

Wiltshire Council

Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on Friday 18 November 2016 at County Hall, Trowbridge

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Angela Brennan, Dawn Bryant, Mark Cawley, Lisa Flenley (Snapdragons representative for Rosemary Collard), Jenny Harvey (minutes), Juliette Heal, Russell Martin, Clare Palmer, John Proctor (chair), Fiona Webb, Liz Williams

2.0 Apologies

Jane Boulton, Rosemary Collard, Ashley Harris, Nicki Henderson, Barbara Sealey

3.0 Minutes of last meeting held on 16 September 2016

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

4.0 Matters arising

Item 5 – AB confirmed Angela Everett is on leave this week so this point will be carried forward to next meeting. LW confirmed that AE does need to be involved in the next meeting as it will be used for budget setting.

Item 6 (from matters arising) – Shelley Hibbard attendance - This point will be carried forward to the next meeting.

Item 6 (from matters arising) – Capital bids - AB confirmed the DfE will be informing local authorities of their decisions next month.

Item 8 – National Workforce Development strategy - AB confirmed that the DfE will be releasing details of the strategy in late Autumn 2016. Work has been carried out in relation to recruitment people into childcare through range of methods, attendance at recruitment fayres, promotion in libraries and other council buildings etc. We will continue with recruitment advertising for the sector. There will be increased recruitment advertising for the sector, and AB is looking at developing briefing sessions for those interested in working in the childcare sector. She is also liaising with Natalia Reyner who has links with the University of Bristol.

Item 12 (from matters arising) - EY tracker language – JP is still receiving comments that the category judgement language used in the tracker feels negative in connotation i.e. below and well below. It was suggested that maybe this could be looked at and changed to something more encouraging, especially as providers are sometimes sharing this data with parents.

5.0 EY Funding review

LW circulated a paper to the group detailing the initial outcomes of the modelling work that has been carried out including the possible options to be considered for Schools Forum recommendation.

LW said it was worth noting that whilst Wiltshire funding is expected to increase, our relative position will decrease significantly. From April 2017, we will be the 8th lowest funded local authority. DB stated that due to the higher hourly rate figures mentioned by central government, it's perceived in the sector that hourly rates will be increasing significantly.

Following the last meeting, it has been assumed that the only supplements that will be included in Wiltshire's formula will be deprivation and rurality in order to ensure the basic hourly rate is as high as possible.

LW confirmed that Wiltshire currently doesn't top slice the Early Years Single Funding Formula budget to cover administration costs. However options for 2017-18 include a percentage being removed to cover additional staffing and improving IT systems required to implement the additional 15 hours.

The group discussed a number of variations on the possible options and hourly rates, with some calculating to be unaffordable such as increasing the base rate of £3.81 by 3.39% to £3.93. LW warned that a recommendation for the highest hourly rate possible would mean that Wiltshire Council will be seen as not incentivising early years providers to deliver the 30 hours.

There was group discussion about encouraging providers to offer the additional 15 hours, and offering a financial incentive to do so. Wiltshire Council need to encourage providers to deliver the additional hours to reflect the new central government policy but to do so offering a financial incentive would mean a reduction in the basic hourly rate. The financial viability of delivering the 30 hours was also discussed including what the group's Schools Forum representative – John Proctor could take to the next meeting to highlight the non-viability of the additional hours such as requesting that funding isn't deducted for ISF or topsliced for administration costs.

LW said that we could try and predict where the additional hours places could be and fund them, but this would be problematic if these places don't materialise and the council is therefore funding empty places. If Wiltshire Council delivers fewer hours then less funding will be received.

Action: To recommend to Schools Forum to adopt Option 2 in which the basic rate and the existing supplements are increased to reflect the increase in funding, with no differentiation for the additional 15 hours. Option 2 includes the assumption that £150,000 will be top sliced for administration and £110,000 for the required increase to the inclusion support fund.

Action: JH to confirm with JP if early years provider contact information can be used for campaigning

6.0 Impact of business rate increases

This topic was included within the overall discussion of the EY funding review and implementation of the 30 hours. The increase in business rates along with the funding rates and the introduction of the 30 hours are currently having and will have a further detrimental effect on the sustainability of many providers within the childcare sector

JP felt that a major campaign was now needed from the sector to highlight the issues being faced and to get business rates either reduced or completely removed in order to support the sustainability of the sector. He felt providers had received no support from either the town councils or Wiltshire Council. MC confirmed that it was the town council rather than Wiltshire Council who made the final decision on the refusal to reduce his business rates.

Communication with the whole sector is needed to encourage lobbying of Wiltshire Council and town councils as well as writing to and getting local MP's involved. Wiltshire Council cannot be seen as not being behind central government policy as it is their statutory duty to deliver the policies. All agreed that group representatives would liaise with settings in their area about the issue and get them to start lobbying for zero business rates.

Action: JP /MC to prepare a letter template for group representatives to use for sector communication.

7.0 Qualified staff shortage

JP reported settings are experiencing a shortage of appropriately qualified managers and lower qualified staff. JP asked AB if council representatives are in contact with schools and returnees to work to encourage them to look at careers within the childcare sector. AB confirmed the team are looking at bringing something together for people interested in working in the sector.

FW mentioned that there is currently a DfE consultation on proposals to amend the literacy and numeracy qualification requirements for level 3 early years educator staff. AB confirmed the consultation closes at 5pm on 28 November 2016, and that Wiltshire Council will promote the date again to providers via the Newsletter.

Action: JH/AB to liaise with Emily Wood for an article on the DfE qualification requirements consultation

8.0 Tax Free childcare

This is a national scheme that is being implemented from April 2017, where both parents and providers need to register. Where some providers own a number of nurseries, each individual nursery will need to register to take part in the scheme. JP asked if every nursery would be aware of this and asked if this could be included in the next newsletter.

Action: JH to organise for Tax Free Childcare item to be included in the next Newsletter

9.0 Sufficiency moving forward

This topic was included within the overall discussion of the EY funding review and implementation of the 30 hours. A number of people reported they had noticed an increased number of childcare businesses going up for sale within the county. Owners are wanting to move out of the sector due to it being unsustainable.

There was discussion about whether providers would have to offer 30 hours to all children, or whether a provider could restrict the number of 30 hour places available to parents. JP stated that such a restriction would have an impact on the local contractual agreement in place between Wiltshire Council and early years providers signed up to deliver the Free Entitlement funding. JP asked JH if providers would be able to do this. Under the current agreement this wouldn't be possible, however a new model agreement is being developed by the DfE. JH confirmed that AB and herself will be attending a Progress Sharing meeting on the 29th November 2016 in Ilminster. DfE representatives plus an Early Implementer local authority will be presenting, so JH will pose the question to them and feedback to the group.

Action: JH to liaise with the DfE regarding restricting the number of 30 hours places and feed back to the group

10.0 Children's Centres update

RM reported that the 22 new providers are still in the settling in phase, and there are currently a number of role vacancies across the county.

The main focus for Children's Centres over the next 6 months will be working with the disadvantaged learner group with Natalia Reyner looking at how they work with childcare providers in their area in order to narrow the gaps. Children's centre staff will be having conversations around what changes could be made and what could be done to improve things for providers. CP said they are working really well with their local children's centre with both offering support and signposting to other services when they can't help. JP also confirmed that Corsham Children's Centre is building relationships with the South Hills Corsham nursery.

RM said there shouldn't be any changes in current funding for the remainder of this financial year.

It was also confirmed that Judith Gingell no longer works for Spurgeons, and therefore Children's Centres no longer has a representative on this group. JP asked RM to liaise with the Children's Centre leads to seek a new representative.

Action: RM to liaise with Children Centre leads to ask for a new Children's Centre representative for the Early Years Reference Group

11.0 Childcare team update

The childcare team have been busy promoting employment in the Early Years sector at a number of exhibitions across the county as well as distributing promotional material in libraries, job centres, doctors surgeries etc

A number of people said that we should be approaching school leavers and using their media channels which would be Facebook and Twitter. AB confirmed that both are currently used by the team.

The childcare team are supporting settings around safeguarding and welfare requirements. 2 joint meetings with PsLA were recently held and were both well attended. The next round of meetings will be open to all PsLA members.

Data for the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report is in the process of being collated, and the finalised report is scheduled to be published in April 2017.

The team's main focus is those providers with a 'requires improvement' Ofsted judgement, and those accessing the new Quality Improvement scheme. In addition, the team will also be concentrating on offering line management training for committee members.

New provision set up enquiries have been received in areas across the county where housing is being increased.

JP thanked AB and the Childcare team for all their support in times of a reduced team.

11.0 Confirmed dates for future meetings

Date	Day	Time	Venue
3 February 2017	Friday	10.00 – 12.00	Lacock Room, County Hall, Trowbridge
12 May 2017	Friday	10.00 – 12.00	Lacock Room, County Hall, Trowbridge

12.0 Any other business

Sector campaign for zero business rates

MC just wanted to confirm who to contact when lobbying about zero business rates. MC's contact to date has been within the Rating department at a town council. JP advised that providers need to contact their local councillors, local MP's, town councils and Wiltshire Council.

JP reminded the group that when they were trying to organise campaign meetings in their area that they need to ensure that they are well managed and constructive, and with the invitation extended to local MP's.

School Places notification days

AB confirmed that the notification of school places days given out by the School Admissions team are set nationally and cannot be changed.