

Wiltshire Council

Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on 20 November 2015 at the Cricket Pavilion, Melksham

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Karen Bird (Wiltshire Council – minutes), Angela Brennan (Wiltshire Council), Dawn Bryant (Westwood Nursery School), Mark Cawley (New Road Nursery), Rosemary Collard (Snapdragons Nurseries), Judith Gingell (4Children), Ashley Harris (Childminder), Juliette Heal (St. Margaret's Pre School), Nikki Henderson (River Mead School), Russell Martin (Wiltshire Council), Claire Palmer (Jack and Jill Pre School), John Proctor (South Hills School - Chair), Barbara Sealey, (TNB Early Years), Fiona Webb (Sunny Days Pre School),

2.0 Apologies

No apologies received, AB arrived later in the meeting.

3.0 Minutes of last meeting held on 18 September 2015

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

4.0 Matters arising

Significant number of applicants for the vacancies on the Group, thanks to all for volunteering and for attending interviews

5.0 The role and purpose of the Early Years Reference Group

The group feeds into the Schools Forum; RC and JP represent this group in the Forum. Schools Forum is made up mostly of heads and covers three sections Early Years, SEN, High needs.

The other role of this group is to discuss services that may be required for the sector from the Local Authority. It provides a good picture of the sector and the expectation is that you will network with and feed back information from this group to other settings in your area or field, as well as sharing best practice with others.

JP advised that when making decisions or taking a vote in the group, it is important to vote with the interests of the county/sector in mind and not your individual setting.

6.0 Future challenges for the sector

BS – 30 hour increase is a concern, also the pension changes, will have to pay 1% contribution to begin with and then increasing to 3%

MC noted that for smaller settings the pension changes will increase admin as there are lots of documents and processes to follow and potential fines if not completed on time or correctly. JP confirmed that you need to start the process 12 months before you are due to start. Federation of small business charge approx. £150 per year to join, they provide online legal help for HR also provide an auto enrolment scheme with Scottish Widows, they automatically send out all the paperwork at the right time and can link with Sage if you are using.

AH commented because the childminder ratios are lower and the rate is now lower it is difficult for childminders to increase hours and take on more children to increase their earnings

RC felt that the living wage could have an impact and BS added that in 2020 could potentially have to pay £9.20 to unqualified over 25 year olds.

Recruitment can be an issue. JG commented that due to the consultation regarding Children's centre services this has caused an issue with recruiting.

FW has struggled to recruit apprentices in Calne, RC agreed that often it is difficult because of the rates of pay available elsewhere in for example supermarkets can be more enticing to a young person looking to earn now and not look at the future picture. The role of an Apprentice has not been "branded" very well.

Wiltshire College are very good at offering student placements, but concerns that not enough good quality candidates coming through. Schools not helping to promote Early Years as a good career prospect.

JP suggested contacting your local Secondary schools for work experience candidates and talking about the sector to young people.

The workforce was upskilled but the money is no longer there to maintain those graduate wage levels.

AH asked if after school clubs could now be run by any person without qualifications. The group will put that question to AB. AB is expecting updates in the new year, there is potentially the option for childminders to be able to register in the village hall and on school premises etc

RC is concerned about the shortfall of officers at the Local Authority available to support the settings. Only just starting to feel the effects of this now. Lots of time taken up to try and track down a member of staff to support.

7.0 30 hours Free Entitlement expansion update – Angela Brennan

An initial early expression of interest was submitted, met with some providers who had expressed an interest in taking part, met with Julia Cramp, after lots of discussion and looking at the information available Wiltshire have decided not to put in an offer. The reasons for this were because the rate was not going to be increased, there were insufficient funds to cover the whole county and still not enough information regarding who will qualify and how this will be checked.

It will be a good opportunity to watch how the trial goes and allow Wiltshire more time to plan.

8.0 Children's Centres Consultation update

Consultation completed on 6th November, due to the large response the paper will go to cabinet on 15th December. 738 responses to the questionnaire, 44 meetings across the county, have some online petitions around the county.

The cabinet members will make the decision as to whether the proposals will go ahead or if any changes to the proposal are needed. Children Centre leads will be notified 16th December of the outcome of the cabinet.

JG has found the support from the families to be really encouraging and humbling. The message to get out to the families is that the services will remain, although the building may not.

RM added that the team are looking at other provision such as the campuses, Libraries; the service will look different but is ever changing to keep up with the demands.

MC asked why can't the Children's centre come to the setting? RM explained that some clusters do already do this but some areas need more encouragement to do this.

Whatever happens with the buildings there will be a retendering process for all children's centre services in March 2016 that is a requirement of the current contract. The new contract will have a bigger focus on working with partners across services which will include settings.

9.0 Childcare team update

Currently 8 Childcare officers in the team.

The team are looking to introduce a Quality Assurance scheme for Childminders and there will be a Quality Day in February at the Corn Exchange to support this. A range of topics will be covered including; School Readiness, Fundamental British Values, tracking and reviewing children's development. Judith Twani from the Early Excellence Centre will be the keynote speaker

Housing developments across Wiltshire are causing concerns for sufficiency. Ridgeway farm near Swindon is a new development with a small school site but no community facilities and currently no early years provision on the plans. AB working hard to get the early years need recognised.

Areas of need currently are, Malmesbury, Bradford on Avon, parts of Salisbury and Amesbury.

10.0 Confirmed dates for future meetings for 2016

Date	Day	Time	Venue
5 February 2016	Friday	10.00 – 12.00	Lacock Room, County Hall, Trowbridge
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

11.0 Any other business

Transitions, JG wondered if there is a standard format for the transition to school, JG would like more information to be shared about cohorts of children, for example those children that were 2 year old funded as often schools are not aware that these children were funded and could potentially be vulnerable.

Would like more two way discussions about what settings can do for "school readiness" and for both parties to see the value in the process

AH feels that teachers do not recognise that Childminders are capable of doing the assessments to support school transitions.

JP asked if NH could feed some of these comments into the schools forum, she agreed that this should be a continual agenda item. NH is fully supportive of helping the whole family settle into school.

JH said that it is time consuming to meet all the new children and families but she will always try to make that time to visit individual settings

DB said that one school took photos of the teacher and coat pegs etc to show to the child over the summer to help with settling in

MC said that they had uniforms from their local primary schools in the dressing up box to help children familiarise themselves with them.

RM said that children's centre is the one constant for the family during this transition process and schools may not be aware that the services and contacts there can be tapped into to support beyond that first year and into Year 1 and Year 2 and so on

AB said there are now an increasing number of voluntary run pre-schools where committees have to take on more and more responsibility and some challenging situations. Where some of these have been situated on school site, the schools are taking the settings over which has been very successful.