

Early Years Reference Group Extraordinary Meeting

Wednesday 24 June 2020

1. Welcome and introductions

Jane Boulton, Lucy-Anne Bryant, Mark Cawley, Rosemary Collard, Jenny Harvey (notes), Sarah Hawkins, John Proctor, Trudy Surman, Emily Wood (notes).

2. Apologies

Russell Martin, Debbie Muir, Natalia Reyner

3. Minutes and actions

The minutes were agreed as an accurate recording of the last meeting.

Point 8 - DAF - LAB raised the suggestion that this funding should be allocated per academic year and not financial year, especially as this term's attendance has been so disrupted by the pandemic. The group didn't object but Jane Boulton raised the point that she has children who are turning five between April and August who will be disappearing to school in September. This term is the last opportunity for them to access the DAF. Therefore it was agreed that the DAF allocation would move to academic year with the exception of those that are turning five between April and August, as per the reason above.

ACTION: A communication to be issued updating providers on Summer 2020 DAF applications (LAB)

4. New Recovery Group

LAB informed the group that a new Task & Finish group is being set up to deal with 'Recovery' post Covid19. An article will be in the EY Newsletter on 25 June. All agreed that the group needed to include both school (primary and secondary – Headteacher, bursar, reception teacher) and EY sector representatives; there were no volunteers from EYRG.

MC asked for the group's terms of reference. LAB explained that these will be compiled at the group's first meeting on Monday 29 June. The main aim will be to prepare for and support children transitioning to school in September. Many children will have regressed in their learning and development as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown, especially those who haven't yet and aren't returning to early years provision in Summer 2020. The rising 5 children will need to be treated as rising 4 children.

JB commented that policy makers need to take notice of the changes that are made this year, that they need to continue and they should influence future approaches.

5. Funding update

JP provided the group with a brief update. Schools Forum have agreed not to reduce EY funding in order to meet the overall budget deficit.

The financial year's allocation is determined from the January census. An adjustment will be made in September, but LAB confirmed that the local authority would be unable to increase funding rates. LAB stated that EY funding is in deficit this year as a result of more children and increased take up of hours compared to last year.

6. Inclusion funding

This is currently underfunded and there are too many obstacles in the way to navigate to access the funding. It often takes far too long for the funding to be agreed to have much benefit, which defeats the core of what the FACT Best Start in Life is all about. It is perceived that the Inclusion Support Officers have been disempowered to allocate the funding, as previously done. A funding working group is being set-up and LAB asked for a volunteer – Trudy's offer was gratefully received.

7. EYPP

EW explained that providers were asked via the daily attendance survey on the 23 June if they wished to claim EYPP funding this term. For those that responded either 'yes' or 'not sure' they are being sent a Claim Form and will have 1 week to submit this. As we have not run a headcount this funding block, providers will be asked to claim for ALL children, not just new children who have appeared this term.

ACTION: Summer 2020 EYPP forms to be issued to providers (EW)

8. Holiday Provision

The Government is expecting holiday provision to run, however schools are not expected to provide this. There was concern around the fact that older children haven't been able to attend school but are now able to attend holiday provision along with younger children. LAB confirmed that it is a personal decision whether or not to operate holiday clubs, and there is no pressure to do so. Risk assessments will be needed.

Some group members confirmed they currently aren't inundated with holiday provision requests. JB commented that she had been unsuccessful in obtaining a grant to subsidise their holiday provision, and as yet, hasn't been able to offer anything.

The continuation of bubbles could hamper the number of children providers are able to accept. RC commented that it is difficult to interpret what is meant by 'bubbles' and to know if what you are doing is correct, and some providers are more flexible than others. Mixed message.

9. AOB

DfE have requested that providers unfurlough staff, however the number of children allowed to attend is restricted. Providers are paying an increasing contribution to the furlough scheme, all add to sustainability issues.

Currently we don't know the demand for EYE places, only the supply. How many EYE children are being turned away? EW to add question to daily survey to get a better understanding of EYE demand and place sufficiency.

ACTION: Sustainability issue to be taken to Risk group (LAB)
Demand/sufficiency question to be added to daily survey (EW)

10. Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 15 July at 12:30pm. LAB will send out a Microsoft teams meeting request to the group.