

## Children's Services

### Minutes of Meeting Early Years Consultative Group

Held on: Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025

Time: 10:00 – 12:00

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
Louise Clement McLoud	Head Teacher	Little Drakes	Y
Claire Hooker	Head Teacher	Emneth Nursery School	Y
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	Apologies
Lynne Armitage	Committee Trustee	Ducklings Pre-school	N
Amanda Healey		Ducklings Pre-School	Y
Sue Brown (minute taker)	Early Years Service Manager	NCC	Y
Nina Hopson	Director	East Dereham Day Nursery	N
Charlie Wilson-Boast	Manager	Seedlings Day Nursery	Apologies
Claire Gravett	Nursery Class	Fakenham Infant School	N
Yvonne Hamilton	Manager	Chestnut Nursery @NRP	Y
Katie Stephens	Manager	Fakenham Daycare	Y
Jo Tuttle	Director of Business	Aylsham High School	Y
Samantha Mann	Owner	Attlebridge, Cawston and Lyng Montessori Schools	Y
Hayley Fiddy	Deputy Manager	East Dereham Day Nursery	N

Item	Minutes	Action
1	<b>Apologies</b> Lacey Douglas, Claire Henry, Lesley Doy, Victoria Furness, Suzie Squirrel-Hughes, Jane Pears, Lynne Armitage, Nina Hopson, Charlie	

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

Minutes from the last meeting read as a true record

## **3 Early Years Funding Consultation Feedback Discussion**

John Crowley (JC) presented the responses of the Autumn 2025 DSG consultation, focusing on issues affecting early years provision. Eight complete and fourteen partial responses were received from a mix of childminders, schools, nursery schools, and voluntary pre-schools.

### **Key Discussion Points:**

#### **Low Uptake of Two-Year-Old Entitlement:**

- Families can now access more hours due to expanded funding for younger children
- The change of name from NEO to FRAS is confusing; Su Rushbrook (SR) confirmed Norfolk will continue using NEO, but FRAS is mandated by DfE.
- Parents searching “2-year-old funding” often encounter misleading results.
- Suggestions included displaying information in GP surgeries via interactive screens.
- Community Engagement: Family Hubs were identified as a key contact; however essential staff training would be needed to enable them to support
- Communications to parents must be concise and clear.
- It was also noted that Libraries are increasing face to face outreach in some areas.

#### **Current Communication Process:**

- Eligible families identified via DWP lists receive a letter, postcard, and follow-up call from the Family Information Service.
- The letter was shared with the group
- HMRC codes have expiry dates, creating barriers for families who delay claiming. NEO codes do not expire.

#### **Letter Improvements Suggestions:**

- Simplify wording; current phrasing implies eligibility only if working.
- Include QR code linking directly to application page.
- Add eligibility code and multilingual options.

#### **Capacity and Sufficiency Issues:**

- Some settings have waiting lists, while others face closure due to low demand.
- Falling birth rates contribute to regional disparities.
- Suitably qualified staffing shortages hinder expansion, particularly for baby rooms.
- There are misconceptions that attending a school nursery guarantees a school place.

**Government Position:**

- Jo advised DfE have acknowledged the system complexity; hopefully changes anticipated in next year's funding arrangements.

*JC left the meeting*

**Next Steps:**

- Revise parent letter to include eligibility code, QR link, and multilingual options.
- Share draft letter with the group for feedback.
- Engage Family Hubs to support families struggling with applications.
- Review food voucher criteria for alignment with FRAS eligibility.
- Improve sufficiency data collection on the portal; encourage provider participation.
- Draft response to Schools Forum based on consultation findings and share with group.

**4 Any Other Business**

N/A

**5 Future Meeting Dates**

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December (SEND Follow up)**

14:00 – 15:00

Teams online