

Wiltshire Council
Children's Services

Early Years Reference Group

Minutes of a meeting held on 24 May 2013 at the Melksham Professional Development Centre.

Present: Jackie Bedford (Wilts C), Jane Boulton (Springboard DSC, Chippenham), Sarah Clover (Wilts C), Rosemary Collard (Snapdragons Nurseries), Gill Hanlan (Chair - Wilts C), Jenny Harvey (Wilts C), Ted Hatala (St Josephs), 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)

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

GH welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2.0 Apologies for Absence

Alan Butler (Learning Curve Day Nursery, Wootton Bassett), Mark Cawley (New Road Nursery), Mike Fairbeard (Little Fir Tree Nursery, YMCA), Jo Murray (CM representative), Fiona Webb (Sunny Days Nursery), Caroline Well (Smiley Faces Nursery, Amesbury)

3.0 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2012 were agreed as an accurate record of discussion.

4.0 Matters arising from minutes of meeting held on 16 November 2012

5.1 Local Provider Agreement – this has been finalised and distributed electronically to all providers and Wiltshire's website has been up dated to reflect both national and local provider agreement requirements.

5.2 Condition of accessing free entitlement (EYFS)

SC confirmed that current arrangements did permitted providers to opt out of following the EYFS framework as long as the necessary exemption certificate had been obtained from the DfE/Ofsted. Clarification on future arrangement is expected when the new roles of the LA are published by central government.

6.2.2 Single Funding Formula - Two Year Old Funding - Consultation –

JH confirmed that results of the consultation concerning bringing two year old funding into the single funding formula had been published on the Wiltshire website but had now been removed after the start of the new financial year.

6.2.3 Single Funding Formula - Two Year Old Funding - Hourly rate for two year old

funding – LW confirmed that School Forum had agreed a two year old funding rate for 2013/14 of £5.68 (comprising £5.43 basic rate and £0.25 set-up supplement). It has also agreed that any uncommitted funds at year end would be rolled forward to deal with future two year old funding demand.

9.1 Schools Forum Agenda

JB confirmed that the sector was now being alerted to this as required.

5.0 Update on National Issues

GH advised of three recent central government papers –

More Great Childcare – most notable proposals related to

- The change in adult to child ratios e.g. for under one (a move from 1:3 to 1:4) and for two year olds (a move from 1:4 to 1:6). This had not proved popular with the sector. Latest announcement indicated that government is now working with NDNA providing them with a £1m grant to 'test' out new ratio proposals.

- The introduction of childminder agencies. This was again not proving to be a popular proposal as childminders were unwilling to pay the likely charge for registering with an agency.

Changes to the role of LAs in early education and childcare – this proposed a drastic reduction in the role and influence of the LA across the early years sector

Good early years provision for all – introduced the proposal for a new early years inspection framework.

GH advised that each document raises huge issues to everyone working in the early years sector. Currently still awaiting government feedback which is thought to have been delayed due to enormous backlash from the sector.

6.0 Code of Practice/Local Agreement

6.1 National draft code and implications for local code from September 2013

SC circulated a paper summarising details of the national draft code and its implication for the local provider agreement which would lead to the deletion of much of the current content of the local code. Key points –

Two year old funding - This becomes a statutory entitlement from September 2013 for lower income households and other specific categories of children. Provision will primarily be made available in good or outstanding settings and funding will not be removed even if a change in family circumstances occurs.

Sufficiency – Repeal of LA requirement to assess sufficiency of childcare

Information, advice and training – duty for LA to provide this is to be replaced

Three & four year old funding – some duties to remain with the LA e.g. charging for extras, equitability between provider types, stretched offer, maximise take-up, top-up fees etc

Flexibility – LA to ensure flexibility of free entitlement is available as an option for parents

Quality – availability of funding will be sole dictated by Ofsted judgement on quality. Funding will be withdrawn from inadequate provision and the LA will need to secure alternative provision as soon as is possible. Funding will be available to new providers prior to their first Ofsted grade inspection.

Funding arrangements – must continue with single funding formula providing an indicative annual budget to providers. Only limited conditions to be placed on providers with a clear policy on funding children that move settings. Maintained nurseries are to provide free school meals to eligible children with consideration being given to doing the same at PVI's. LA to consider funding EYFS exempt providers. DfE will publish all LA funding rates.

Delivery in partnership – LA to publish a list of providers taking up funding and must have an appeals and complaints procedure in place.

Securing sufficiency – LA must secure sufficient childcare provision and publish an assessment every three years reporting annually to elected members

Parents – LA must provide information, advice and assistance to secure and assess quality of childcare and have a complaints procedure.

Information to childcare providers – LA must provide information on where to find advice, information and training on a voluntary basis.

Special educational needs – LA must advise providers to adhere to SEN code of practise

Wiltshire's local code of practice will be issue in September 2013 to reflect these changes.

6.2 Local provide declaration – update on returns

JH advised current declaration had been issued to all providers in electronic format which had caused some confusion across the sector. Following sending out a chaser indicating funding would be temporarily suspended if not returned, only 39 remained outstanding at the deadline date of which 16 were related to childminder who did not currently have any funded children in their care. 23 payments were suspended in total. As of today (24 May) only 12 now remained outstanding and late payments had been made to those provided who had since replied. JH expressed her thanks to all the work the childcare officers had done in chasing non respondents.

7.0 Single Funding Formula

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

JH advised that with effect from September 2013 the administration procedures around two year old funding will be integrated with that of the three & four year old entitlement as required under the single funding formula arrangements.

The LA is currently scoping a project to bring the funding IT software system in line with these new arrangements. The main concern and aim has been to ensure no additional paperwork is introduced but just expand on data collected using current paperwork.

Annual financial estimates will incorporate two year old funding information as a separate entry and providers will receive one monthly payment covering 2,3 and 4 year old entitlement. The LA hopes to provide settings with new statements including two year old information at the end of August taking eligible two year old children data from government statistics. Uncertainty in settings regarding knowledge on two year old uptake leading to necessary payment adjustments will be dealt with flexibly by the team which will allow providers to make contact at any time to advise on changes to two year olds numbers (as already implemented for childminders).

Headcount form will include details of two year olds but will not require parent signature. However these will continue to be required for three and four year old claims.

The authority will continue to research ways of reducing paperwork into the future.

8.0 Two year old funding – Update

SC circulated a paper detailing current position on two year old funding. There are approximately now 500 children being funded with the aim of increasing to 726 by September 2013. The LA is now using the on-line eligibility checker which is working well and referrals are still coming through via CAFs, health visitors etc. Confirmed eligibility cases are automatically approved and exception/discretionary cases only are being reviewed by the panel/strategy group.

GH reported that the care and attention the team uses to place these vulnerable children is outstanding and this has proved to be very successful in a number of cases when children have gone 'missing' and been tracked down.

9.0 Membership

9.1 Voluntary representation

A new representative for this sector, Caroline Wells would be recommended to Schools Forum following the current member, Ted Hatala's term of membership coming to an end. GH thanked with sincere gratitude his long service on the group and his work in steering through some difficult decisions over the years.

9.2 Maintained nursery representation

Sarah Ward, Headteacher of Bulford St Leonards Primary School would be recommended to Schools Forum following Michael Keeling's term of membership coming to an end.

Recommendation to Schools Forum

Schools Forum is requested to agree the recommendation to accept with immediate effect the expressions of interest to join the membership of the Early Year Reference Group as follows –

- Voluntary sector representative - Caroline Wells, Manager of Smiley Faces Nursery, Amesbury

- Maintained nursery representative – Sarah Ward, Headteacher of Bulford St Leonards Primary School

Schools Forum is also requested to note that the reference group will put forward the name of its second Schools Forum representative following its next meeting in September to replace Michael Keeling. John Proctor will continue to serve as an Early Years Reference Group representative on School Forum.

10.0 **Dates for Future meetings**

Date	Day	Time	Venue
20 September 2013	Friday	10:00 – 12:00	Melksham PDC, Falcon
22 November 2013	Friday	10:00 – 12:00	Melksham PDC, Falcon

11.0 **Any Other Business**

11.1 **Two year old funding strategy group - membership**

SC advised that Early Years Reference Group membership representation on the Two Year Old Funding Strategy Group is required. It was agreed that Jane Boulton and Rosemary Collard would join this group and that Lucy Waterman would be invited to join the group as a substitute if the current EYP representative was unable to attend.

11.2 **Two year old funding national network meeting - 6th June 2013**

SC, Lucy-Anne Bryant and John Proctor had all secured places at this event being run by Hemsells. A further place had now become available and it was agreed that Rosemary Collard would also attend. GH agreed that reimbursement of travel costs would be made to reference group members.