

## Children's Services

### Minutes of Meeting Early Years Consultative Group

Held on: Wednesday 16th July 2025

Time: 14:00 – 16:00

Venue: County Hall, Cavell Room

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		Y
Louise Clement McLoud	Head Teacher	Little Drakes	Y
Claire Hooker	Head Teacher	Emneth Nursery School	Apologies (Carole Jacques representing)
Carole Jacques	Head Teacher	Earlham Nursery School	Y
Claire Henry	Owner	So Schools Out	N
Lesley Doy	Manager	Chapel Break OSC CIC	Apologies
Victoria Furness	Owner	Forest School for Life	N
Suzie Squirrel-Hughes	Owner	Little Squirrels	Apologies
Jayne Rayner	Manager	Alburgh & Denton Pre-school	Y
Jane Pears	Manager	St. Helens Pre-school	Y
Lynne Armitage	Committee Trustee	Ducklings Pre-school	Y
Sue Brown (minute taker)	Early Years Service Manager	NCC	Y
Nina Hopson	Director	East Dereham Day Nursery	Apologies
Charlie Wilson-Boast	Manager	Seedlings Day Nursery	Y
Claire Gravett	Nursery Class	Fakenham Infant School	N
Yvonne Hamilton	Manager	Chestnut Nursery @NRP	Y
Katie Stephens	Manager	Fakenham Daycare	N
Jo Tuttle	Director of Business	Aylsham High School	Apologies
Samantha Mann	Owner	Attlebridge, Cawston and Lyng Montessori Schools	N
Paul Finon	Head of Intensive and Specialist Support Services	NCC	Y

Item	Minutes	Action
1	Apologies	

Apologies received from Claire Hooker, Lesley Doy, Suzy Squirrel-

Hughes, Nina Hopson and Jo Tuttle

## **2 Minutes of last meeting & matters arising**

Read as a true record:

- LM had emailed raising a query regarding the discussion regarding the querying the decision about the Expansion Grant. JC and JL clarified the minutes were correct regarding the decision.

## **3 Impact of Local Government Review – Paul Finon**

PF shared a power point (emailed with the minutes) advising the key detail of what it may mean for this group with the following key points raised:

- Currently Norfolk has a two-tier local government (one county council and seven district councils). The county council manage county-wide services like highways, adult social care and education. The district councils handle services such as bin collection, planning and housing
- The Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution invited councils with two tier areas to propose ideas for replacing this system with a unitary council system. This would bring all local government services in one area under one organisation, to create simpler, more effective structure that deliver better services and outcomes for residents.
- In March 2025 NCC put in an initial plan that said they would be evidence driven. The proposal went to Cabinet on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2025 and NCC is now working on the full proposal for submission on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025
- The Government to decide early 2026
- May 2027 shadow elections to take place
- 1<sup>st</sup> April 2028 new arrangements to be in place
- NCC's proposal is for a single unitary authority and South Norfolk District Council's Interim plan was for a two unitary structure with an East/West split. The remaining six districts proposal is for a three unitary option
- Lacey added that the proposals have not been fully agreed yet

Discussions took place with the following comments:

- One unitary authority would potentially result in redundancies as there would be a reduction in duplicate roles.
- A question was raised regarding what would happen with deficits in the Local Authority, Paul confirmed there is no information available.
- LA raised that opening buildings in local areas would benefit the local services, was there scope to do that? And had the costings for local service delivery been accounted for? Paul advised the proposals were not at the level yet
- Paul added the opportunities with a single unitary authority would

- be integration, data sharing, knowledge and skill sharing
- LM raised the election of a local Mayor is about to take place and that may affect the decision as they will also have their view and plans.
- CJ felt it would be good to hear about the other proposals, so an informed decision could be made.
- JL raised there may be other providers that are unaware of this so will include in an EY newsletter.

Paul added that if anyone had any queries or comments to be included, please contact him direct (paul.filon@norfolk.gov.uk). Additionally, here is the link to the NCC website which has the information regarding the options and a video explaining LGR - [Local government reorganisation - Norfolk County Council](#)

#### 4 **Giving every child the best start in life Strategy**

Published last week – JL shared the details on a power point on the screen – copy attached.

JL/JC highlighted the following:

- Current 2025 Goals, NCC are at 67.6% and National is at 68.3% (provisional)
- 4.5 million children in poverty across the country
- Piloting face to face HV clinics in the West and East and looking how they can roll that out across the county
- School Based Childcare – it is not about childcare run by schools; it can be run by a PVI setting on a school site but does need to be marketed correctly
- Doubling the Stronger Practice Hubs to 38 across the country but that doesn't mean there will be one in each county. Norfolk's Hub currently is in Ipswich
- Ofsted holding online sessions in September, dates have been shared in an EY Bulletin

#### 5 **Funding arrangements for 2026**

- JC advised we will need to consult in the Autumn term with providers regarding the funding.
- Two things to discuss: two-year-old take up which has always been low. Do we centralise or do we consider a different funding formula
- Is there anything further or different we can do to promote?
- SR advised that there will be a change in the portal around the family NEO code. The practitioners will be able to check eligibility with a click of a button.

Discussions took place with the following raised:

- Firstly, need to access those families in the first place and feel the best way is via Health/doctors surgeries.
- CJ raised that if there is a teacher in a school, they are significantly more expensive.

- Lacey raised that the new chair of APPG understands EY and he is open to suggestions. Lacey is writing to the APPG asking to look at eligibility for 2-year-olds to be as soon as they turn two. If there is anything else we feel needs to be raised let Lacey know.
- John advised there would be some remodelling and then will consult with all providers. There will also be something around when funds are received at short notice i.e. Expansion grant, NIC grant

**6 Any Other Business**

N/A

**7 Future Meeting Dates**

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025 3pm**

Wymondham Rugby Club

(To discuss funding proposals to put forward to Schools' Forum)

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025 1pm**

County Hall – Margaret English Room

(Follow up SEND Session)