

THE EARLY YEARS' REFERENCE GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

The Early Years Reference Group (EYRG) was brought together in 2007 as a sub-group of the Wiltshire Schools' Forum in response to the Government's plans for Nursery Education Funding reform. It is recognised that the EYRP needs to be established on a more permanent basis.

Key to successful delivery of the free entitlement is for local authorities to achieve a balance in their priorities; securing sufficiency, quality and accessibility in free provision. Critical to achieving this is a strong partnership between LAs and providers in all sectors; private, voluntary, independent, maintained and childminders, to enable them to assess and meet demand according to local circumstances and market.

2. Current Purpose

The purpose envisaged for the EYRG was to offer advice, experience, information and recommendations to the Local Authority and the Wiltshire Schools' Forum in relation to the practical exercise of developing, reforming and implementing early years funding arrangements including:

- costing the current free early years entitlement;
- modelling a new single local funding formula for distributing the funding for the free entitlement between all early years sectors in a fair and transparent way, including impact assessments of each model;
- implementing the new formula, including any appropriate transition or protection mechanisms;
- reviewing the new formula.

To act as the principal channel by which those involved in ownership and management of early years settings may convey their views.

3. Proposed Terms of Reference Autumn 2010

As the initial detailed work on the development of the funding formula has been completed it is clear that the EYRG continues to have an important role to play. To recognise this role and to clarify the status of the group it is proposed that the Schools Forum adopt terms of reference for the EYRG.

Terms of reference are proposed as follows:

To offer advice, experience, information and recommendations to the Local Authority and the Wiltshire Schools' Forum to ensure early years and childcare funding follows national and local requirements and priorities. The aim being to secure the best possible outcomes for children by delivering an entitlement which is high quality, flexible and accessible, and gives parents choices about what is best for their children.

This will include:

- promotion of sustainability and preservation of a mixed market, as well as encouraging clear terms of engagement with parents as key delivery partners;
- acting as the principal channel by which those involved in ownership and management of early years settings may convey their views;
- monitoring the impact of the single formula including undertaking ongoing costing analyses of the free early years entitlement as necessary, and reviewing its operation for future funding periods, including impact assessment;
- providing a view on the arrangements for the administration of central government grants for early years and childcare administered locally.

To act as the principal channel by which those involved in ownership and management of early years settings may convey their views.

4. Membership

The membership of the EYRG should be representative of the different types of early years education providers across the county who are eligible and registered to offer free entitlement nursery education.

Membership:

- 4 representatives of private sector nursery education providers
- 4 representatives of voluntary sector nursery education providers
- 1 representative of independent schools providing nursery education
- 1 representative of Children's Centres
- 1 representative of District Specialist Centres
- 1 representative of childminders
- 1 representative of LA primary schools which have nursery classes.

Members will be selected by inviting expressions of interest all nursery education providers and selected by the LA in consultation with the chair of the Schools' Forum with a view to maintaining a geographical spread in the membership.

Membership will normally last for up to three years from the date of appointment.

Members unable to attend a meeting may nominate a substitute from the same sector to attend on their behalf.

The group will be supported by officers of Wiltshire Council as determined by the Director for Children and Education.

The council will provide the services of a clerk to the EYRG.

As is the practice for all sub-groups of the Wiltshire Schools' Forum, meetings will be chaired by a senior officer of the council.

5. Conduct

In carrying out their functions, members of the EYRF are expected to act in accordance with seven principles of public life set out in the first report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

It is important that Reference Group members take a strategic view of the issues they are considering when contributing to the Group's business by focussing on the needs of the children and young people of Wiltshire generally (0-19).

6. Recommendation

The above proposals were considered, amended and endorsed by the Early Years Reference Group at its meeting held on 24 September 2010.

Schools Forum is recommended to adopt the Terms of Reference, membership and conduct for the Early Years Reference Group as set out in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 above.

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Unpublished documents relied upon in the preparation of this report: None