

Wiltshire Council

Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on 6 February 2015 at the Melksham Professional Development Centre.

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

Jane Boulton (Springboard DSC), Mark Cawley (New Road Day Nursery), Rosemary Collard (Snapdragons Nurseries), John Proctor (South Hills Nursery) – Chair, Lucy Waterman (LW) (Rub A Dub Pre School), Fiona Webb (Sunny Days Nursery), Karen Bird (Wiltshire Council), Elizabeth Williams (EW) (Wiltshire Council), Jennifer Harvey (Wiltshire Council) – minutes.

2.0 Apologies

Angela Brennan (Wiltshire Council), Lucy-Anne Bryant (Wiltshire Council), Alan Butler (Learning Curve Day Nursery), Sarah Ward (HT, Bulford Primary School)

3.0 Minutes of last meeting held on 21 November 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2014 were agreed as an accurate record of discussion.

4.0 Matters arising from minutes of meeting held on 21 November 2014

Extra high needs funding – JP questioned where this is coming from. EW informed the group that £1.2 million has been allocated to EY high needs managed by Angela Everett. The high needs block of DSG is managed within SEND service.

5.0 Single funding formula

5.1 Funding rates for 2 and 3&4 year olds 2015-2016

2yos – EW informed the group that we are currently funding 2yos at rate of £5.43. From 1 April 2015, we will be moving to participation based funding. Wiltshire Council has up until now been able to support a higher hourly rate based on predicting numbers, but moving forward the council is now only going to be funded at £4.97/hr. Schools Forum are supportive of a higher hourly rate for 2yos, but understand that they might not be able to financially support it. Their decision is that at least a set hourly rate of £4.97 is paid, but this will be reassessed at the end of the financial year to see if a higher hourly rate can be set. Schools Forum have agreed to ringfence EY funding, but any surplus could be used to offset a high needs overspend within the overall budget.

EW reported a projected underspend of £300k for 2yos, which is currently offsetting overspend in other areas. Further discussion around this point will be finalised at the next Schools Forum meeting. JP stated that Schools Forum could potentially be going back on a previous decision of ringfencing EY budget.

3&4yos – EW reported that following the consultation in Autumn 2014 on the principle of moving to one hourly rate, there has been some analysis of these results. There was discussion at the last Schools Forum meeting regarding who had responded and the need for possible further analysis of those respondents and the actual hours they delivered. JP questioned this as he thought this would come into effect from 1 April 2015. EW reminded the group that Wiltshire Council had only consulted on the principle of a single hourly rate not an actual change. The impact of a single hourly rate on all early years providers now needs to be assessed. EW has contacted EFA, who have stated that there needs to be sufficient consultation with providers on a change in hourly rate. If Schools Forum make a decision to implement a single hourly rate from 1 April 2015, the council would only be giving providers 3 week's notice of a change.

JH reported that analysis of the providers who had responded to the consultation showed that they delivered 426,737 hours of the total 1,197,041 hours that were delivered by all providers in

Autumn 2014. Of those 426,737 hours, 22,037 were delivered by childminders, 9870.5 by maintained providers, and 394,829 were delivered by PVI providers.

EW circulated a report which calculated that an affordable single hourly rate is £3.81. JP suggested that Wiltshire Council could write out to providers now to forewarn them with a link back to the consultation to remind providers.

EW stated that there are a number of funding options available:

- a. Implementing a single hourly rate from 1 April 2015;
- b. Implementing a single hourly rate from 1 September 2015;
- c. Manage the change through transitional protection over 2 years ;
- d. Limiting losses and protect through capping.

EW circulated a 2nd report on options c and d for discussion. MC questioned the loss of £9k indicated as an impact. EW stated that all childminders would experience a reduction in hourly rate of 41% and that the figure quoted was the maximum loss to a single provider with the average being approximately £1,500. JP questioned that at a previous meeting (24.05.2013) EW reported on agreed 2yo funding rates, and that childminders had been overpaid as they had continued to be paid at a higher rate of £6.50.

EW will wait for further legal advice but take the options forward to the next Schools Forum meeting on 12 March 2015.

ACTION: EW to take options forward to Schools Forum on 12 March 2015 for a decision to be made by them. The Early Years Reference Group recommend an hourly rate of £3.81.

5.2 Early Years Pupil Premium update

JH gave a progress report to the group (report attached).

RC stated that she had attended an EYP meeting where the loss of funding was discussed. It's a difficult position for all providers who have an EYP as they won't be able to recoup the funding through EYPP. All agreed. MC asked the group who would be maintaining the higher salary. All said they will be keeping. Providers could hire their graduates out to other providers but then leaves original provider without that person.

ACTION: None

6.0 Free Entitlement administration

6.1 Automating returns

JP requested an update on the Provider Portal. JH informed the group that a web based provider portal is being looked at as an electronic solution for providers to update their own information currently held on the online Childcare directory as well as submit their headcount information. At the beginning of January 2015, a brief IT audit for providers was carried out via SNAP survey which also asked for testing volunteers. Approximately 90 providers offered their services, and a random sample of 20 providers will be selected in the next week or so.

ACTION: None

6.2 Mid-term adjustment forms

JP requested that the wording on the current Mid-term payment adjustment form is looked at, and possibly reworded to reduce confusion.

ACTION: JH to look at rewording the mid-term payment adjustment form.

7.0 SEND Local Provider Offer update

No update available. JH has contacted Caroline Bell, SEND Team Lead, for an update, and no reply has been received despite chasing. JB suggested contacting Anna Williams who might be able to assist.

ACTION: JH to contact Anna Williams for a SEND Local Provider offer update for distribution to the group or extend an invitation to the next meeting.

8.0 Childcare team update

JH gave a Childcare team update in AB's absence to the group (report attached).

ACTION: None

9.0 Safeguarding Audit update

Update included in Childcare team update report (report attached).

JB mentioned that Springboard DSC will have 2 safeguarding audits to complete – one for EY and one for Commissioned Services. She feels that this is duplication and that there should only be 1 audit for providers to complete.

ACTION: JH to liaise with AB on audit issue.

JP brought up the issue of disqualification by association for discussion by the group. It was felt that providers may wish to get a declaration from all their staff stating if they know of anyone/ or live with anyone who has a criminal record linked to safeguarding. JP stated that he wasn't aware of any letter being sent to date to Wiltshire providers advising of disqualification by association.

MC reported that his nursery is virtually at full capacity, and thinks this could be the case with several other nurseries in the Chippenham area.

ACTION: JH to take Chippenham sufficiency comments to AB.

10.0 Dates for Future meetings

Date	Day	Time	Venue
15 May 2015	Friday	10:00 – 12:00	Melksham PDC
18 September 2015	Friday	10:00 – 12:00	Melksham PDC
20 November 2015	Friday	10.00 – 12.00	Melksham PDC

10.0 Any Other Business

2yo update – KB gave a 2yo funding update in LAB's absence (report attached). KB stated that approximately 41% of eligible families hadn't taken up their FE offer. JP questioned this. KB confirmed that initial contact is being made with these families asking why not taken up offer.

JH reported that Sarah Ward (maintained nursery representative) had tendered her resignation from the group. With the resignation of Alan Butler along with a few other vacancies, JH stated that the Local Authority must seek to appoint new representatives. In addition there has also been no contact or attendance from some representatives such as Jo Murray (childminder representative). JP stated that if there is failure to attend consecutive meetings, then the group must assume resignation. All agreed.

ACTION: JH to liaise with LAB and AB, and email all EY providers inviting initial expressions of interest.

MC stated that he had received a letter from central government to all PVI's regarding seeking a reduction in business rates from Local Authorities. EW said that she would look into this.

ACTION: MC to forward copy of letter to JH, and EW and JP to try and take forward.