

## Wiltshire Council

### Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on Friday 10 May 2019 at County Hall, Trowbridge

#### 1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Jane Boulton, Angela Brennan, Mark Cawley, Nicki Jones (in place of Rosemary Collard), Jennifer Harvey (minutes), Clare MacKinnon, Nicola McCann, John Proctor (chair), Natalia Reyner, Marie Taylor

#### 2.0 Apologies

Rosemary Collard, Grant Davis, Angela Everett, Juliette Heal, Russ Martin

Resignations - Ashley Harris and Fiona Webb

**ACTION: AB to look for replacement representatives**

**ACTION: JH to send a letter to Juliette Heal to see if she would like to continue as a representative.**

#### 3.0 Minutes of last meeting held on 11 January 2019

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

#### 4.0 Matters arising

Item 5

EY strategic response. MT informed the group about the RESET programme under Helean Hughes. The programme will be looking at a new structure and all the different areas of responsibility. The programme is aiming for a September 2019 go live date.

Item 8

AB confirmed to the group that the grant application had not been successful.

Item 8

Nicola McCann (NM) informed the group about the 2<sup>nd</sup> training session held on 9 May by LiquidLogic. Currently the go-live date is scheduled for August/September 2019 with a view to a partial rollout for the Autumn headcount, and then a full rollout across the sector from 1 January 2020.

There will be access to an establishment portal for providers where they will enter data into a live register for funded and non-funded children. The new system will encompass all eligibility checks required such as 30 hours eligibility and code validity, Early Years Pupil Premium and 2 year olds checks. For 30 hours children, they will be created within the system and eligibility automatically checked with providers being informed of the grace periods.

Providers will be able to compile and submit their own funding estimates via the live register, with funding automatically calculated for payments. The same register will be used for each of the headcount exercises, and eligible aged children along with their funded hours details will be pulled through and submitted. Mid-term adjustments will also be included in the new system, and will be dealt with live rather than in arrears as per current practice.

JP enquired about provider training on the new system. NM confirmed that online training will be available as the system is very intuitive and not complicated as there are only a handful of screens that providers will need to use. Instructions and screenshots will be available to aid providers.

TS enquired about LAC children and the change of names, and NM confirmed that the Early Years element of the system will work with Social Care.

AB enquired about notes of visit. NM confirmed a notes of visit facility will be available for colleagues to upload notes for providers. The system will also include the online childcare directory where providers will be able to directly amend some information fields.

NM confirmed that the 'spreading' of funding over more than term time weeks is not yet 100% resolved in new system. This was detailed in the Council's Statement of Requirements, however the LiquidLogic system is primarily a Social Care system and they are currently moving into and working in the Early Years sector. Further development is required as the current system will only accept term time funding claims or all year round claims (based on 48 weeks). This isn't what was wanted, and it has been raised as an issue for resolution before go live.

CM and TS informed NM that they would be happy to be used as test providers for the new system.

**ACTION: None**

#### 5.0 Provisional 2018/2019 outturn

MT circulated report. Outturn is only because not accounts have not been finally closed.

It is usually a larger underspend but the budget fully funded the EY higher needs. More 2, 3 & 4 year olds were budgeted for so hopefully this means more funding will be received in 2019/2020 allocations.

**ACTION: None**

#### 6.0 2019/2020 budget

The main difference this year is that the Council have been able to increase the hourly rate from £4.16 to £4.20 (3&4 year olds). The risk with this action is if the numbers of children accessing funding increases, then this will add pressure to the budget. The 2 year old budget is straightforward as the national hourly rate remains at £5.32. The January 2019 census data has not yet fed into the 2019/2020 budget allocation, so figures are estimates based on 2018/2019 data.

The budget will allow a small degree of flexibility to accommodate a small increase in children accessing funding.

JP enquired why there was a 7% team cost decrease for EY Childcare/Development team in 2018/2019. MT confirmed this was as a result of cross charging. JP asked if the team would increase in 2019/2020 and AB confirmed this would be discussed under agenda item 8.

MT stated that due to Brexit, the Council was not anticipating an Autumn 2019 statement and that it would be probably later in the financial year. All budget allocations will be flatlined until a later date.

**ACTION: None**

#### 7.0 Childcare sufficiency

AB confirmed the finalised Childcare Sufficiency report will be available later in the year. Initial headline data from the parent survey indicates that 80% of respondents felt their current childcare arrangements met their needs, with 90% being happy with the quality. 48% of respondents would like to access more childcare but they are unable to afford to do so.

AB has received flyers regarding options available to parents for financial assistance, and will distribute to providers by email.

Tax free childcare is also an issue with a number of providers not yet set up to accommodate this which would be helpful to parents. AB and her team will be writing to these providers to see if they would consider signing up.

The group stated that the word 'Free' regarding the funding is still an issue, and AB and NM confirmed the issue about removing reference to 'Free' in Wiltshire Council documentation had been escalated to Judith Westcott.

45% of respondents disagreed that there was enough childcare in their area. AB feels this could be down to parents not being able to get their first choice in the following areas. These areas are: Warminster, Hullavington, Pewsey, Chippenham, Devizes and Salisbury. The group discussed some of the potential issues in each area.

**ACTION: Group members to liaise with AB if they wish to get additional information on children with additional needs and tax credits**

#### 8.0 Childcare team changes

AB confirmed the following changes to the team:

- Some of the team have moved to Troubled Families and will be working there until March 2020 (salaries will be paid by Troubled Families, not EY).
- Quality element of childcare – this has historically been managed by AB's team. Safeguarding and welfare requirements will continue to be managed by AB's team, with the remaining elements of quality being managed by Natalia Reyner (NR). There is a transition period until the end of June after which 2 members of AB's current team will be moving to NR's team where they will be working closely with the Advisory Teachers. AB will be writing out to the sector to inform them of the changes.
- The primary focus for AB's team will be sufficiency.
- NM informed the group that Karen Bird will be leaving the EY Free Entitlement funding team shortly, and the post is being advertised.

**ACTION: AB to inform sector of team changes.**

#### 9.0 MASH and Early Support Hub update

AB has received an email regarding MASH and Children Centre staff being located in the MASH and Early Support hub.

**ACTION: AB to forward email to group for information.**

#### 10.0 Early Inclusion funding issues

JP stated that it was unfortunate that AE wasn't present at the meeting to assist with this item. JP informed the group that children without a support plan, but have severe needs are not being visited by the EY Inclusion team. The EY Inclusion team appear to agree there is a need for support, but they won't allocate funding to the child/provision until an EHCP in place. JB agreed

with JP that the process is too lengthy and is interfering with some children getting the timely support they need. If a child is attending a District Specialist Centre, there is already an identified need. Transitional support needs to be available to such children and associated provisions.

AB asked if JP could write to AE to ask for answers to the questions posed by group members on behalf of their representative sector.

TS also discussed their similar experiences/issues in particular the parental choice regarding and DLA applications and subsequent provider Disability Access Fund applications. The DLA application is a huge document and is incredibly time consuming to complete. Central government's direction is that the Local Authority and the EY sector need to be identifying and supporting these children, however it is being made overly onerous and difficult for the children and provisions to access funding. Some processes are viewed as a barrier to accessing the support and funding the need across the board for 2, 3 and 4 year olds, with some EY providers having to turn away such children as they simply do not have the staff to provide the level of support required, but also because the funding isn't there to assist in the support of the children

MT said that the high needs block is looking at improving systems but there is currently a £4.6 million overspend. The EY block funding is funding all EY expenditure, and the High Needs block funding should be doing likewise. The group felt that EY high needs should be funded by the High Needs block.

JB is attending an EY review shortly and will update the group afterwards of any pertinent information.

**ACTION: JP to write to AE regarding support plans and funding**

**ACTION: JB to update group after EY Review meeting**

#### 11.0 Workforce development and staff recruitment

AB reported that this is a huge issue across the county, and asked for suggestions/ideas as to what could be done. Vacancies are being advertised via Facebook and childcare career flyers are available.

The group discussed some of the issues they are all facing with the current groups of young adults coming through the system. There does appear to be a lack of understanding of the level of work, paperwork and study required by them as well as attitude problems.

Other issues discussed were apprentices/volunteers unwilling to work the longer hours required by EY businesses, the impact of the introduction of 30 hours on volunteer levels and returning parents from Germany and problems with their German qualifications. There is a need for potential staff but their 'foreign' qualifications are preventing them from being able to access work. AB confirmed there will be a Recruitment Fayre in Autumn 2019. AB and MT to have a discussion to see if additional funding is available and could be used. MT advised AB to liaise with Jayne Hartnell and Rowena Prentice (or someone higher in the Family Learning team).

**ACTION: MT and AB to meet re: additional funding**

**ACTION: AB to contact Jane Hartnell and Rowena Prentice**

#### 12.0 Nurseries in difficulty – current situation

Wiltshire has 1 Inadequate setting and 2 Inadequate childminders. There are concerns with a number of charity run pre schools, and AB will shortly be surveying committee run providers key questions with the aim of identifying those that might require support.

**ACTION: None**

#### 13.0 Nominated persons issues

JP informed the group that he recently took over a setting. He agreed with Ofsted to operate the setting under the current nominated person until the Ofsted initial inspection came through. Ofsted insisted on an interview, which was short and specifically on safeguarding. The interview and inspection were carried out by the same person. This person said that the setting could not operate under the current nominated person as there wasn't one. Ofsted had contacted the setting in writing but had not heard anything. They informed JP that it appears to be a recurring problem with pre school settings not informing Ofsted when there are staff changes, and gave JP the new registration within 2 weeks.

**ACTION: None**

7.0 Confirmed dates for future meetings

The next meeting date is to be confirmed as there are problems finding a meeting room at County Hall. Ideally the meeting will take place on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019, 10.00-12 noon.

**ACTION: JH to inform group of next meeting date and venue as soon as possible.**

8.0 Any other business

**ACTION: None**