

Wiltshire Council
Children's Services

Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on 22 November 2013 at the Melksham Professional Development Centre.

Present: Chris Ashton (Wilts C), Jackie Bedford (Wilts C), Lucy-Anne Bryant (Wilts C), Rosemary Collard (Snapdragons Nurseries), Jenny Harvey (Wilts C), John Proctor (South Hills Independent School, Salisbury), Sarah Ward (H/T – Bulford St Leonards Primary School), Lucy Waterman (Rub a Dub Pre-school, Derry Hill), Liz Williams (Wilts C)

Observer: Anne Reeves – Spring Board Opportunity Group

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Members were welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made.

2.0 Apologies for Absence

Jane Boulton (Springboard DSC, Chippenham), Alan Butler (Learning Curve Day Nursery, Wootton Bassett, Mark Cawley (New Road Nursery), Mike Fairbeard (Little Fir Tree Nursery, YMCA)

3.0 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2013 were agreed as an accurate record of discussion.

4.0 Matters arising from minutes of meeting held on 20 September 2012

None

5.0 Membership

5.1 Future Chair arrangements

LW advised that Schools Forum, at their meeting on 3 October, had agreed to amend the terms of reference for the EYRG to delete the requirement for the Chair of the group to be an LA Officer.

In view of this members unanimously elected John Proctor to the role of Early Years Reference Group Chair with immediate effect.

5.2 Schools Forum representation

It had been agreed at the last meeting that Rosemary Collard would start attending Schools Forum, initially as an observer, alongside John Proctor who would continue as an EYRG representative.

ACTION: LW to advise Democratic Services and arrange for RC to receive a scheduled of future meeting dates.

6.0 Update on National Consultations

Update on current national consultations -

Great flexibility for Change of Use – No noticeable relaxation of had been observed regarding planners attitude to being more sympathetic to greater flexibility of use of premises for childcare.

Childcare regulations – Current consultation incorporating a number of significant proposals (responses deadline 30 September). Includes relaxation on childcare for over 5s, leisure centres, minimum age of unsupervised staff, staff qualification, removal of training courses to be approved by LA. It is expected regulatory changes will come into effect in November 2013. Still awaiting final response from DfE.

More Great Childcare – no proposals to make changes to single funding formula immediately but expecting changes possibly in coming year with introduction of national funding rates. EW advised that there would be no need to update the single funding formula as a result of the recent proposed changes.

7.0 Single Funding Formula

7.1 Two year old funding – integration into a single free entitlement administration system

JH updated members on this work.

First combine headcount has now been completed by early years providers. This appears to have gone reasonable well, despite no pre populated information being able to be sent to providers due to an Impulse software error. The information received from providers on eligible two year olds was completed well bearing in mind this was the first time they had completed this as a combined return. Feedback from provider on being able to forward all 2, 3 & 4 year old information on one form was generally positive.

LW advised that some providers were finding it difficult to obtain proof of ID for some two year olds. There was a general feeling that the need to be flexible in such cases was necessary and providers could seek clarification from health visitors if it helped.

7.2 In year funding adjustments – phased verses lump sum payments

Single Funding Formula adjustment payments – currently offer two options; funding adjustment spread over remaining months of the financial year or as an immediate lump sum payment/debit. This had been looked at further and to address the concerns expressed by members at the last meeting about reconciling accounts it is proposed that additional information be added to statements detailing actual hours delivered. It was hoped this would facilitate moving over to a single system of phased adjustment payments only

ACTION: CA to draft revised statement paperwork

RECOMMENDATION TO SCHOOLS FORUM: That a single process of phased payments over the remaining months of a financial year be adopted to accommodate payment adjustments.

7.3 Rapidly expanding settings

It has been recognised that the current free entitlement funding processes do not accommodate for where a setting might rapidly expand.

LW advised that Schools Forum, at their meeting on 3 October, had agreed to implement the proposed changes to the Early Years Single Funding Formula for rapidly expanding settings. In future, requested for alternative funding arrangements by rapidly expanding providers would be considered on a case-by-case basis. It was considered important to monitor the reason for such requests.

This would now be implemented with effect from April 2014 and providers informed by issue of an addendum to the Local Provider Agreement.

7.4 Proposal to fund new children for actual weeks in attendance & children who start & leave prior to a headcount

In developing the funding scheme further to pay for 'actual attendance' officers proposed implementing the following two new processes –

- Funding new children for actual weeks in attendance during their first term of registration – currently the scheme assumes all new children commence at the start of a new funding period
- Funding children who start and leave a setting prior to a headcount – currently these children are not funded.

LW advised that Schools Forum, at their meeting on 3 October, had agreed to implement the new proposed funding arrangements for starters and leavers prior to a headcount, subject to appropriate audit arrangements being in place for the headcount. This would now be implemented with effect from April 2014 and providers informed by issue of an addendum to the Local Provider Agreement.

8.0 Code of Practice/Local Agreement

8.1 Local Provider agreement

JH summarised the proposed revisions to the Local Provider Agreement as detailed below -

- Section 3 – statement that provider declarations must now be completed electronically and clarification that one must be completed for each separately Ofsted registered setting.
- Section 3 – add- new providers/childminders must attend briefing sessions
- Section 5 – parental complaints – clarify process and publish a complaints form on the Wiltshire website.
- Section 5 – provider complaints – add statement that these should be processed using Wiltshire Council's corporate complaints procedure.
- Section 6 – quality – section to remain to detail quality standards and statutory guidance.
- Section 8 – clarify information about free entitlement audits by childcare officers as part of LA financial standards.
- Section 11 – insert details about Equality Act
- Section 12 – charging – clarify details about the need to be specific in invoices, promoting transparency and will be subject to childcare officer audit
- Section 13 – withdrawal of funding – subject to major rewording to comply with national guidance; on receipt of official notification of Ofsted inadequate judgement & gross misconduct.
- Section 14 – appeals – reworded in collaboration with legal services but cannot appeal to LA on notification of Ofsted inadequate. Section now details appeals process in detail.

ACTION: JH to circulate draft copy to members for final comments with the aim of publishing to sector mid December.

9.0 Two year old funding – Update

LAB presented a paper detailing current position on two year old funding.

Currently on target for funding 900 children by January 2014. If a setting receives a judgement of 'requires improvement' the LA will continue to fund a child to maintain continuity of provision but will not allocate 2YOF to children at such settings even if they have been in attendance in prior to turning two.

New criteria for funding will be introduced in September 2014 and will be primarily based on receipt of 'benefits'. The CAF will longer be used.

25p additional allowance in 2013/14 – benchmarking data indicated that Wiltshire’s 2YOF rate is the highest in the south-west.

ACTION: Work on projecting future funding requirements is required following receipt of Wiltshire’s funding settlement and modelling to be presented to Schools Forum. Anticipate recommending basic rate to remain unchanged but cease the 25p additional funding allocation which has been paid in 2013/14.

10.0 Dates for Future meetings

Date	Day	Time	Venue
14 February 2014	Friday	10:00 – 12:00	Melksham PDC
23 May 2014	Friday	10:00 – 12:00	Melksham PDC
19 September 2014	Friday	10:00 – 12:00	Melksham PDC
21 November 2014	Friday	10:00 – 12:00	Melksham PDC

11.0 Any Other Business

11.1 Early Years & Childcare Team

Members requested information, including a structure chart, on the Council’s re-structured early years & childcare team.

ACTION: Details to be included in provider newsletter when available.