

Please outline the reasons for your preference. - Please outline the reasons for your preference.

We have chosen proposal two because we know a more equitable, sustainable funding model is needed for all 4 maintained nursery schools to survive and continue to provide quality early years provision to the children in our communities. However, we recognise this can't be done overnight and we do not want to see such an immediate impact on Pen Green. In the longer term, we would like the funding to be shared evenly by participation – as represented by proposal one.

The three smaller MNS have cut all non-essential expenditure completely for the last three years and at Ronald Tree we have undertaken a complicated and stressful staffing restructure to streamline our staff to the bare minimum. Any revenue reserves have been completely used up by year on year 'in year' deficits caused by reductions in the EYMNSS since 2018-19.

At RTN we are in a 'catch 22' situation where, unless our funding is increased, we will not be able to pay our staff, but if we reduce our staff any further, we will not be able to accept all the children on our waiting lists for September, and our funding will be further cut.

The increasing needs of our children, in line with national trends, require a higher level of staffing than the statutory 1:13. At present our staff are over stretched and struggling to provide the exemplary support we believe the various SEND and vulnerable children that we have in our care deserve.

We see RTN as part of a cluster of four NNC MNS who should all be providing the very best early years provision and we have all been proud to be beacons of excellence in the early years. The children attending the MNS are the most deprived and vulnerable children in the county. Indeed, at Ronald Tree 87% of the children have some sort of vulnerability indicator - and many of them have multiple vulnerability indicators – ranging from involvement with social care to coming from very low-income households. Without the benefit of our early interventions many of our children will experience delays with identifying their additional needs, some may never narrow the gap between themselves and their peers at school, and some may remain at risk and unknown to social care.

The Windmill ward in which we are located, has been identified as part of the government's 'Levelling Up' strategy and Ronald Tree have been working with local councillors to raise the profile of our Nursery and recognise the importance of quality early years provision in raising pupil attainment throughout their schooling.

Last year we worked with the University of Northampton to complete a research study of the long-term social impact of our setting:

'Findings indicate that the net effect of the work of RTNS on its community and the well-being of individuals and families is highly beneficial, such that the social impact of RTNS is strong (Centre for Social Impact, 2021). Given the findings, a high level of confidence exists that the study aim - to identify evidence for the social impact Ronald Tree Nursery School provision has on children in an area of high deprivation – was achieved.'

Agenda Item 04 – Appendix B

We will email this document separately to AnnMarie Dodds and Jo Hutchinson to share.

Ronald Tree needs the distribution of the EYMNSS to change in order to survive as the only MNS in Kettering. There is no surplus expenditure to cut and whilst over 90% of school income is spent on staff salaries and on costs to maintain our staffing ratios, this is too high a proportion. With additional funding, Ronald Tree could further narrow the gap between our families and national levels in line with the levelling up agenda by increasing our ability to better support and engage families and provide outstanding care for those children who have SEND needs. We would also be able to offer quality CPD to our staff to reflect the changes in the curriculum and diverse needs of the families we work with.

Our underfunding has led to under investment in the maintenance of the grounds and buildings and in the resources for the children for far too long. We need to address this imbalance now before the costs of reparation are too high.

Any sudden cuts to income are very difficult to overcome and at Ronald Tree we have experienced the impact of these cuts over the last few years. We must, therefore support proposal two. This would enable our colleagues at Pen Green to continue, or to wind up satisfactorily, some of the additional work that they do there rather than proposal 1 which would bring all such activities to an immediate close and would present issues in making their staff redundant in an impossible time frame for NJC staff term and conditions. We value the work of all of the maintained nurseries in North Northants and believe they can all thrive if there is parity in the distribution of the EYMNSS

Ronald Tree, Highfield and Croyland all operated as Children's Centres up until 2014 so we understand the value of the work at Pen Green which supports vulnerable children and families too. However in Kettering and Wellingborough we support these vulnerable children and through them, their families, through the provision of the universal entitlement. That provision is at serious risk unless action is taken now. The needs of the 63% of North Northants' vulnerable children attending the MNS in Kettering and Wellingborough – who currently receive only 15% of the funding, must at least equal the needs of children and families in Corby.

Ronald Tree has received substantially less funding than all of the other maintained nursery schools across Northamptonshire for many years. It is time to redress this balance in a fair and transparent way.

Please identify any additional factors that you would wish to be taken into consideration in determining the maintained nursery supplement distribution. - Please identify any additional factors that you would wish to be taken into consideration in determining the maintained nursery supplement distribution.

The EYMNSS has been cut substantially since 2018-19.

From the introduction of the EYMNSS until 2018-2019 Ronald Tree received £76,076.

Agenda Item 04 – Appendix B

Ronald Tree have actively supported every initiative the government and the council asked us to, from becoming phase one children centres and offering year round integrated education and care, to prioritising taking funded two year olds and to supporting the 30 hours funding initiative to support parents returning to work. In Autumn 2020 we completed a Diagnostic Tool for the Local Authority and met to discuss every aspect of our income and expenditure to ensure total transparency and to ensure we were as cost effective as possible. We understand not all MNS engaged in this process.

We will continue to work with North Northants council to support the needs of our vulnerable families in Kettering as we have always done. An increased budget could enable us to look more closely at the requirements of our community and have a greater impact regarding the levelling up agenda.

Unbeknownst to the MNS the 30 hours initiative had a negative impact on the EYMNSS because it had a direct negative impact on the number of universal hours claimed at each setting. The first the MNS knew of this was in the Autumn of 2018 when we were advised that the EYMNSS would be cut by the ESFA by 9% in the following year. A disproportionate reduction was made however to try and support Highfield Nursery School which was already in deficit; so Ronald Tree had the EYMNSS cut to £56,822 in 2019-2020 (more than 25%) to account for the underfunding in 2018-19 and going forward into 2019-2020.

There was a reduction in the numbers on roll connected to the 30 hours even though the MNS expanded their overall capacity but this reduction on roll levelled off until Covid; the funding cuts did not. An in year unjustified cut of over £15,000 in 2020-2021 meant Ronald Tree received the lowest amount of EYMNSS funding per child.

This year Ronald Tree received £9.00 per hour supplement for each hour of universal participation. This compares to £10.75 for children at Highfields, £12.65 for children at Croyland and £106.47 for children at Pen Green. Is this fair and equitable? If there is a clear remit for the funding given by government to be used in this way, we would appreciate this information.

Whatever the conclusion of this consultation, we would welcome clarity on the distribution of the EYMNSS and how this is spent and accounted for in different settings. We believe every child in the community should have the same opportunity and would like to understand how the additional money has been distributed and spent.

We understand that some of the figures shared by North Northants may differ slightly from actual take up; however, it is the principle of the parity of funding that needs to be addressed. We spend every penny we receive on the children in our care and are left with no uncommitted balances at the end of the financial year.

In summary the children at Ronald Tree have consistently received less than their share of the EYMNSS allocation as determined by the DFE guidance. The funding being distributed at 5% compared to 25% participation in 2021-2022 is incomprehensible and we have really felt the impact of this.. We are pleased that this has finally been recognised after years of unsustainable reductions.