - Crescent Purchasing Consortium (CPC) (thecpc.ac.uk)](https://www.thecpc.ac.uk/suppliers/categories/framework.php?categoryID=9&frameworkID=264)

## Recommendations

## School Forum is asked to agree for a consultation to commence with schools over a four-week period on the proposed withdrawal of the LBTH Schools’ Maternity Pooling Arrangements from the 2023/24 financial

## A follow up report will be brought to Schools Forum once the consultation with schools has concluded