

Children's Services

Minutes of Meeting Early Years Consultative Group

Held on: Thursday 20TH March 2025

Time: 13:00 -15:00

Venue: Barnham Broom Hotel

Present:	Post Title	Dept/Organisation	Attendance
Jo-anne Lamb (Chair)	Senior Adviser for Early Years Learning	NCC	Yes
Su Rushbrook	Early Years Finance Manager	NCC	Yes
John Crowley	Assistant Director Learning & Achievement	NCC	Yes
Lacey Douglas	EY Rep, Schools Forum		No
Nina Hopson	Manager	East Dereham Day Nursery	Yes
Jenny Wickes	Manager	East Dereham Day Nursery	Yes
Louise Clements McLeod	Executive Head	Halcyon Federation	Yes
Claire Hooker	Head Teacher	Emneth Nursery School	Yes
Claire Henry	Owner	So Schools Out	No
Lesley Doy	Manager	Chapel Break OSC CIC	No
Victoria Furness	Owner	Forest School for Life	Apologies
Suzie Squirrel-Hughes	Owner	Little Squirrels	Apologies
Jayne Rayner	Manager	Alburgh & Denton Pre-school	Yes
Jane Pears	Manager	St. Helens Pre-school	Yes
Lynne Armitage	Committee Trustee	Ducklings Pre-school	Yes
Charlie Wilson-Boast	Manager	Seedlings Day Nursery	Yes
Rachel		Seedlings Day Nursery	Yes
Jo Tuttle	Director of Business	Aylsham High School	Yes
Claire Gravett	Nursery Class	Fakenham Infant School	Apologies
Katie Stephens	Manager	Fakenham Daycare	Yes
Samantha Mann	Owner	Attlebridge/Cawston/Lyng Montessori Nursery	Yes
Yvonne Hamilton	Manager	Chestnut Nursery @NRP	Yes
Hayley Fiddy	Deputy Manager	East Dereham Day Nursery	Yes
Sue Brown (minute taker)	Early Years' Support Manager	NCC	Yes

Item	Minute	Action and due date
1	Welcome & Apologies	
2	Minutes of last meeting	

- JC recapped regarding the last meeting which covered SEND and advised a follow up meeting was planned for 8.5.25
- JC advised the LFI Group had been working on Transitions. There was a constant demand for EHCPs, some of which were not needed. There were two spikes recognised, one in early years and one at the end of primary. It was felt it was about confidence in the next stage rather than meeting the need. There has been a decline since September for ECHPs particularly around those year groups.
- JL advised 110 children deferred entry to reception last year, just under half of which had additional needs. Some providers have changed their admission policy and are no longer offering deferred places.
- **Action:** -JC to send school admissions policy to the group, for information how the policy is implemented.

JC

3

Terms of Reference

- The current TOR was shared on the screen and discussed with the following comments: -
 - ❖ Do we see this group as a sub group of School's Forum?
 - ❖ How do we decide the chair of this group? It was also felt a vice chair should be named. Should there be a time frame for when they are in post?
 - ❖ How do we decide the membership of this group?
 - ❖ There is to be a review at the next School's Forum meeting about the School Forum constitution and how it relates to other groups.
 - ❖ This group identifies the chair for this group, and they attend School's Forum. Currently Lacey is the chair of this group and attends School's Forum as PVI rep.
 - ❖ Could there be more early years representation at the School's Forum?
 - ❖ Need to recognise this is a self-governing group but also needs to maintain a voice at School's Forum

Action: JC/JL to update the TOR with the above comments and distribute a Draft copy for consideration.

JC/JL

4

Expansion Grant

Funding was available to support the expansion of the funded entitlements, settings to be informed of their individual allocation by 10th April 2025. The Grant was to be distributed directly to providers from the LA.

Jo shared the information and proposal with all for comments.

- Discussed whether to distribute the full amount of the

grant to providers or keep back £200K for any increase in September – if there are no applications expansion it will be shared with existing providers.

- Additional grant going to schools - NIC Grant – will come from DfE to schools via the LA, to support increase of costs associated with NIC. Proposed the Expansion Grant (EG) only be allocated to the PVI Sector. Maintained schools will sit with the NIC grant (any school led provision). Schools with baby rooms will get the EG grant and NIC grant.
- It will be a one-off payment and will show separately on remittances. There are 463 eligible providers based on the data we have. Smaller pre-schools would only get a payment of under £100, so feel we need to set a minimum payment.
- There are no criteria for expansion, it's about recognition of the increase of places being offered.
- Monitoring of the spend will take place but there are no criteria of what it is to be spent on other than it's for revenue, not capital spend. DfE are creating a monitoring sheet, and we have stressed it needs to be light touch.
- When providers are informed of amount, we will give guidance on what it can be used for.
- JT felt that £200K was too much to hold back, as it is doubtful there will be very many providers who will be expanding places. CH added that from a budget point of view it would be good to know what will be fully received.
- The full grant needs to be distributed by end of August 2025 (which would be based on summer data)
- JL advised there was a small amount of funds left in the Childcare Dev Start up and Q & I so if it was agreed to spend the full amount, it could be used to create a different grant to support providers for revenue costs for expansion.
- **Vote:** Types of providers eligible – Should those eligible for the NIG be excluded?
 - ❖ **All agreed only to be paid to PVI Sector**
- **Vote:** Holding back £200K or distribute all of funds.
 - ❖ **All agreed to distribute all the funds**
- **Vote:** Minimum amount to be paid to providers would be £250.00
 - ❖ **All Agreed.**

5

Applying for SENIF

- SR advised SENIF application was being reviewed and would welcome any feedback.
- YH advised it would be good if the data was retained so didn't have to start from scratch every time.
- HF asked if it could be linked to the portal. SR advised there is to be a procurement change and this has been

requested.

- SM asked if it should be linked to INDES?

6

Statutory Guidance

- JL advised the new Statutory Guidance had been published and an initial reaction from settings raised concerns how they would meet the requirements.
- JL advised the topic was discussed at Leaders & Managers and one to one surgery for providers were arranged for providers to raise their concerns. There were mixed reactions, some felt there was no issue as already meeting requirements and some had concerns.
- The most common query was around the “no artificial break” which we are seeking clarification on with DfE. NH asked what the consequences would be if this wasn’t adhered to. JL advised artificial breaks are not allowed.
- KS raised what would happen if we did close for an hour? JL advised at this stage not able to advise until heard back from DfE. We need to be clear to prevent challenge from parents to the provider and to the LA.
- JL advised the LA is taking a pragmatic approach, all to carry on as is, whilst the answers are sought from DfE.
- JL advised that no policies are to be submitted at this point, until we have clarified queries. Providers will be contacted and advised when to submit them.
- JL asked what would be helpful to support providers to understand the changes?
 - ❖ YH stated some providers feel a bit overwhelmed with paperwork so short timely information would be good, advising exactly what we can do and what we can’t.
 - ❖ CH felt the one-to-one session was valuable as able to discuss individual issues. Only concern was there were no other west settings booked on. If there was a pop up on the portal set up, that could be a helpful reminder.
 - ❖ The Parent Booklet needs updating. SR advised this work was underway
- JL advised we have asked DfE questions, but not sure when they will be answered. If anyone has any concerns they need to contact us.

7

Any other business

- LM asked for Next meeting as AOB – Play (Setting up a group about Play).

10

Dates of future meetings

Thursday 8th May (SEND follow up session)
14:00 – 16:00

Venue tbc