

**Schools Forum Early Years Working Group**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024 on-line at 9.30am**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation/ Representation</b>
Melian Mansfield (MM)	<b>CHAIR.</b> Chair of Pembury House Nursery School
Gladys Baah-Okyere (GBO)	PVI Settings Rep
Luisa Bellavita (LB)	PVI Settings Rep
Joanna Conroy (JC)	Childminder
Duwan Farquharson (DF)	Willow Director of Business
Nick Hewlett (NH)	Principal Advisor for Early Years
Sian McDermott (SMcD)	Nursery Head SF Rep (Rowland Hill & WPNC)
Susan Tudor-Hart (ST-H)	V Chair. School Forum PVI Settings Rep
Melanie Widnall (MW)	Principal Advisor for Early Years
* Grant Bright (GB)	Primary Head Rep (Rokesly Primary School)
Cllr Zena Brabazon (ZB)	Lead Member
Ridhwaan Edoo (RE)	Early Years Finance Team
* Lucy Walker-Collins (LW-C)	Primary Head Rep (Stroud Green Primary School)
Fiona Crean (FC)	Headteacher Rep (Belmont Infants)
Avril Parker-Roach (AP-R)	Childminder Rep
<b>Also Present</b>	
Sarah Hargreaves (SH)	Senior Governance Officer

\* denotes absence

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1** The Chair (Melian Mansfield), welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2** Apologies have been received from Lucy Walker-Collins.
- 1.3** It was noted that **Patricia Harvey** has left LBH and **Grant Bright** has retired. A new Headteacher Rep is required. To be discussed at School Forum. **Action MM**
- 1.4** **Avril Parker-Roach** was welcomed to her 1<sup>st</sup> meeting as the new childminder rep. Introductions were made.

### **2. Minutes of the Meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

- 2.1** The minutes were **agreed** as a correct record of the meeting.

### **3. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

- 3.1** Pt 3.1 The next meeting to look at the finance information available to schools and how requests can be simplified is scheduled for January 13<sup>th</sup>. It was noted that there has been no improvement so far in the information which is received.
- 3.2** Pt 3.2 It was noted that Rachel Boston, the finance lead for the Safety Valve (SV) project, has now moved service area.
- 3.3** All other actions have been completed or are being actioned.

#### 4. Early Years Inclusion Funding: Nick Hewlett and Ridhwaan Edoo

- 4.1 NH reported that he and RE, ST-H. SMcD and MM had met to discuss the details of the DSG for 2025/26. There will need to be a transfer of an additional £180,000 from EY to the HNB budget this year.
- 4.1.1 By 2027/28 savings of £720,000 are expected. In the same period the proportion which can be retained for central services is likely to reduce from 5% to 4%.
- 4.1.2 The transferred money will cover Bandings 2 and 3 of the Inclusion Fund but does not include children with EHCPs. The projected costs are based on steady incremental increases.
- 4.2 Three modelling schemes have been considered in order to find the money:  
**Option 1:** split evenly between the 3 groups; under 2's, 2's, 3+4  
**Option 2:** split on the basis of take-up by the 2's and 3+4's (under 2's don't receive Inclusion Funding)  
**Option 3:** reduce the total contributions by 1.03%
- 4.2.1 **Option 1:** It was **agreed** that this penalised the under 2's who do not receive the funding. It would also discourage providers from taking under 2's. It was noted that the other options would affect nursery classes and schools. *Members asked what the effect on the base rate would be.* RE said that it would be necessary to look at the number of children as it wouldn't be a straight split between the age groups.
- 4.2.2 **Option 2:** On the current basis of take-up of SEND funding the split would be:  
2 year olds 19% of funding £68,400  
3+4 year olds 81% of funding £291,600  
This split will change each year based on the number of children.  
This option will have more of an impact on maintained nursery classes as the PVI sector can be more flexible about taking on under 2's and 2's. Additionally schools have already been hit by SV cuts. Autumn 2024 has been the best ever take up of 3+4 year old places at 86%, with FF2's standing at 77%. *Members asked for a breakdown by gender and ethnicity.* **Action NH**
- 4.2.3 **Option 3:** The cut would be proportionate against the overall budget and would act as a straight top slice, not dependent on the number of children. It will result in changes to the base rate. It would not be easy to administer especially as the two year old disadvantaged rate must be greater than or equal to the two year old working family rate.
- 4.3 After discussion members voted as follows:  
Option 1: 0  
Option 2: 1  
Option 3: 7
- 4.4 *Members asked what was happening with the previous underspend?* 2022/23's will be spent on a well-being project linked to the Anchor Project and the racial equity conference led by the Nursery Schools. The spending of this year's £425,000 will be paused until it is known what funding is needed for SEND Inclusion Fund. A decision can be made in April 2025.
- 4.4.1 The new financial allocations from the DfE will be announced on or around 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024.
- 4.5 Nationally an extra £1b will be going into HNB funding (a 7% uplift) as part of the central government settlement with local government. Deprivation and need indices will be more prominent. School Forum will need to take account of this when allocating money,
- 4.6 The Schools Forum Steering Group meets monthly and reports to Schools Forum. It was noted that there is still no EY rep. on the Steering Group. Cllr Brabazon will raise this at the Steering Group. **Action ZB**

#### 5. AOB

- 5.1 *Members asked for an update on the EY/SEND well-being project.* SMcD said that Pembury House, Rowland Hill, Woodlands Park and The Willow have been working with

the SENDCOs, the EPS and the Anchor Project. They had been working on resilience building, attachment, health and well-being for 2 year olds. In total 36 settings will be worked with. They will each receive £250 to buy resources and three days cover time to enable staff to attend training. There will be a launch in early 2025.

**5.1.1** *Members asked how the 36 settings (out of a possible 120) were chosen for inclusion in the project?* NH said they had looked at what else was going on eg. the LEEP project and what commitments settings were already signed up for. In year 2 childminders will be included.

**5.2** The EY conference in November was on racial equity and the keynote speaker was well received. The workshops went well but not many settings attended, even though it was free. The presentations will be run again at the PVI Forum in May. **Action SMcD**

**5.3** NH said that he would like to re-visit the remit of this group in the new year; some of the processes are LA one's and maybe could be changed. He will be speaking to Jane Edwards. ST-H said she would also like to discuss this with NH. **Action ST-H, NH**

**5.4** **Agenda** for the next meeting will include:

Update on the possible changes to the base rate

December 2024 financial allocations from the DfE

The next meeting will be held **on-line** on **21<sup>st</sup> January at 10.00-11.30am.**

There being no further business the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at **11.30am**

Item	Action log	Person
1.3	To encourage a SF Head to come to the meetings	MM
4.2.2	To provide the group with a breakdown of the 2's, 3's and 4's by gender and ethnicity	NH
4.6	To raise the continued absence of an EY Rep on the School Forum Steering Group	ZB
5.2	To arrange for the racial equity conference presentations to be run at the PVI Forum	SMcD
5.3	To review the remit of this group.	NH, ST-H