

Schools Forum Early Years Working Group
16 October 2025 on-line at 11am

Name	Designation/ Representation
Melian Mansfield (MM)	CHAIR. Chair of Pembury House Nursery School
*Gladys Baah-Okyerere (GBO)	PVI Settings Rep
Luisa Bellavita (LB)	PVI Settings Rep
Joanna Conroy (JC)	Childminder
Duwan Farquharson (DF)	Willow Director of Business
Sian McDermott (SMcD)	Nursery Head SF Rep (Rowland Hill & WPNC)
Susan Tudor-Hart (ST-H)	V Chair. School Forum PVI Settings Rep
Akwai Gill (AG)	Interim Principal Advisor for Early Years
*Melanie Widnall (MW)	Principal Advisor for Early Years
Cllr Zena Brabazon (ZB)	Lead Member
Ridhwaan Edoo (RE)	Early Years Finance Team
Rhonda Scott (RS) AHT Lucy Walker Collins (LW-C) - HT	Primary Head Rep (Stroud Green Primary School)
Avril Parker-Roach (AP-R)	Childminder Rep
*Hussain Sofiean (HS)	Strategic Business Lead CYPS
Lewis Anthony (LA)	Early Years Finance Team
Muhammad Ali (MA)	Senior Finance Officer - Schools
Ese Anyia (EA)	Interim Schools Account – Schools
Jane Edwards (JE)	Director, Schools and Learning
Also Present	
Corinne David (CD)	Governance Officer

*denotes absent

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

- 1.1 MM welcomed everyone to the meeting. MM invited all persons present to introduce themselves.
- 1.2 JE introduced AG, who had joined Haringey in an interim capacity and had previously been Head of Service in Hounslow.
- 1.3 CD informed members that Fiona Crean Headteacher Rep (Belmont Infants) had resigned from the group; leaving a primary Headteacher position (whose school had a nursery) vacancy.
- 1.4 Noted that Melanie Widnall was currently on leave.

2. Minutes from 2 October

- 2.1 The minutes from the meeting were reviewed and discussed with the following amendments:
 - Item 5.3 to amend the second and third lines as follows:
 'It was further noted that the £912k, should currently be left untouched until the settlement for 2026/27 is known; with future plans composed once the funding landscape is known'.
 - Item 5.4 to amend the third line as follows:
 'The contribution for 2026/27 will be £540k.'

2.2 Matters arising

- 2.2.1 Item 4.1 a) Power point on wrap around and school-based nurseries to be circulated to the EYWP.
Action completed.
- b) School-based nursery to be an item at the NLC Chairs meeting.
JE noted that the meeting occurs once every half term and had not yet happened.
- c) Officers to provide the detail of the July 2026 EYFS clawback once known.
Noted this is done at year end – information will be provided once known.
- 2.2.2 Item 8.1 a) Members to start compiling ideas about how support for families in difficult economic circumstances, to access 30 hours nursery provision would look like.
See item 4 for details.
- b) SMcD to circulate the criteria for settings to access the fund which supported children doing an extra year in EYs settings.
- c) Members to receive a breakdown of funds used to support children doing an extra year in EY settings.

3. Terms of Reference

- 3.1 Noted the names of the representative on the group had been changed to reflect the membership.
- 3.2 ST-H noted that in the School Block Working Party (SBWP) terms of reference, the group didn't work on a majority basis to make decisions rather reported recommendations to Schools Forum for decision. The EYWP had traditionally tended to make decisions on a majority basis. ST-H enquired if this was the correct position for the EYWP.
- 3.3 JE suggested that in reports back to Schools Forum, it is made clear what the options were, what was considered, summarised different viewpoints and whether there was a general consensus or preferred option. Noted that the EYWP doesn't have delegated responsibility to make decisions or vote.

4. Proposals for use of underspend.

- 4.1 SMcD noted that potentially the most vulnerable children, wouldn't necessarily be able to access the 30 hours, for example children eligible for EYPP; those that currently have their free for two entitlement, which converts to three-year-old universal entitlement. How this money could facilitate a group of children: potentially SEND, CP or CiN or Early Help, complex family situation. Children that aren't having the best start in life and accessing good EY provision would support them. Mindful of costs associated for children going to nursery; lunch, nappies, staffing. Etc.
- 4.2 SMcD suggested fixed term funding support could be provided to a group of children which meet an agreed set of criteria. There would then have an evolution period to review the impact of the project.

- 4.3 ZB also provided support for a project that supported children from vulnerable families who would benefit from accessing quality EY provision and having good levels of development. ZB made reference to a piece of research which made links between the 20 most prolific young offenders in the borough had adverse early experiences, most significant speech and language delay. Noted that ZB was attending a meeting for London Lead Members for Children, which is on Early Years talking about reaching the neediest and the best start strategy (EY SEND).
- 4.4 Noted that it had been previously agreed that there would be funds made available for settings to access which supported children doing an extra year in EYs settings.
- 4.5 JE noted that the DfE has charged the LA to write a local plan, part of which is how the LA will respond to the GLD target. This will require a multiagency response. Further noted that there is around £11k of debt in nurseries where a child is on a plan and is accessing nursery provision as part of that plan; but has gone beyond their entitlement resulting a debt. However, there is a conundrum between supporting the child/family as being in a setting is the most protective factor for the child against the financial factors to the setting. Noted any project would have to have tight budget oversight and framework around it.
- 4.6 ST-H noted that potentially settings could apply for children that they know would benefit to allow any project to fund children rather than funding places. This would allow scale across the whole borough. Further noted that there was 67% identified disadvantage in settings, however there is a fundamental question on whether there is a need to be putting more funding into trying to get the balance or to create more of a balance, as settings are still within the criteria. Noted that any project has to have borough wide impact and not in just one or two settings.
- 4.7 LW-C noted that Stroud Green take children free if they have a CP plan, which is funded through the school's main budget. There are also Islington residents that attend the nursery/ school. Islington have a Panel which providers can apply to for additional funding, for many reasons including social care. Potential a model in Islington and Hackney could use. Similar idea to a SEND emergency fund. Noted that there is an underspend within the EYWP which means funding for this type of panel could be factored in every year.
- 4.8 MM suggested that there was a consensus to move forward to scope out a pilot project which consisted of a Panel that would allow settings to apply for funding to support their most vulnerable children; inline with an agreed framework/ criterion.

ACTION a) LW-C and RS to reach out to Islington to obtain their terms of reference.
b) SMcD to reach out to her Governor on HEYSA who is lead in Islington.

- 4.9 JE noted the next steps as:
- a) Review the suggestion of a Panel.
 - b) Review the terms of reference for Islington and Hackney Panel's
 - c) Discuss options with the group.
 - d) Provide a recommendation on funding allocation.

ACTION AG to co-ordinate with LW-C & SMcD to work on a draft Panel proposal.

- 4.10 ST-H enquired if the £425k had to be committed or spent by the end of financial year: 31 March 2026.

ACTION Clerk to email Ridhwaan Edoo and establish if the £425k has to be spend or allocated by March 2026 to prevent any clawback.

- 4.11 ZB enquired if they may be a possibility of funding holiday provision for under 5s as another possible project.
- 4.12 MM sought agreement that work on a proposal is undertaken now for agreement in January 2026.
- 4.13 Members enquired about the funding for Leap project, how much it has cost and likely loses, to receive a short summary on the project's impact. Noted that early access to speech and language therapists is a key part of the safety valve programme; has also had major benefits.

ACTION a) AG to talk to MW about the Leap project funding and summary on the project's impact.

b) Any further project proposals to be emailed to both JE and AG before the next meeting.

5. Capital Grant.

- 5.1 The window within which settings can apply for capital grants was noted as 22 September to 11 December 2025 by 5pm. The grant was noted as £150k for new projects. The capital grant is for school-based nurseries, to allow settings to operate new childcare places from next academic year. The provision can operate either as nursery classes within primary schools, nursery units led by Governors or an Academy Trust, as well as, PVI's, voluntary child minders or private providers contracted to deliver provision either on the school site or operating on the school's behalf. Funding is built on the foundations of phase 1, with an increased focus on disadvantaged families to access EY provision.

- 5.2 Before submission the LA would have to approval of the project. Either signed off by the Corporate Director or Director, Schools and Learning. Decisions would be based on the holistic picture of nursery provision and include details on sufficiency, sustainability of setting, stability, performance, building condition survey etc. An overview of the application form was provided; the following information was required as part of the application:

- Project overview.
- Local needs impact.
- Approach to education.
- Link to the eligibility of the grant.

- 5.3 Noted that providers had been informed via the LA's newsletter and from the DfE. A member enquired about who applied last year with a response provided from the LA either through the newsletter or at the next meeting.

ACTION Overview of successful applications in wave 1 to be provided by the LA.

6. Updates

The EY Local Plan to be circulated to the EYWP.

ACTION To be circulated before the next meeting.

7. **Dates of future meetings**

The date for the next meeting was agreed as: 10 November 2025 at 2pm via Teams.

7.1 **Agenda items**

Proposals for use of underspend and allocation of spend.

- EY Vulnerable Childrens' Panel.
- Leap project funding.
- Children doing an extra year in EY setting fund.
- Holiday provision fund for under 5s.
- Any other proposals as received by the LA.

8. **A.O.B.**

- 8.1 LB noted that capital funded is being directed to LA provision and primary schools, with nothing accessible for the PVI sector. This is leading to the PVI sector becoming unsustainable and declining, with the possibility of a number of provisions having to close in the future.

The Chair closed the meeting at 12:30pm

ACTIONS

Item	Action	Lead
2.2.2	b) SMcD to circulate the criteria for settings to access the fund which supported children doing an extra year in EYs settings. c) Members to receive a breakdown of funds used to support children doing an extra year in EY settings.	SMcD LA
4.8	a) LW-C and RS to reach out to Islington to obtain their terms of reference. b) SMcD to reach out to her Governor on HEYSA who is lead in Islington.	LW-C & RS SMcD
4.9	AG to co-ordinate with LW-C & SMcD to work on a draft Panel proposal.	AG, LW-C & SMcD
4.10	Clerk to email Ridhwaan Edoo and establish if the £425k has to be spend or allocated by March 2026 to prevent any clawback.	CD
4.13	a) AG to talk to MW about the Leap project funding and summary on the project's impact. b) Any further project proposals to be emailed to both JE and AG before the next meeting.	AG & MW All
5.3	Overview of successful applications in wave 1 capital grant to be provided by the LA.	LA
6	EY Local Plan to be circulated to members	JE & CD