

Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on Monday 6 January 2020 at County Hall, Trowbridge

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Jane Boulton, Lucy-Anne Bryant, Emma Cooke (standing in for Natalia Reyner), Jenny Harvey (minutes), Nicola McCann, Deborah Muir, John Proctor (chair), Sarah Hawkins, Marie Taylor.

2.0 Apologies

Mark Cawley, Russ Martin, Clare MacKinnon, Trudy Surman

3.0 Minutes of last meeting held on 13 September 2019

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

4.0 Matters arising

8.0 2 year old funding - children with EAL – LAB confirmed that the Local Authority only become aware of EAL upon self referral, not through information provided by DWP. The main issue is finding out where these families are and having better communication channels with them as many are unaware of the 2 year old funding.

ACTION: LAB to source a new childminder representative for EYRG.

5.0 Finance

MT circulated and discussed the Schools Forum Early Years Block Update for 2020-21 and appendices with the group (attached).

2019/2020 budget is forecasted to be overspent by £1 million for early years block. This is because the number of children (counted in FTE, full time equivalent) taking up free entitlement is higher than the DfE allocation. For 2 year olds this is 67 additional FTE leading to a forecast overspend of £0.407m and for 3 & 4 year olds, 98 FTE higher than budgeted leading to a forecast overspend of £0.468m.

DfE 2020/2021 budget allocations were received from the DfE in December. There has been a national increase in the 2 year old hourly rate from £5.32 to £5.40 which will be passported out to providers. Unfortunately, Wiltshire Council cannot afford to increase the 3 & 4-year-old hourly rate as a result of the demand in excess of funding in this year's overspend. MT confirmed that the new budget allocations are based on the January 2019 census figures. The DfE will issue an in-year allocation revision using updated figures from the January 2020 census, and it might be possible to review the rates when the DfE update their early years allocations in the Autumn if affordable to do so.

ACTION: MT to propose Option 1 to Schools Forum with no increase in hourly rate for 3&4 year olds and will look at a mid-year review and possible change to rates if affordable.

ACTION: JP and MT to discuss possible in-year review once revised budget allocations are released later in the year. Agreed no formal meeting for the whole group was required.

6.0 Update on the Liquidlogic IT system/portal

NM reported to the group that Wiltshire Council have been working with Liquidlogic on Phase 2 of the programme to deliver the Early Years & Education System (EYES) and the Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) module by mid-January 2020. Unfortunately, the go live date has been delayed to allow Liquidlogic to make the final system changes we require to ensure the system meets our requirements. We are currently awaiting a new go live date, which will possibly be Summer 2020 for the Local Authority, and Autumn 2020 for early years providers. Volunteer early years providers testers will be needed to test the funding side of the system. The delegated access part of Liquidlogic to share case notes, has been developed and some childcare providers have been invited to test the system, including Tid n' Bul.

ACTION: NM to provide an update at the next scheduled meeting.

7.0 Confirmed dates for future meetings

Date	Day	Time	Venue
15 May 2020	Friday	10am-12 noon	Longleat room, County Hall
6 November 2020	Friday	10am–12 noon	Lacock meeting room, County Hall

8.0 Any other business

Registrars and birth certificates – issues experienced with parents not having the full birth certificate which is required for a child to access childcare. Barriers to obtaining these certificates include registrars not being aware that a full certificate is required if a parent wishes to use childcare, cost prohibitive for some families (over £10 per copy), and delays in meeting with the registrar/obtaining certificates.

MT suggested that the EY team develop a small presentation for Registrars to explain childcare situation to parents in meetings.

ACTION: LAB to organise a registrar presentation.

EY/EY childcare team structure - JB asked about the overall structure now that AB has retired. LAB confirmed that there are 2 key areas: EY Quality and EY Sufficiency

EY Quality – managed by Natalia Reyner and includes the Advisory Teachers and Sufficiency Advisors (quality focused)

EY Sufficiency – managed by Lucy-Anne Bryant and includes the Sufficiency team (sufficiency focused only), who are also Assistant Commissioners. LAB also manages the Children's Centres, Troubled Families and Early Help as part of Children's Community Commissioning.

EY Inclusion - sits under Support and Safeguarding but links with the SEND team.

EY forums - JB raised whether these should continue. She felt that there was topic overlap with the MAF meetings and other chargeable meetings. All confirmed that EY forum attendance had declined significantly over the years. MT suggested webinars/conference calls as a possible way forward.

ACTION: LAB to look into webinar as an option, using slideshow

Safer recruitment - JP raised this issue as well as good references being given for inadequate staff. A nursery was on the receiving end of the recruitment of a new senior member of staff, a good reference being provided for this person by an outstanding nursery, which was then found to be false when events escalated once the person had been employed. The previous employer of this person was contacted and similar events had happened with them but they gave this person a good reference. Advice from Ofsted is to only provide the employment dates for a person where a contract has been terminated or the staff member has left on bad terms. All agreed that this advice needs to be reaffirmed to all early years providers to ensure children are safe, with perhaps a follow up call once a reference is received.

LAB confirmed that the safeguarding forums were continuing.

ACTION: Emma Cooke to raise safer recruitment at her next team meeting.