

## Wiltshire Council

### Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on 5 February 2016 at County Hall, Trowbridge

#### 1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Angela Brennan (chair), Dawn Bryant, Mark Cawley, Judith Gingell, Ashley Harris, Juliette Heal, Jenny Harvey (minutes), Russell Martin, Clare Palmer

#### 2.0 Apologies

Rosemary Collard, Nicki Henderson, John Proctor, Fiona Webb

#### 3.0 Minutes of last meeting held on 20 November 2015

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as an accurate record of discussion.

#### 4.0 Matters arising

None

#### 5.0 Schools and changes to legislation

Discussion took place regarding new changes to legislation around schools accepting younger children (2, 3 and 4 year olds). A separate registration is no longer required for younger children.

From September 2016, it will be part of the statutory framework that if a school is operating their own nursery, a Level 3 member of staff can run the nursery. Schools can operate on this basis now if they wish. AB felt that this was linked to sufficiency ensuring that enough places will be offered, and provided clarification on the ratios.

Discussion took place regarding childminders and their ratios when operating on non-dom premises. AB stated that if a childminder wanted to operate on this basis, then they could employ assistants. AB felt that this would probably be linked to small rural communities where there aren't enough children to warrant setting up a nursery. There was further discussion regarding childminder qualifications required and the difficulty of 1:30 ratios within an after school setting environment.

**ACTION: None**

#### 6.0 EYSFF – estimated hours for childminders issue

JH informed the group that it had been noticed that over the last year lots of childminders have been receiving invoices due to not informing the Free Entitlement officers of a drop in estimated hours or to zero hours resulting in overpayment. The main reason for this is linked to the formulation of the annual financial estimate, and affects childminders more than settings.

JH asked the group to consider the following proposal - that all childminder estimated hours be set to zero at the start of each financial year in order to prevent overpayment. Childminders would need to contact a Free Entitlement officer to set their estimated hours for a funding period or a year as and when required. The proposal was agreed by the group, and is to take effect from 1 April 2016.

The issue of estimated hours for 2 year olds was also discussed, but no decision was made.

The group also discussed the importance of knowing if money is owed in the event of an early year's provider closing. AB informed the group that if a building owned by a setting due to close

is on another party's land, the building needs to be sold and removed or demolished at the expense of the setting. DB mentioned that this issue could go on cluster group agendas.

**ACTION: JH to ensure that childminders accessing Free Entitlement funding receive no estimated hours on their 2016/2017 annual financial estimates**

#### 7.0 Fees charged by Ofsted

AB informed the group that the Childcare Minister has said that government can no longer delay looking at the issue of increasing Ofsted costs. AB stated that a consultation in the future is likely, and that she will keep the sector informed of any updates.

**ACTION: AB to update the sector as and when.**

#### 8.0 Childminder Agencies update

There are now 5 childminder agencies across the UK. Central government has held a number of briefing sessions for anyone interested in setting up an agency, with separate sessions being held for local authorities in 2 weeks' time. Wiltshire Council is not expected to attend one of the briefing sessions (being held in London and Leeds) due to the short notice given. MC enquired about the agenda, but AB stated it was unknown and that we'd have to wait for the general information release.

**ACTION: None**

#### 9.0 Childcare team update

AB informed the group that Wiltshire Council Early Years and Childcare have been directed by Ofsted to implement a QA scheme for childminders. This is in line with the changes in statutory duties solely lying now with early years providers with either a 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' Ofsted judgement.

The scheme is currently being developed and will be part of the PACEY scheme. Endorsement by PACEY will hopefully be received in the coming weeks, with the scheme being available from April 2016. It will be a paid membership scheme based on voluntary participation, and it will offer a very affordable package of support and training. The focus of the scheme is primarily for childminders rather than cluster group meetings.

Sufficiency is a rapidly changing picture across the county, and AB confirmed that this will now be assessed 3 times a year in order to be more proactive.

Army rebasing area - AB reported that requirements have grown exponentially with demand from new housing developments. All available childcare was full, and settings within the area have worked incredibly well in creating new places.

The majority of available childcare in Devizes is full and AB is liaising with settings in the area about increasing capacity.

A few members of the group brought up that they had experienced difficulty using the online childcare directory. The search facility wasn't returning any available childcare providers within various areas. JH to look into this.

MC raised the issue of the 30 hours, and there was general discussion around the planning of, implementation and flexibility of the extended offer. Concern was raised about the lack of information from the DfE as AB and JH confirmed that no more information had been forthcoming. Swindon Borough Council are involved in the pilot but as yet have been unable to confirm their offer details to neighbouring authorities as to how (or if) they will be affected. Wiltshire has good relationships and links with Swindon so we also hope to receive feedback on pilot issues. AB and JH assured the group that the sector would be updated as soon as more information became available.

**ACTION: JH to liaise with colleagues responsible for managing the online childcare directory about the resolution of search issues.**

10.0 Children's Centres update

RM reported that the Children's Centres consultation has now finished. The proposals were agreed by cabinet in December 2015. The tender process for buildings which could have an alternative use went live 3 weeks ago, and 28 expressions of interest have been received. Wiltshire Council is looking at approximately 7 or 8 bids being submitted, and these will be considered and marked by commissioners and relevant professionals in March 2016. Decommissioning of any buildings will start taking place at the end of June 2016.

RM informed the group that the national consultation on Children's Centres has been postponed.

JG reported that from a children's centre perspective, it is a difficult time for services being delivered, and that there will be significant changes ahead in terms of how services will be delivered and accessed.

Both RM and JG stated that some progress has already been made moving towards the new model of working. People are slowly getting used to the change in how the services will be delivered and accessed, although in some areas this isn't possible and some bidders will also have their own ideas of how the future service will be delivered.

**ACTION: None**

11.0 Confirmed dates for future meetings

Date	Day	Time	Venue
13 May 2016	Friday	10.00 – 12.00	Lacock Room, County Hall, Trowbridge
16 September 2016	Friday	10.00 – 12.00	Lacock Room, County Hall, Trowbridge

12.0 Any other business

JG asked the group how involved settings and childminders are with referred children/safeguarding/child protection issues. General discussion took place with most of the group confirming that the focus is mainly on schools and not childcare providers.

JG also asked about the integration of 2 year old reviews and information sharing. General discussion took place regarding setting and childminder practice/experience.

**ACTION: None**