

## Wiltshire Council

### Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on Friday 4 May 2018 at County Hall, Trowbridge

#### 1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Angela Brennan, Rosemary Collard, Ashley Harris, Sarah Hawkins, Russ Martin, John Proctor (chair), Trudi Surman, Emily Wood (minutes)

#### 2.0 Apologies

Jane Boulton, Lee Churchill, Mark Cawley, Angela Everett, Jennifer Harvey, Clare MacKinnon (nee Palmer), Nicola McCann, Fiona Webb and Liz Williams

#### 3.0 Minutes of last meeting held on 5 January 2018

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

#### 4.0 Matters arising

Item 5 – outstanding action, KD to forward AB a draft copy of the School Readiness document.

Item 6 – FE hourly rate for 3&4-year olds of £4.16 was accepted by the Schools Forum

Item 7 – 30-hour Code checking consent form, not sure if this includes the telephone number. EW to check and include this field if necessary.

**ACTION: AB to chase up KD for School Readiness document  
EW to amend 30-hour code consent form as necessary**

#### 5.0 Update on FACT

Families and Children's Transformation plan – back in October, Early Help and Safeguarding were merged to form a new team. Work is now progressing with looking to remove barriers effecting change for children and their families, especially important because the Troubled Families project will finish in 2020.

FACT has set-up seven work streams, the one relevant to early years is the 'Best start in life' – looking at the first 1,000 days of a child's life, so this covers maternity services, Health Visitors and childcare settings. The predominant question asked is, what can we do to improve outcomes for these children? Consistent messages need to be given by all sectors.

There is also a SEND pathway – part of this brings the appointment of two new Early Years Inclusion Officers, bringing the total team up to five.

**ACTION: None**

#### 6.0 Update on 2-year-old places

The latest fully analysed data is from Autumn 2017.

85% - 887 funded two-year olds claimed hours (from list of 1041 names), of which:

- 758 attended good or outstanding settings (85.5%)

- 109 attended a new uninspected setting (12.2%)
- 17 attended an RI setting (2%) - Codford Caterpillars, Kingfisher Montessori, Newton Tony Puffins and Wally's Day Nursery
- 3 attended a setting which has subsequently been suspended or has been found inadequate (0.3%)

Funding is promoted via children's centres who make home visits to families on the DWP list plus the lists are also shared with the Health Visiting teams.

A leaflet has been created for professionals to raise awareness (Ten Fact Flyer) and will be shared with early years providers via the electronic newsletter EW produces.

JP raised the issue that in Corsham, they've had no new Better2gether funded children in the Spring. Only one family out of 24 took up the funding opportunity (mainly because an older sibling was already attending). It's recognised that social media should be used more to stimulate interest in the funding, unfortunately the current council policy is not to use 'Shout Out' or 'Spotted', which are the mediums we believe our target audience use. Lucy-Anne Bryant to take this issue up the council's Communications team. We need to understand more why parents are not taking the funding up.

**ACTION: Lucy-Anne Bryant to seek advice from the council's communication about making better use of social media to promote Better2gether funding.**

#### 7.0 Feedback on financial sustainability of nurseries

TS reported from the charitable sector saying that there were no known sustainability issues; that the 30 hours has not had a negative impact. However, the Free Entitlement team have picked up some concerns over sustainability. It is suspected that this may be down to some settings still not charging for consumables when delivering the free hours. AB reported that some of the Delivery Support Funding, that has recently been allocated, is funding three settings to attend business training. In return, they will cascade their newly acquired knowledge to support struggling settings via phone/emails and some face to face.

JP reported that the flexibility agenda is working against those private nurseries offering 52 weeks a year – staffing costs are too high to fund the degree of flexibility which the government would like to see. It is felt, that some settings are reverting to where we were five years ago, with rigid sessions offered as part of the FE scheme.

It's acknowledged that the big nationals seem to continue to expand and that Wiltshire is seeing a decrease in the number of registering childminders – this reflects the national picture.

SH described a concern that the timescale to reinstate FE funding after it was removed because of an inadequate Ofsted judgement, was slow and problematical for one of their nurseries.

A plea was made that if the website was updated (especially concerning Safeguarding advice) that an email alert was sent to let settings know.

**ACTION: EW to ask the WSCB that if they publish new advice/updates to forms/procedures that an email is sent to the sector to alert them of these updates.**

#### 8.0 Treasury Select Committee report on Childcare

JP shared the headlines from this recent report, which was published on the 25 March. Broadly the report is good and in favour of increasing the hourly rate for providers. Nicky Morgan – the chair of the committee has stated that quoting £4.90 as the hourly rate was misleading. The report indicates that there is no evidence that the increases in the National Living Wage have

been factored into the hourly rate nor is it likely that increases in other costs, such as pension auto-enrolment and business rates, have been factored in either. The Government must ensure that the hourly rate paid to providers reflects current costs. The report states "Setting the funding level with reference to wage and overheads data that is more than five years old is unsatisfactory".

Interestingly, in Scotland, they have already removed business rates for nurseries.

The Government have yet to respond to the report.

**ACTION: None**

#### 9.0 Funds to train unemployed mothers as childminders

For information, it is believed that several million pounds have been earmarked by the government to train unemployed mothers to train as childminders. It is not sure if this is linked to the new business grant?

A discussion was had over the challenges childminders had to face, recognition was given to the fact that the profession was relatively isolating and the amount of bureaucracy and scope of regulation to know was extensive. AB is looking to run exit interviews for those who are dropping out of the profession to find out why people are leaving the job. AH said that she knows that the extent of regulation and paperwork can be overwhelming when you're trying to operate as a childminder.

TS from St Osmund's Pre-school shared that they support a couple of local childminders and have found that this peer support to be very useful; this pattern could be adopted elsewhere.

**ACTION: None**

#### 10.0 Childcare team update

As before, focus had been on supporting settings with safeguarding issues, in particular following up on the non-responders of the last SG audit. For the summer, the focus will continue to be on supporting the voluntary sector and developing childcare provision in known 'hot-spots'.

#### 11.0 Workforce Development Update

AB reported on the Housing Association in Westbury who have been working to re-engage the unemployed with different work experience opportunities. They've forged links with various employers and the college to provide individuals with a 2-hour slot in an employer to 'have a go'.

The Childcare Officers continue to work on the list of settings who are happy to offer 'work experience' to those interested in taking up childcare as a career. AH offered that childminders would also be interested in providing experience to others thinking of becoming a childminder. AB to consider this.

Little has been issued from the Government following the release of the Workforce Strategy, no further information has been given regarding the SEND qualification.

It is felt that there is no shortage of apprentices in the sector.

AB shared a recent experience of visiting a Care Home where they have similar staffing issues to early years. They've learnt that offering staff longer working hours per day but shorter weeks has resulted in improved staff satisfaction and team cohesiveness. This in turn, has allowed them to move away from using agency staff.

The Childcare Officer team are constantly looking out for careers events to attend and represent the profession; posters and stands are constantly being displayed in the county to promote childcare as a career.

Discussion was had about the military rebasing project. It is felt that staff working in settings over in Germany should be able to move straight into Wiltshire settings. AB is developing a Wiltshire Online ICP course, which will be promoted to individuals currently out in Germany.

**ACTION: AB to consider reintroducing the ‘buddying’ scheme for prospective childminders to spend time with existing childminders.**

#### 12.0 Childcare Sufficiency

We must now annually update the Childcare Sufficiency Audit report – the 2018 edition is almost finished. AB listed to the group the known top “hot spots” where there is a concern over a lack of provision. Namely Trowbridge, Royal Wootton Bassett (where we think parents are using Swindon provision) and Larkhill – this should be alleviated with the opening of the new school in the Autumn with its 72-place nursery).

Section 106 applications are being constantly applied for through the planning process; AB is encouraged that early years has a greater prominence in the planning process than ever before.

We want to constantly stimulate new provision as Wiltshire’s population expands.

**ACTION: None**

#### 13.0 Confirmed dates for future meetings

Date	Day	Time	Venue
21 September 2018	Friday	10.00 – 12.00	Lacock Room, County Hall, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN
16 November 2018	Friday	10.00 – 12.00	Lacock Room, County Hall, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN

**ACTION: None**

#### 14.0 Any other business

It is proposed that the council should coordinate an Early Years Conference, it’s been many years since one was run. The idea is to use a school to keep costs at a minimum and possibly run two dates, one being a Saturday to enable those providers who find releasing staff (or themselves) during the week impossible. It was felt that getting a known personality to speak or even OFSTED to brief colleagues on up and coming training and inspection focuses would be attractive and useful.

GDPR – clarification needs to be shared with the sector. There appears to be lots of conflicting advice. JP provided reassurance that the new regulations will not be substantially different from the current data protection law. The ICO will not be wishing to ‘trip’ organisations up and any consequences of not meeting the new regulations will be proportional to the size of the organisation. The main emphasis will be on obtaining consent to share information and the security measures put in place to secure data held.

**ACTION: EW to include a ‘heads up’ in the next newsletter about the conference to stimulate interest and gather feedback as to preferred days of the week to hold the event.  
AB to share with sector GDPR advice once compiled by one of her team.**