

Children's Services

Minutes of Meeting Early Years Consultative Group

Held on: Wednesday 17th January 2024

Time: 11:30 – 13:30

Venue: Barnham Broom Hotel

| Present: | Post Title | Dept/Organisation | Attendance |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Jo-anne Lamb (Chair) | Senior Adviser for Early Years Learning | NCC | Y |
| Su Rushbrook | Early Years Finance Manager | NCC | Y |
| John Crowley | Assistant Director Education Intelligence and Effectiveness | NCC | Y |
| Lacey Douglas | EY Rep, Schools Forum | | Apologies |
| Alison Hughes | Primary Director | Inspiration Trust | Y |
| Kim Walters King | Senior Lead | Martham Academy | N |
| Cassandra Williams | Head Teacher | Lakenham Primary School | N |
| Louise Clement McLoud | Head Teacher | Little Drakes | Y |
| Claire Hooker | Head Teacher | Emneth Nursery School | Y |
| Claire Henry | Owner | So Schools Out | Apologies |
| Lesley Doy | Manager | Chapel Break OSC CIC | Apologies |
| Carol Vincent | Nursery Manager | Spring Thorpe Hamlet | N |
| Victoria Furness | Owner | Forest School for Life | N |
| Suzie Squirrel-Hughes | Owner | Little Squirrels | Y |
| Jayne Rayner | Manager | Alburgh & Denton Pre-school | Apologies |
| Jane Pears | Manager | St. Helens Pre-school | Y |
| Lynne Armitage | Committee Trustee | Ducklings Pre-school | N |
| Sue Brown (minute taker) | Early Years Service Manager | NCC | Y |
| Nina Hopson | Owner | East Dereham Day Nursery | Y |
| Charlie Wilson-Boast | Manager | Seedlings Day Nursery | Apologies |
| Susie Pull | Manager | Glebe House | Apologies |
| Claire Gravett | Nursery Class | Fakenham Infant School | N |
| Yvonne Hamilton | Manager | Chestnut Nursery @NRP | Y |
| Katie Stephens | Manager | Fakenham Daycare | Y |
| Kirsty Woods | Improvement & Inclusion Officer – Workforce Development | NCC | Y |
| Jo Nolan | Family Information & Childcare Sufficiency Manager) | NCC | Y |
| Jo Tuttle | Director of Business | Aylsham High School | Y |

| Item | Minutes | Action |
|-------------|---|---------------|
| 1 | Apologies Lacey Douglas, Claire Henry, Lesley Doy, Jayne Rayner, Charlie Wilson-Boast, Susie Pull | |

2 Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

- As agreed at the last meeting, the minutes to be published on the website.
- At the last meeting it was discussed to nominate a deputy. We have since had some expressions of interest from other members to join the group, so not needed just now. However, if you feel you would like to nominate a deputy, please advise SB.
- Statutory Guidance is now published with additional operational guidance (links below). We have raised a query with DfE regarding optional consumable charges as we do not think it is clear.

[Early education and childcare \(applies from 1 April 2024\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-education-and-childcare-applies-from-1-april-2024)

[Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-entitlements-local-authority-funding-operational-guide-2024-to-2025)

- KS raised that not all 2 year olds would be eligible for the funding. SR advised to direct parents to the calculator on Childcare Choices to check.
- SR advised the system (Synergy) would be upgraded for the new entitlements during half term. However, it is not clear if the system is able to check the codes for disadvantaged children. We have not had sight of the new system but from the release notes, the terminology is not the same as the guidance, so might be a little confusing. The parent carer claim form will also be changed for the new term.
- A Wraparound Consultative Group has been set up and have emailed for members to join. Additionally, an EY SEND Consultative Group has also been set up. If anyone is interested in being a member of either of the new groups, please let us know. They will both feed into this sub-group.
- Wraparound briefings taking place from next week so if anyone is interested in setting up or extending a wraparound provision, it may be useful for you to attend.

Agreed as a true record.

3 Funding Update

- SR shared with the group the proposed rates received which are to be in place from April 2024. A paper is to be presented to Schools Forum and then to Cabinet on 29th January to be agreed. Once agreed with Cabinet, settings will be informed.
- SR advised that EYPP was for only 15 hours and not the extended hours. If a child attends two settings it would be divided. For 3 & 4 yr old universal hours claims, details would be checked from the parent if supplied. If allocated at 2 years old and the child stays in the setting it would automatically continue, there would be no further checks.
- Food vouchers have been withdrawn and will be suspended from March 2024
- If there is anything that does not seem right, please get in touch so we are fully prepared and ready for April 2024
- SSH asked if DfE had in mind what would happen post April 2025. JL advised DfE had informed they had invested an amount for Early Years but not released a figure for Norfolk.

4 Working parents' entitlements – sufficiency of places

- It is the LA's statutory duty to ensure sufficient early years places as far as practical, for all eligible early years children.
- We are unsure of the demand.
- For schools who are interested in opening a nursery provision the LA would carry out a sufficiency assessment and the school would then need to carry out a consultation with families.
- We are aware of what places we have but the demand is unknown at this stage.
- Provider surgeries which happened recently, we established there seems to be a significant demand in the West and some settings were closing their waiting lists until 2026. In other areas there doesn't appear to be so much demand.
- To obtain the right qualification, some settings invest in allowing the staff to achieve the Level 2, but they may not pass their probation period, so then a wasted investment.

JL asked the group what the demand was like in their area and were they thinking of expanding. The following comments were made:

- Recruiting good quality staff is a barrier.
- It is the lowest paid, long working hours and highest level of need so not able to attract the right staff.
- Wellbeing of staff and managers is a factor.
- Pay and conditions are not great so not attracting applicants.
- Colleges are not delivering the same courses resulting in students not achieving level 3 so are going onto university.
- JL advised that a number of settings are not claiming SENIF funding they are entitled to. When visiting providers, the common saying is “we manage” but if SENIF was claimed it highlights the level of need to the LA, and the children are entitled to the funding.
- It was felt the settings do not understand the criteria around claiming for SENIF and needs to be advertised more. JL to look at raising the profile.

5 Recruitment/retention/workforce development

- KW advised there is a recruitment/retention plan in place. As a starting point staff are promoting in colleges and in High School 6th form as a career incentive. We have also attended career fairs in school and speaking to careers advisers and some of not been aware of the childcare sector. 2 EY staff are currently in college promoting this. We have also given advice around applying for jobs and how to complete an application form. The next step is to work with settings to help attract staff and retain them.
- KW advised to read the Early Educations Childcare Coalition paper ([link below](#)), where there is evidence there is a thirst for working/returning to work. The profile as a career needs to be raised.

[Early Education and Childcare Coalition \(earlyeducationchildcare.org\)](http://earlyeducationchildcare.org)

- CHo informed they had been in contact with the High School in their area and year 10 students had visited the setting and she had also been into school and spoken to students.
- JL informed that DfE had recruited a small Early Years Recruitment Team to address the recruitment issue across the country.
- SSQ raised that the childhood study courses were not relevant. Where can we go where the staff have all of the knowledge but require a qualification? JL thought that DfE had something in place so will check and feedback.

6 SALT Support

Add to next meeting agenda.

7 Any Other Business

- AH raised savings could be made in Energy Costs by moving the contract to another provider. Additional savings could be sourced by using LED lights. Explore grants that are available. There is also the Sugar Tax fund for outdoor, but unsure who is dealing with it at County Hall now.

The above to be discussed further at the next meeting.

8 Actions

- KW to provide more formal Workforce Development action plan to review at the next meeting.
- JL to check with DfE regarding qualification routes for people with experience but no qualification. If nothing exists, can we facilitate it to happen?
- JL to look at raising the profile of claiming SENIF.

Dates of next meeting

Wednesday 24th April 2024 - 2-4pm at County Hall – Colman Room