

**Early Years Reference Group Meeting  
Friday 6 January 2023**

**1. Welcome and introductions**

Lyssy Bolton (LB), Jane Boulton (JB), Jackie Day (JD), Lucy-Anne Bryant (LAB), Emma Cooke (EC), Emma Osmund (EO) (Chair), Marie Taylor (MT), Emily Wood (EW) (notes)

**2. Apologies**

Gary Binstead (GB), Sarah Hawkins (SH), Deborah Muir (DM), Claire Shipley (CS)

**3. Minutes of last meeting (23 November 2022)**

All agreed as true and accurate.

**4. Matters arising**

Item 4 – Lots of interest received to join the EYRG following publicity of vacancies in the EY Newsletter. Private representation (1 more needed) – 4 different providers have come forward. Off the back of this, EW and LAB revisited the group's Terms of Reference and identified that Rosemary Collard had been representing the private sector for more than the maximum of 6 years, she in turn then offered her resignation, this now allows two new providers to join the group. The four providers who have expressed an interest are to be written to and asked to produce a paragraph on why they should be selected, these will be shared with Emma Osmund (chair) for consultation on who should be asked to join.

Voluntary representation (2 more needed). Interest received from two providers. They are to be invited to attend the next meeting.

Item 4 – Kai Muxlow (Commissioning Manager) has been briefed about school aged children still in EY provision – he is aware, and this sits under his SEND work.

Item 9 – Still awaiting reply from DfE regarding clarification over 'artificial breaks' in the delivery of EYE funded places.

Item 10 – COMF funding – to be covered by this meeting.

**ACTION: JH to invite 4 private providers to submit a paragraph to expand on why they should join the EYRG.  
JH to invite the 2 voluntary providers to attend our next meeting**

**5. Budget monitoring 2022-23 update (MT)**

MT talked through the attached document. The budget was increased by the DfE back in the summer based on the January 2022 census data. Unusually, this has only increased the forecast underspend for 3&4 year olds but she's not concerned about the financial position. The majority of this variance will be clawed back in June / July 2023 as per the funding guidance. The ISF is forecasting an overspend this is following the expansion of the scheme from 15 to 30 hours per week and reflects a higher number of parents than estimated taking up the funding.

**ACTION: The report will be shared at Schools Forum on 19 January 2023.**

**6. Consultation of the EY Payment Rates for 23-24(MT) & 7. The EY Budget for 2023-24 in total (MT)**

Attached presentation was shared.

Under the guidance, ultimately, the LA decides the rates, but we need to consult with the sector and the EYRG is used for this purpose.

A further £20m has been added to the national increase of £180m announced last year to reflect cost pressures on the sector.

#### 2 year old funding

Historically we have passported 100% of the 2-year-old funding to providers and it is proposed to continue to do this for the 23-24 financial year. All agreed.

#### 3&4 year old funding

We are required to passport at least 95% of the 3&4 year old budget to providers, Marie has undertaken a number of models showing the differing hourly rates, each increase of 1p per hour equates to approximately £50k of additional expenditure. The affordable hourly rate equates to passporting 98.3% of the budget to providers. All agreed that this was a logical and reasoned argument, which supports providers. Acknowledgement was given to John Proctor who had campaigned and sought agreement from Schools Forum that the Early Years funding should be ringfenced. Deprivation and rurality have been increased slightly to reflect demand.

#### **ISF, EYPP & DAF**

ISF remains at 22/23 levels and any time limited overspend can be a pressure on the reserve. EYPP and DAF are passported at funded rates as per the DfE guidance.

#### **Central Budgets**

The increased national pay award impact for 22-23 and 23-24 estimate of 4.5% are included in the 23-24 base budget estimate.

The group supported the recommended budget.

**ACTION: MT to present proposed EY funding rates to the Schools Forum on 19 January for final consultation.**

7. See above.

#### **8. Early Years Funding formulae: government consultation response (MT/ LAB)**

The Government have responded to the consultation responses given last year. No significant differences to the proposed method to EY Funding formulae have come about as a result of the consultation, and the response from the DfE is as expected. Full response can be read here: [Early years funding formulae - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-funding-formulae)

#### **9. EY underspend – support for SEN children and school readiness (EC)**

To address the apparent lack of school readiness already being evidenced by those starting this academic year, EC shared with the group her idea to expand the number of Early Years Inclusion Advisors by one in each quadrant on a fixed term, 2-year contract. Lyssy voiced that she felt building capacity in the sector and generally developing skills across the board would be useful. She felt it was important that EYIA modelled good practice and that this benefitted by more than those providers visited by an EYIA. Jane commented that they've seen a 98% increase in the number of referrals to Springboard, this is an unprecedented increase. Springboard are unable to do physical outreach, their offer is all virtual.

Discussion was had about the feasibility of extending the expert and mentoring programmes already in place, but this requires children being moved between providers, which is problematic as staff capacity, insurance liabilities etc pose as blockers. Suggestion was made that a technical person could be employed/commissioned to create a library of videos to be shared with the sector – the scope of scenarios to be captured on film would need to be scoped out but they should include both acute and universal scenarios and have resources required and what strategies to use clearly demonstrated. The technical person could have the ability to convert real footage into avatars or cartoons to protect the identity of those taking part – this

would assist with getting over consent hurdles. The skills and knowledge of the Portage service should also be included in the design and structure of these films.

**ACTION: EC to approach the council's communications team, in the first instance, to ascertain if they have the capacity to develop a library of film clips.**

#### **10. Recruitment campaign – help needed (LAB)**

Off the back of the discussion about supporting the sector with school readiness, this led to a discussion about generally bolstering the workforce. EC shared her recent experience of attending Swindon's recent EY Conference which was joint organised between health and education. This was compered by Ann Van Dyke and Dingley's Promise. The event was open to Level 2 and 3 students alongside registered providers. This gave attendees the opportunity to network.

All agreed that Wiltshire should run its own EY Conference in the Autumn – open to providers and those currently studying to join the sector. This would provide the perfect forum for students to engage with seasoned practitioners. Suggestion made that the sector is surveyed to obtain ideas of what could be included in the way of workshops and stands. The conference could provide a showcase for outstanding providers to share their good practice. All agreed that this should be a heavily subsidised event but with the expectation that providers fund the refreshments. 'Play is the greatest inclusion tool'

Request that elements of the EY Conference are filmed and shared on Right Choice for all to benefit from – all agreed.

**ACTION: EC to start preparations for an EY Autumn Conference**

#### **11. Surveys (EO)**

Emma requested that the council coordinates the timings of surveys, as just before Christmas, providers were sent multiple questionnaires to complete (Safeguarding, FSM, EYE Funding Audit) all within a very tight timescale. EW apologised and acknowledged that insufficient thought had been put to the timings of these surveys. Each appeared to be necessary at the time when, they could have been stretched out. The EYE Funding Audit survey is new and unlikely to be a repeated with great frequency – the Safeguarding Audit is annual and other survey requests should be coordinated around this.

#### **12. Any Other Business**

Jane raised a concern that providers may have been underpaid EYE funding if they only claimed 12 weeks of funding in Summer 2022 instead of the full 13 weeks, she felt that this may explain the reported EYE underspend from last year. EW explained that this was unlikely as the majority claimed the full number of weeks each funding block. The explanation may be that Springboard didn't claim for the last week of 'Spring term' leading up to Easter which was at the beginning of April as they didn't realise they could.

**ACTION: EW to investigate if multiple providers mis-claimed last Summer Funding Block.**

#### **13. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday 31 March 2023 at 2pm-3:50pm.