

## Wiltshire Council

### Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on Friday 3 February 2017 at County Hall, Trowbridge

#### 1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Caroline Bell, Angela Brennan, Dawn Bryant, Mark Cawley, Rosemary Collard, Jenny Harvey (minutes), Clare Palmer, John Proctor (chair), Fiona Webb, Liz Williams

#### 2.0 Apologies

Jane Boulton, Juliette Heal, Russ Martin, Nicki Henderson, Natalia Reyner, Barbara Sealey

#### 3.0 Minutes of last meeting held on 18 November 2016

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

#### 4.0 Matters arising

Item 4 (from matters arising) – Angela Everett had been asked to attend this meeting to discuss SEND, unfortunately was not able to attend on this occasion but will try to attend future meetings. Caroline Bell attended as the SEND service representative and gave the group an update. Caroline explained that with a widening remit of 0-25, the SEND team is busy across the board and unfortunately we are currently operating with staff shortages as they aren't able to recruit into vacant positions. Caseloads are rising, and it is difficult to carry out the level of work they once used to provide when part of Early Years. Although the team now have to prioritise conversion cases, there is still a commitment to provide training and work with our other EY partners to provide resources for their community working. The inclusion support officers work in community areas, and whilst they might not be able to visit a provider, they are able to give email/telephone advice. There is also the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) helpline that can be used by providers too for information, support and access to a SEND Lead Worker if this is required. The Educational Psychologist service is another good avenue to discuss children, as they hold EY support drop ins to focus on advice and setting support for specific children. There is also the Early Help section in the MASH team.

Item 6 (from matters arising) – Shelley Rowe (was Hibbard) was invited to this meeting but was unable to attend. She will be asked to attend the next meeting in May.

Item 6 (from matters arising) – All successful capital bids have now been announced. Wiltshire had 6 successful bids; 1 in the North, 3 in the West and 2 in the South. Projects will be completed by Autumn 2017.

Item 8 (from matters arising) – National Workforce Development strategy – this has been deferred to February 2017.

Item 5 - Top slicing EYSFF – this will be discussed later in the meeting.

Item 5 -JP expressed his disappointment that Wiltshire Council was unable to provide the group with contact information for early years providers for the purpose of campaigning. JH informed the group that provider information held by Early Years can only be used for its original purpose which is as contact information for early years and council services. The decision was made after consultation with JH's line manager, Nicola McCann. JP asked whether the council could ask providers for email contacts for campaigning purposes?

Item 9 – Sufficiency – this will be discussed later in the meeting.

Item 10 – Children’s Centres – JP asked if it was known in RM had found a new Children’s Centre representative to attend the Early Years Reference Group meetings. JH said she wasn’t sure, and would flag the issue again with RM.

#### 5.0 Feedback from Schools Forum meeting 3&4 year old funding

There have been a number of changes since the last meeting in November 2016 as the DfE had issued its response to the initial consultation in December 2016. The main change was that the Department of Education stated that a minimum floor level of £4.30 per hour would be paid to local authorities, and that a minimum of £4 per hour was to be paid to early years providers. In addition, a supplement for incentivising the 30 hours no longer had to be made available, therefore leaving allowed supplements as deprivation, rurality and flexibility. Wiltshire would now be receiving £4.30 per hour,

As a result of the changes the proposed formula had been re-worked and presented to the Schools Funding Working Group. Due to the very short turnaround it had not been possible to convene another Early Years Reference Group meeting, and so JP had been invited to attend the Schools Funding Working Group instead. At the Schools Funding Working Group meeting, the proposal of an hourly rate of £4.06 was approved for recommendation to Schools Forum. The proposals included a proposal to require the early years block to cover the full inclusion support fund and Wiltshire Council costs for the administration of delivering the extended entitlement.

Schools Forum agreed that the high needs budget would continue to fund the inclusion support fund but did not agree that funding for the administration and support of the extended entitlement should be held centrally.

The requirement is that local authorities have to pass through a minimum of 93% of total funding in 2017-18 to providers; Wiltshire Council will be passing 98%. The hourly base rate for 2017-18 will now be £4.14, with additional supplements available to providers.

The new rates being offered by Wiltshire Council were confirmed as:

2 year olds - £5.32

3&4 year olds - £4.14

Deprivation supplement – £0.40

Rurality supplement - £0.52

Early Years Pupil Premium - £0.53 per funded hour

Disability Access Fund – annual one off payment of £615.00

On behalf of the group, MC thanked JP for all his work, also LW.

From 1 April 2017, 4 new local authorities will be joining the original 8 local authorities in the 30 hours pilot. Confirmed statutory guidance from the Department of Education on the delivery of the 30 hours is still being awaited, however the PSLA have produced a document called ‘A guide to EY funding and delivery changes’ that is available to early years providers.

Following the recent parent/carer survey, AB stated that she will be sharing initial data results about what parents are saying about childcare in general as well as 30 hours intentions.

There was general group discussion about the 30 hours including the lack of incentive for early years providers to offer the 30 hours. How to prioritise spaces between the 15 hours and 30 hours was now an issue for providers.

**Action: AB to share initial parent/carer data results with the group.**

## 6.0 EYSFF

### Estimated hours for 2 year olds for settings

JH circulated a report to the group requesting that consideration be given to the removal of 2 year old estimates for all setting based providers from 2017-18. This system is currently in place for all childminders, and has worked reasonably well reducing the amount of money the Council has had to recover as a result of non-delivery of funded hours. After discussion, it was agreed that the proposal would be trialled for a year, and then reviewed.

**Action: JH to arrange for 2 year old estimates for 2017-18 to be removed for all providers**

### Recovery of Free Entitlement funding debt

Issue not discussed.

**Action: JH to add to the agenda of the next meeting.**

## 7.0 DfE Model Agreement

JH circulated a report to the group requesting the consideration of Wiltshire Council adopting the DfE model agreement replacing its own local provider agreement. After discussion, the group agreed in principle to the use of national model agreement, but all would want to see the final document before giving final approval to adopt.

**Action: JH to forward a copy of the DfE model agreement to group members once officially published for review and final decision on possible adoption in April 2017.**

## 8.0 Feedback on Nursery managers meeting – South Wiltshire

19 people representing 15 providers attended the meeting where the main focus was on the 30 hours agenda - lower rates, loss of income, increase in lease costs.

Some of the issues raised were:

- a) Some providers said that their lease conditions stated that they had to offer the 30 hours. This was viewed as contradicting the national guidance.
- b) Where buildings belong to Wiltshire Council, providers are concerned rent will be increased/be charged.
- c) There was concern from providers who currently offer hot lunches. The introduction of the 30 hours and not being able to insist on hot lunches could affect the sustainability of having a cook.
- d) Some providers had experienced errors in payments/ late payments/ payments less than expected, and wanted more accurate and prompt payment dates.
- e) Flexibility is a big issue – how to maximise occupancy, who is/ isn't eligible for 30 hours?
- f) The recruitment of new staff and training are becoming increasingly more difficult. The overall lack of staff is getting worse.

Another area meeting is planned in the coming weeks.

DB commented that the overall lack of information about the 30 hours is making it difficult to carry out business planning and forecasts as well as modelling income.

The group discussed a Ken McArthur article (nursery based in York – Pollyanna's) about the number of 'restricted/unrestricted' contracts that are being created for use with parents, and other interesting creative ways of increasing income that providers across the region/country.

JP stated that the government needs to understand that the offer cannot be offered and provided free. Some wording being used classes it as funded rather than free. There is also the national issue of maintained nurseries saying that they cannot afford to offer the 30 hours on the rates being offered.

**Action: None**

9.0 Children's Centres update

On behalf of RM, JH gave the group a prepared brief update:

As part of the transformation plan around children's health and wellbeing, children's centres have received some additional funding to support young children living in households where domestic abuse is present.

The bulk of the funding will be used by the centres to train staff to deliver the 'You and Me, Mum,' programme developed by Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland. This is a ten week course which aims to help victims understand how domestic abuse affects them and their children.

In addition, centres will be training more staff in the Freedom Programme (also domestic abuse) and the Webster Stratton Incredible Years Parenting. All of these courses are invaluable resources for parents, and providers are encouraged to speak to the centres regarding referrals for their families.

**Action: JH to remind RM to seek a new Children's Centres representative to attend the group meetings**

10.0 Childcare team update

The team continue to support all providers on safeguarding and RI/inadequate providers. The Childcare Officers are focussing their efforts on RI/inadequate providers, childminders with concerns, safeguarding issues and signposting on inclusion issues

The ICP courses are increasing in popularity. 22 new childminders have successfully come through the course, and there is another due to start in April 2017. A childminder day is also scheduled for March, with opportunities to meet Helene Schwartz, Safeguarding Adviser for Education and Early Years and Shelley Hibbard, Early Help Adviser in MASH. To date, there are 44 delegates booked to attend.

AB updated the group on a current situation. She is working with family looking for a place for their son who required additional support within their setting. AB is looking to see if the parents can apply for tax credits to help pay for the costs associated with the additional support required. AB is testing the system for Wiltshire Council in this area. If the application is successful, then this will be another avenue for settings. AB will inform the group of the outcome when known.

JP noted that as the budget has been topsliced by £240,000 to cover some costs for childcare services and support, nurseries need to be aware that they are paying for this.

**Action: AB to inform group of tax credits application outcome when known.**

11.0 Workforce Development

This has been deferred to February 2017

There is a GCSE qualifications/staff shortage, and the Childcare team are campaigning childcare careers in different ways across the county. Will possibly be offering children's centre sessions in areas of sufficiency in the coming months.

**ACTION: None**

12.0 Impact of Wiltshire Learning closure

AB confirmed that 2 ex-Bright Horizons members of staff have now left Wiltshire Council. Their work will be covered by the Childcare Officers, and they will offer what support they are able to.

AB confirmed that Wiltshire Learning will stop trading by end of March 2017. They will no longer be offering apprenticeships/ work based training schemes. AB and team will try to find other organisations to assist those people who are currently close to finishing. A gap will be left by their closure.

**ACTION: None**

13.0 Structure chart for Early Years

JP would like a structure document available for provides with all the different streams of Early Years services. It was explained that the Early Years & Childcare team was 'broken up' a few years ago and since then the childcare officers, learning and development officers and inclusion officers have been located in different parts of Children's Services albeit still working closely together.

**ACTION: JH to produce an Early Years service structure document**

14.0 Early Years 2017/18

Currently, JP and RC act as group representatives at Schools Forum. There always needs to be 2 group representatives attending every meeting. MC agreed to act as deputy in the event of RC being unable to attend.

Members of the group discussed and agreed that nurseries will struggle next year and beyond as there is no investment in either maintaining or raising standards in the sector with no surplus funding being available.

**Action: None**

15.0 Confirmed dates for future meetings

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

16.0 Any other business

Future meetings

**ACTION: JH to try and arrange the September 2017 meeting for 15 September.**