

## Wiltshire Council

### Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on Friday 5 January 2018 at County Hall, Trowbridge

#### 1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Angela Brennan, Lee Churchill, Rosemary Collard, Katie Davies (guest speaker – Public Health), Jenny Harvey (minutes), Nicola McCann, Russ Martin, Claire Palmer, John Proctor (chair), Trudi Surman, Fiona Webb, Liz Williams

#### 2.0 Apologies

Jane Boulton, Mark Cawley, Angela Everett, Ashley Harris

#### 3.0 Minutes of last meeting held on 29 September 2017

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

#### 4.0 Matters arising

Item 4 – The group now has 3 new representatives from the voluntary sector.

Item 4 - JH not had chance to liaise with LW, but LW informed the group that she will prepare a summary for the next meeting.

Item 4 – Firefox issues. NM said there are currently no outstanding issues with providers and access to the portal, so assuming all well with Firefox access. JH to liaise with EW to confirm current situation with Firefox.

**ACTION: JH to ensure Reference Group contact list updated with new member details  
LW to produce a summary of centrally held budget for next meeting  
JH to confirm current Firefox situation with Emily Wood.**

#### 5.0 Guest speaker presentation

JP welcomed Katie Davies (KD) from Public Health to the meeting. KD delivered a presentation on healthy eating guidance for the Early Years sector (presentation attached)

KD mentioned the Healthy Start Scheme which has been running for a few years and entitles women who are either pregnant, have a baby or young child to access different items. Uptake is currently at 60% which is relatively low. The team are aiming to increase this figure to 70% and are working with community nurses to deliver the agenda. RM wasn't surprised at the low level. Children Centres have tried to promote this initiative with their parents, but it has proved difficult.

AB asked KD if any guidance available from the Health Visitor service could be sent to AB for inclusion in the newsletter.

KD confirmed that a School Readiness document will be available to parents in September 2018. TS asked if the document would be available in different languages. KD confirmed that this would be discussed at a later date, with the main focus at the moment being on finalising the document.

AB asked KD if the Public Health service collated data on early years children. KD confirmed that the majority of their data was for school aged children.

RM asked KD if there is any collation of data carried out centrally. KD wasn't sure but said she would confirm.

Future plans include a number of training sessions to be run which will be open to everyone. Once arranged, KD will forward the dates to AB and they will be forwarded to the sector via the newsletter.

**ACTION: KD to forward copies of all guidance and documents mentioned in presentation to the group  
KD to forward AB any Health Visitor Service guidance  
KD to forward AB a draft copy of the School Readiness document**

#### 6.0 Funding settlement for 2018-2019 and proposed funding rates

LW circulated a report to the group on the funding settlement for 2018-2019 and the proposed funding rates. The budget allocation is provisional with actual take up from the January 2018 Early Years Census being used to revise the allocation. LW needs a recommendation from the group to take to the next Schools Forum meeting in mid January. The group agreed to recommend the rate increase to £4.16 per hour.

LW will prepare a summary for the group on the centrally held budget, and there is the assumption that this will remain the same in 2018-19.

In MC's absence, JP read his report response email to the group. The question of whether Wiltshire Council would consider removing the word 'free' from funding literature like many other local authorities are doing. NM asked the group to put forward a proposal of what the wording could be replaced with, and then this would be taken further for a decision by Council senior management.

LC raised the issue of charging top up fees and registration fees and how this can be done. JP said that the national guidance (and Wiltshire Provider Agreement) clearly states nothing can prevent a person from taking up a free place. A provider cannot insist on a registration fee or lunch charge being paid if they are a barrier to the child accessing their entitlement. Daily top ups are considered illegal. Providers must be clear what services are classed as additional services, how much they cost and clearly show these costs on parental invoices.

FW said providers should offer their service as they would want. Some parents will pay, and if a parent wishes to access a different service, then they might be able to access this at an alternative provider. JP also said that if the situation arises where providers are becoming unsustainable, then this will be problematic for Wiltshire Council and their statutory duty to ensure sufficient childcare. He emphasised the need for a provider to make themselves sustainable.

RC queried why the deprivation supplement is set at 40p per hour, and wondered if this could be adjusted to free up some additional money to add to the basic hourly rate. LW wasn't sure why it was set at 40p, but thought it did go back to when EYSFF was first developed. She also confirmed that making a change to this supplement would not make a considerable difference to the basic hourly rate.

FW raised the issue of recruitment. As a result of the low funding rate, they were unable to match salaries offered in other sectors. Other members of the group agreed.

**ACTION: LW to recommend increased hourly rate of £4.16 to Schools Forum.**

#### 7.0 30 hours Free Entitlement update

AB confirmed that the first funding period of implementation has gone well with no major issues. 1 provider has closed as a result of the introduction of the 30 hours.

JH confirmed that 5694 children accessed free entitlement funding in Autumn 2017. Of these, 2368 children accessed extended entitlement hours (approximately 41%) at either one provider or split between providers.

JP asked if Wiltshire Council or the DfE had any evidence that more people were in employment as a result of wanting to access this funding. NM and AB confirmed that the DfE weren't collecting this data from local authorities and have not said that they will be collating this data themselves.

JH confirmed there still seems to be a lack of awareness amongst parents that they need to re-apply for the extended entitlement hours approximately every 3 months. JH will liaise with EW to include a notification in the next newsletter.

FW asked for the written consent template to be updated to include telephone number as this is being asked for on the 30 hours validation tool.

AB discussed the Delivery Support Fund available from the DfE which is to offer support to providers around the 30 hours. AB has submitted an application for a range of projects including offering business training support, an inclusion conference, supporting childminding as a career and mentor support to settings. Successful applications will be confirmed in February/March 2018.

**ACTION: JH to ask EW to include a short piece on reapplying for Extended Entitlement every 3 months in the next newsletter  
JH to get written consent template on website amended to include telephone number**

#### 9.0 Childcare team update

AB believes that having robust paperwork for recording concerns regarding children and making referrals appears to have moved up Ofsted's agenda, and has a bigger focus than before which could be very important. This could have implications for providers.

There have been some setting closures over the Autumn term, but not as a result of free entitlement funding or sustainability. There has been a decline in the number of voluntary pre schools; committee members are finding the responsibility too much and don't have the time to deal with the volume of work involved. If AB's Delivery Support Fund bid is successful, then the business support training could be useful if targeted in this area. Childcare officers will be targeting support towards the voluntary sector in Summer 2018.

**ACTION: None**

#### 10.0 Workforce Development update

There is an ongoing problem employing staff in the sector. A letter will shortly be sent to all settings regarding apprenticeships/bank staff. The Childcare team are aiming to hold details on those settings interested in taking on apprentices/bank staff, so interested individuals can be directed immediately to potential employers.

Family Learning are running 'are you interested in working in childcare?' sessions, so Childcare Officers will also be attending.

AB has approached SERCO to see if any free training for the sector can be accessed, and the team are promoting childcare as a career at local events and wherever possible.

**ACTION: None**

11.0 Childcare Sufficiency

The assessment report is now updated annually. Parent surveys will be issued shortly, looking primarily at out of school provision. All schools will be surveyed too, so we can obtain a more accurate picture of what school provision is available.

A cabinet report on places and sufficiency is due to be presented in February 2018. AB felt it was positive that cabinet want regular updates.

Challenging and concerning areas of the county during Summer 2018 are likely to be Larkhill and Bulford. Developments are coming along that will help the situation. The recruitment of new childminders might be the easiest and quickest solution. Other areas of concern are Malmesbury (small town with expensive buildings), and Royal Wootton Bassett (settings are currently quite full). A future concern is Corsham as a result of a number of new housing estates being developed.

**ACTION: None**

12.0 Confirmed dates for future meetings

Date	Day	Time	Venue
9 February 2018	Friday	10.00 – 12.00	Lacock Room, County Hall, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN

All agreed that the February meeting should now be cancelled, and JH to organise dates for the group for the next year. JH confirmed that meeting rooms can only be booked 6 months in advance but would set the dates and then book rooms as and when possible.

**ACTION: JH to set meeting dates for 2018 and forward to the group**

13.0 Any other business

FW raised the issue of settings closing and the knock on effect over the next 1/2/3 years.

LW asked if the group were aware of the DfE consultation on Free School Meals (FSM) and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). LW confirmed that as a unitary authority, Wiltshire is better placed than most to deal with any changes, as thinks it will bring more children into eligibility for FSM. NM confirmed the document was very light on detail for EYPP. The closing date is 11 January 2018.

NM also confirmed another current consultation on 2 year olds and universal credit with changing income levels to £15415 per annum. The consultation closing date is 15 January with changes being implemented from 1 April 2018.

RC raised concern over recent documents in the press on school nursery classes, on site school nurseries and narrowing the gap. It seems that the current view is that the best care is only going to happen in schools with graduates. The EY team need to be supporting settings, as this could affect setting viability and sufficiency. All settings need to be aware of this. AB said that taking the Housing strategy for 2026 into account, she feels the issue is more about the need for sector expansion.

JP informed the group that he had been approached by Poverty Summit in Salisbury to work with a research student. Parents coming from deprived areas are quite difficult to engage with. TS said she could help JP with this if required.

JP raised the subject of quality assurance schemes. Kitemark was mentioned where providers develop to maintain standards across the board. There would need to be an element of independence in assessing providers, so JP asked if it would it be possible for a member of the EY team to observe assessments.