

Early Years Reference Group Extraordinary Meeting

Wednesday 27 May 2020

1. Welcome and introductions

Jane Boulton, Lucy-Anne Bryant, Mark Cawley, Rosemary Collard, Jenny Harvey (notes), Sarah Hawkins, Debbie Muir, John Proctor, Natalia Reyner.

2. Apologies

Russ Martin, Trudy Surman.

3. Minutes and actions

JH apologised for the lack of minutes from meeting held on 6 May 2020, the electronic notes taken have been lost.

The issue around space in single room settings was raised with the Schools Cell and how it may be an issue for sufficiency going forward depending on the number of children that can be accommodated. Larger settings can use different entrances to provide drop off and pick up points

Snapdragons and running of out of school clubs – LAB confirmed this had been raised and managed with schools.

ACTION: None

4. Funding from June

Funding estimate adjustments - LAB confirmed that the Local Authority is not expecting any provider to be out of pocket financially but we will continue to pay providers as per their original Summer 2020 funding estimate. Funding estimate adjustments will only be considered where providers can evidence that their numbers and funded hours after re-opening on 1 June are higher than their original funding estimate.

Incentive payments - LAB confirmed that with 58% of early years providers due to re-open from 1 June 2020 and increased child attendance, Wiltshire Council will be unable to continue to pay an incentive to providers at its current rate of £100 per child per week. As PPE is likely to be a large cost for providers from 1 June, the Local Authority will be consulting with the EY sector within the next few days on 2 proposals:

1. Closed providers to continue to receive 80% funding. Open providers to continue to receive 100% funding plus a one-off payment - £1,000 for settings and £150 for childminders up to end of August 2020.
2. Closed providers to continue to receive 80% funding. Open providers to continue to receive 100% plus £10 per child per week (as long as they remain open) until the end of the Summer 2020 school term.

LAB and NR confirmed that thanks to a donation, hand sanitiser (500ml bottles) are being delivered to front line settings, i.e. schools and EY providers. Providers will be informed when these are available and if they will be delivered or available from various collection points.

LAB confirmed that any unused funding will remain in DSG and funding reallocation discussions will take place later in the year.

ACTION: None

5. Opening from June

All EYRG representatives confirmed their settings will be/will continue to be open from 1 June offering a range of increased booking flexibility for parents in order to operate safely within the new guidelines. At this time, the biggest barriers are school day lengths and PPE. Schools are not operating their before and after school clubs which impacts on staff at daycare provision with school aged children.

Generally take-up numbers are on the lower side at present.

Managing expectations - RC raised a concern that parents do not seem to be fully taking on board the implications of the current Covid-19 situation and that everything is going back to the way it was pre-crisis. Parents will need to bear with providers and all agreed that expectations need to be managed in this 'new normal'.

Capacity - RC feels this is a huge issue moving forwards as a result of capping numbers of children. Providers can accept fewer existing children back, and fewer new younger children. This will be a problem for both providers and parents if the guidance isn't relaxed soon. LAB to include this as a COVID-19 Risk in the log.

One setting guideline - NR and group discussed this new guideline. NR understands this might not always be possible so providers involved would need to carry out their own risk assessments ensuring risk of transmission is kept to a minimum. JP felt this was impractical and that the guidance needed to be firm on only 1 setting. RC felt the wording 'where possible' leaves this guideline open to misuse. NR stated that in the main, 1 setting will work and that it would only be a few exceptions that would require a re-working.

Shared placements - JB confirmed 98% of their children at the DSC share funding with another provider. 7 of their children so far have had their mainstream provision chosen over the DSC, and the Local Authority needs to be aware of this. Another issue for DSCs is children being held back in September and continued support being offered to children remaining at home. Potentially there will not be as much space for younger children.

General child attendance – RC raised concern that children have been off radar for a long time, and for some, other issues are being 'hidden' by remaining at home, i.e. safeguarding. Public Health are happy to work with early years providers to relay the message to parents that the best place now for children is at an EY provision/school.

Provision opting for a delayed restart – NR confirmed the Local Authority is supportive of provision not re-opening from 1 June, preferring a delayed re-opening in order to digest and get systems in place. Some providers have been pro-active about 1 June restart by contacting parents/staff several weeks ago, and getting measures put in place ready. MC asked if there were any providers who were keeping their doors closed permanently LAB confirmed she was unaware of any providers who fell into this category.

Lunchtimes – some providers have experienced problems with lunchtime cover and new guidelines so staff have been working a continuous day. Other providers offer a 1 hour slot for staff members within which to have a lunch break but remain within earshot and sight whilst 2 bubble groups merge. Providers need to see what works best for their provision and

continuously assess and adjust. Any changes to bubble groups will need to be risk assessed and managed.

Church/village hall based provision – LAB confirmed this provision type is experiencing a number of issues such as toilet access and permission to use a public building for childcare in current situation. This area is being risk managed so that the Local Authority can find childcare places to find places for children who might be caught in this situation.

No one from the group had received requests from parents who were shop workers for a delayed restart date to 15 June.

ACTION: LAB to refer capacity issue re: number capping to Risk Management Log

6. AOB

Daily EY newsletters have now ceased, with a possible change to a weekly edition. The last parent newsletter will be issued this Friday, 29th May 2020.

LAB and NR are meeting with Ofsted and DfE later and asked the group for any issues to be raised. Issues to be raised - inspection timetable, changes to provision such as staff changes and First Aid courses attendance

The group all agreed that the release of new operational guidance by the DfE (1 week before providers are due to re-open on 1 June) makes the situation more difficult than normal.

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 10 June 2020, 12.30pm – 2.00pm; a meeting invitation will be sent out shortly.

ACTION: LAB to send out meeting invitation to the next meeting