

## Schools Forum Early Years Working Group

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017 at the PDC at 9.30am

Name	Designation/ Representation
Melian Mansfield (MM)	<b>CHAIR</b>
Ngozi Anuforo (NA)	Head of Early Help Commissioning
Luisa Bellavita (LB)	PVI Settings Rep
Zena Brabazon (ZB)	Rowland Hill
Peter Catling (PC)	Woodlands Park Nursery School & Children Centre
Duwan Farquharson (DF)	Willow
+ Dawn Ferdinand (DaF)	Willow
Nick Hewlett (NH)	Principal Advisor for Early Years
Emma Murray (EM)	Primary Head Rep
Yoke O'Brien (YO)	Finance Business Partner (Schools)
Karyn Parker (KP)	Childminders
Susan Tudor-Hart (STH)	School Forum PVI Settings Rep
+ Christine Yianni (CY)	Business Support Officer
Sarah Hargreaves (SH)	Clerk

+ denotes absence

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

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted from Dawn Ferdinand and Christine Yianni.

### 2. **Minutes of the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

- 2.1 The minutes were **agreed**, signed and returned to Ngozi for safe keeping.

#### **Matters arising**

- 2.2 Pt 2.3 The Quality Supplement meeting determined which settings and co-ordinators will be supported; there are some new co-ordinators. Some PVIs are struggling. One has been judged to be inadequate. A PVI group within the NLC groupings is due to be set up. Peer to peer support and Champions are being set up. Nick confirmed that there are 200 active childminders in the borough.
- 2.3 Pt 2.5 The list of agreed principles for the 30 hours scheme is still to be circulated and will include the topics previously suggested, including the wider issues eg. the DfE criteria and general admissions concerns. **Action NA**
- 2.4 Pt 2.7 Ngozi confirmed that although there is no more money available to create more two year old places, existing places will continue to be funded.
- 2.5 Pt 3.3 There may be a possibility of s106 money being used to provide kitchens. Will depend on the locality – and therefore if planning funding is available.
- 2.6 Pt 3.4.3 Settings vulnerable to closure are still being spoken to and worked with.
- 2.7 Pt 3.4.5 Nick reported back that some childminders need to undertake more business planning including assessing the market more; younger children now have to be the target market. Unfortunately childminders do not always attend meetings
- 2.8 Although children are leaving the borough, the quantity is not sufficient to account for the vacancy rates encountered.

### 3. **EYWG Membership**

3.1 With Lou Colley leaving there is a PVI Rep vacancy. Nick will email PVI settings.

**Action NH**

3.2 Susan Tudor-Hart asked it to be noted that she is the Schools Forum PVI setting rep.

### 4. **30 Hour Offer Delivery – Update**

4.1 There are still teething problems: parents are waiting for codes, the system is crashing, the system cannot always be accessed, HMRC and the DfE have different criteria, information provided to parents by DfE staff has been inconsistent.

4.2 Providers are not paid unless there is a valid code in place; the temporary codes are not proving to be useful.

4.3 The deadline for parents to apply was 31<sup>st</sup> August. Applications received after that means that a place isn't available until January 2018. Codes are valid for 3 months. For families who applied in advance the 1<sup>st</sup> term is guaranteed, so that they have time to renew their application.

4.4 By 4<sup>th</sup> September 840 codes had been issued and 750 children had taken up places. 735 codes have been validated and 698 are still eligible. The codes and validations have to match, otherwise the DfE will re-claim the funding. Parents have to sort out any issues with HMRC themselves, LAs are only told if an application is valid, not the reasons for rejecting it.

4.4.1 The DfE has not done any publicity about the scheme; initially due to the election. This has been left to LAs to do, but they have not been provided with any money to do so. Bus shelter advertising will take place in October.

4.4.2 Not all providers and parents had realised that there had to be double validation – by the DfE and the LA.

4.4.3 There is also confusion between the 30 hours and the tax free childcare schemes – they are both on the same website, but require different codes. There are implications for child benefit, which families may not be aware of.

4.5 Providers and the LA are losing out due to the lower take up of places and some are experiencing cash flow issues.

4.6 **A review is needed and feedback given to the DfE and Minister.** Cllr Weston will be provided with a briefing and asked to act as the political advocate by writing to the local MPs, Zena will raise the issues at the Labour Party conference. Ngozi, Zena and Melian to work on.

**Action NA, ZB, MM**

**10.20am Peter Catling** left the meeting.

4.6.1 **Members also felt that these issues needed to be pushed further up the list of priorities of and by senior staff.** The borough is losing money so it is a false economy to not be proactive. Currently it appears that there is little political urgency being attached to the issue. Ngozi will speak to Charlotte.

**Action NA**

4.7 Providers said it would be very useful if the LA could provide a 'phone line solely for providers to use, rather than having to go through Customer Services. Funding the staffing to staff it could be an issue. Ngozi to consider further.

**Action NA**

4.8 Schools reported that the scheme had not been discussed at the Headteacher's Conference. Many schools are not taking part and those who are are having to provide admin. support from the school's staffing complement.

### 5. **Early Years DSG Budget Review**

5.1 All EY settings need to understand that they need to participate in both Census returns in October and January as they both inform the financial allocations. £650,000 was lost this year due to lower child numbers. Providers are funded termly although the money is received by the borough annually. If the 3 year old numbers are incorrect further funding could be lost. Settings need to understand that the Census = money.

5.2 Schools are generally OK in filling in the Census, although they leave ethnicity and SEN spaces blank. Of the PVIs only 25 (out of 102) submitted the information without being chased.

5.3 The details will be able to be inputted directly, which should reduce the margin for error, next time. New guidance is due to be issued.

- 5.4 **Members asked if it was possible to spend the £400,000 in the contingency.** This was not felt to be a good idea, as there would then be no money left for future needs.
- 5.5 Members were unhappy about the £1.3m (from the previous 2 year old funding) which had been given to the HNB, before any consultation had been undertaken. It was **agreed** that this showed a lack of respect for early years provision and providers. The LA will be having to spend from their reserves as they have already spent the £1.33m in the General Fund. Early Years cannot be seen to fail as it is contained with the council's Priority 1, however there was no mention of the above in the financial report to Cabinet on the overspend.
- 5.5.1 A meeting has been scheduled for Monday 25<sup>th</sup> Sept to discuss how this money will be spent. The EFA says that the money is not ring-fenced between the blocks, with the DSG being all one block.
- 5.5.2 The meeting **agreed** that, although this may be the case, people's views should be respected and there should be transparency in the way decisions are made around funding. The EY surplus had been ring fenced and now this has been removed without consultation.
- 5.5.3 It was **agreed** that children should be in settings 1<sup>st</sup> and then assessed for additional needs, rather than being sat at home and going to clinics for assessments.
- 5.6 The borough is going to challenge the EFA on the 2 year old funding. 800 places are funded but because of the population turnover over 1,000 children are funded. £2.8m is provided in the general DSG reserves, but this includes school funding.
- 5.7 Funding will only increase significantly if take-up increases.
- 5.8 The following actions were agreed:
- To improve the Census data collection
  - To add a clause in provider contracts that they need to complete the Census accurately and that they can be penalised if they do not do so
  - Promote childcare place to families to improve take-up
  - The Quality Team will look at income generating ideas. £75,000 is already a target. It is acknowledged that some PVIs have difficulty in paying for training etc. It is likely that services will become a Traded Offer under the HEP.
  - Data checking used to be shared between the EY and finance teams and was sometimes insufficient. Since November 2016 it has been centralised. Data from Tribal is being used to back-fill Census returns.
  - The impact of the withdrawal of childcare subsidy on the LA maintained settings is being monitored. It is likely that fees will increase.

**11.20am Ngozi Anuforo** left the meeting.

- 5.9 Members asked for details of the occupancy rates and current overspend levels at the maintained nursery settings.

Setting	Occupancy Level	Overspend £
The Triangle	80%	200,000
Stonecroft	91%	negligible
Woodside	60%	60,000
Park Lane **	90%	180,000

\*\* It was noted that it is difficult to get fee paying parents at Park Lane and the setting is highly subsidised. Most children only take up their free entitlement. Salary costs are higher than elsewhere. The setting is likely to be demolished as part of the HDV.

**6. Draft Paper for School Forum**

- 6.1 The next SF meeting is on 19<sup>th</sup> October.
- 6.2 The meeting on Sept 25<sup>th</sup> will need to discuss the draft paper. Ngozi will be asked to produce and circulate it in advance. **Action MM**

7. **Date of next meeting:** The next meeting will be held at the PDC on **4<sup>th</sup> October** at 9.15am. The Chair thanked everyone for attending. There being no further business the meeting closed at **11.40am.**

**Signed:**

**Date:**