

Children's Services

Minutes of Meeting Early Years Consultative Group

Held on: Wednesday 15th April 2026

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
Sue Brown (minute taker)	Early Years Service Manager	NCC	Y
Lacey Douglas	EY Rep, Schools Forum		N
Claire Hooker	Head Teacher	Emneth Nursery School	Y
Carole Jacques	Head Teacher	Earlham Nursery School	N
Claire Henry	Owner	So Schools Out	N
Lesley Doy	Manager	Chapel Break OSC CIC	N
Victoria Furness	Owner	Forest School for Life	Y
Suzie Squirrel-Hughes	Owner	Little Squirrels	N
Jayne Rayner	Manager	Alburgh & Denton Pre-school	Y
Jane Pears	Manager	St. Helens Pre-school	N
Lynne Armitage	Committee Trustee	Ducklings Pre-school	N
Amanda Healey		Ducklings Pre-School	N
Nina Hopson	Director	East Dereham Day Nursery	N
Charlie Wilson-Boast	Manager	Seedlings Day Nursery	Apologies
Katie Stephens	Manager	Fakenham Daycare	Apologies
Jo Tuttle	Director of Business	Aylsham High School	Y
Samantha Mann	Owner	Attlebridge, Cawston and Lyng Montessori Schools	Apologies
Hayley Fiddy	Deputy Manager	East Dereham Day Nursery	N
Lisa Cook	CEO	Ad Meliora Academy Trust	N
Amanda Dennis		Fakenham Daycare	N

Item	Minutes	Actions
1.	Apologies	
	Noted as above.	
2.	Minutes from the last meeting and matters arising	

	As this was an extra meeting for a specific purpose, the minutes of the last meeting were not looked at.	
3	Early Years Inclusion Fund Proposal 2026-2027	
	<p>Jo-anne Lamb (JL) shared information relating to the DfE Early Years Inclusion Fund.</p> <p>Key Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fund is a one-off payment for the current financial year • Providers will be informed of the indicative allocation by the end of May • Full payment to be made in September • No application or panel process • Funding is not linked to an individual child • Funding must be clear and transparent • Monitoring expected to be minimal (likely a simple portal form); receipts must be retained • Funding must not be used to cover costs for services/resources for which the setting has already been funded (double-funded) • Intended to support inclusive practice for children with SEND • Funding may support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic planning ○ Workforce development ○ Resources and environmental adaptations <p>The DfE provides guidance, but Local Authorities retain flexibility in allocation, provided principles and requirements are met.</p> <p>DfE Recommended Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation based on 3–4-year-old PTEs • Universal rate (75%) plus additional needs factor (5%) • Suggestion to target providers supporting higher numbers of children with SEND • Indicative recommendation of £1,000 per setting <p>Local Authority Options</p> <p>The LA can propose a formula-based approach to target SEND need locally.</p> <p>Options 1 & 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1: Minimum payment (£250) plus additional needs factor where a PTE was recorded at Census (Not adopting the DfE £1,000 minimum, so this will ensure all providers receive funding) • Option 2: Exclude providers where base funding is less than £1,000. Eligible providers receive base rate plus additional needs factor (Risk of excluding childminders and smaller settings) 	

Discussion points:

- Option 2 may allow childminders (CMs) to adapt settings to be more inclusive
- Concerns raised about ensuring the funding is used for its intended purpose
- Agreement that fair distribution is important even if impact is modest
- Financial pressures on childminders acknowledged
- Rural providers and childminders identified as essential to local provision, including ASC/BC
- Agreement to avoid creating “provider vs childminder” divisions
- Clear guidance would support consistent use of funding
- Opportunity identified for IDWs to support childminders directly

Options 3 & 4

- Same as Options 1 & 2 but including Early Learning for 2-year-olds (Spring 2026 data)

Discussion:

- Preference to focus on 3–4-year-olds as primary SEND demand
- SENIF claims predominantly relate to 3–4-year-olds
- Limited and less reliable 2-year-old data acknowledged

Options 5 & 6

- Inclusion of all age ranges, including babies

Decision:

Options 5 and 6 were not supported.

Outcome

Initial preference was Option 1. However, further discussion highlighted:

- Providers offering only 2-year-old provision would be excluded
- Exclusion unlikely to impact 2-year-old uptake
- Importance of messaging around inclusivity for 2-year-olds
- Need to avoid perceived value differences between age groups

Final Consensus:

- Model 3 (Option including 2-year-olds and childminders) preferred in principle
- Model 3:
 - Includes childminders
 - Reinforces equal value of 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds
 - Allows individual setting review where allocations are minimal

	<p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proceed in principle with Model 3 • Review impact at individual setting/childminder level • Develop clear guidance on eligible use of funds • Final proposal and messaging to be brought back to the group 	
4.	Any Other Business	
	N/A	
5.	Date of Next Meeting	
	<p>Tuesday 23rd June 2026 – County Hall (Colman Room)</p> <p>Agenda item: Revisit OAP SEND Local Offer narrative template White paper/SEND Reformsdiscussion</p>	