

**Oxfordshire Schools' Forum
Early Years Working Group**

**Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday 16 May 2017, 1030-1230
Mortimer Hall Pre-School, Oxford Road, Old Marston, Oxford**

Present: Janet Crane (JC), Sandra North (SN), Rebecca Saunders (RS),
Sarah Steel (SS), Maureen Thompson (MT)

In attendance: Neil Darlington (ND) *(Item 9 only)*,
Georgina Newbould (GN), Debbie Rouget (DR),
Kit Howells (Clerk)(KH) *[Meeting was quorate]*

Item	Action
<p>1. Apologies and Welcome Apologies received from Nick Baggett (NB), Christine Malone (CM), Carole Thomson (CT)(Chair of Forum), Netta Buckett (NB), Michelle Jenkins (MJ), Sarah Fogden (SF), and Margaret Whitaker (MW), and accepted. Katrina Sharp (KS) is no longer a childminder and so does not now sit on the Group. Lisa Thompson (LT) was absent.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2016 The Minutes were agreed, signed by the Chair, and retained by the Clerk for File.</p>	
<p>3. Matters arising from the minutes (where actions remain/not on Agenda)</p> <p>3.1 RS and SN have been seeking a representative to fill the vacancy for an Academy with Nursery Class, but to no avail.</p> <p>3.2 SS has sought a representative to fill the vacancy for a Private/Independent Sector representative, but to no avail.</p> <p>3.3 SS had raised the issue of whether or not 'Age & Stage' 2 year old developmental postcards from Health Visitors are useful at the recent meeting of the Early Years Board and concern that these do not work well for providers was registered. Postcards are rarely received and when they are are often meaningless to families and providers due to lack of training on definitions. There is no link between the 2-year old checks done by providers and those done by Health and EYWG members strongly emphasised that if concerns are raised they should be raised by more than a postcard, and that the postcards are therefore irrelevant. The need for providers' 2 year old checks to be taken account of by Health was emphasised. GN will feed in the concerns to the EY Team's upcoming meeting with Health.</p> <p>3.4 RS had raised the urgent issue of safeguarding and identification of vulnerable children with Maria Godfrey and the Safeguarding Team and had been informed that it is not felt appropriate due to data protection issues for Headteachers to access Framework I despite this Group's view that schools and settings know more about children than any other agency apart from their families.</p> <p>RS also reported concern relating to completion of the new CAF and TAF forms and the need for training to be available in relation to the scoring system as it is</p>	GN

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<p>not working as it should. Oxfordshire has spent a lot of money on the new system and this issue should be the subject of broader Forum discussion re funding.</p>	<p>RS</p>
<p>4. Purpose and function of EYWG RS introduced a discussion with intention to agree whether or not to continue the EYWG. The Group had been established initially to give voice to Early Years providers and help feed into decision making on funding. However, there is now little discretion in funding, many of the funding decisions are limited and thus the voice at Forum is also limited. Also, recent recommendations of the Group, for example relating to the significant discussions on hourly rates, had made no difference to the outcomes and decisions made at Forum. Early Years providers are represented at Forum already and can provide input there.</p> <p>It was agreed to temporarily disband the Group, in the knowledge that Early Years is represented on the Schools & High Needs Committee (to which all recommendations of EYWG were required to go in any case) and on full Forum by RS, SS and MT and that GN will be able to continue to feed into Forum and its Committees on behalf of Childminders.</p> <p>It was also agreed to utilise the network systems, particularly the very useful and wide-reaching Early Years Facebook page, in order to ensure views from the sector are taken account of by the representatives at Forum. RS will ensure that a post is put on the Facebook page to ensure providers know that RS and SS represent Early Years at Forum so they can contact them with issues and this will be a good conduit, in addition to Schools News, to ensure information flow. It was noted that input on pedagogical EY issues can be put to the Oxfordshire Early Years Board (run by Michelle Jenkins).</p>	<p>RS</p>
<p>5. OCC Early Years Support Offer Papers 4a and 4b had been previously circulated and GN briefed members on the Offer for the coming academic year. Schools had received the information already with the charging models for Early Years included. The Offer takes account of the previous EYWG recommendation that charging scales for training for EY settings should be in line with schools, although it is noted that most LAs charge a differential rate.</p> <p>The Group discussed training offered by other providers, including Teaching Schools in the County and the lack of access to training by Pre-schools due to affordability, and whether or not there should be differentials, as well as emphasis on the need for sustainability which will not be possible if rates are subsidised. It was agreed that charging to out-of-county providers for all conferences and courses should be higher than for those in Oxon.</p> <p>It was noted that the LA's statutory duties include provision of advice, support and training but charges can be made for these.</p> <p>Concerns were expressed about settings which are unable to afford the going rate for training, including childminders, and the networks which are available of these which might help them access training. These networks are much</p>	<p>GN</p>

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<p>reduced with the closure of Children’s centres, but RS noted that she runs an informal network in the Didcot area whereby all settings in the Partnership area are invited to join training sessions hosted by her school. This is, however, due to good will, and is often not taken up by Childminders as they are not free during the daytime or on weekdays. Overall, Childminders have the most difficulty in accessing training as they are the least able to afford the cost or time. It was noted that there has already been a decline in the number of Childminders, and numbers are likely to further decline, due to the 30 hours offer.</p> <p>It was agreed to refer the EY Offer for further discussion at the next meeting of the Schools & High Needs Committee on 7 June.</p>	<p>RS/ KH</p>
<p>6. Revisions to Provider Terms – for comment (following publication of revised statutory guidance)</p> <p>Papers 5, 5a and 5b had been previously circulated and DR briefed members.</p> <p>Revised statutory guidance for PVI’s had been published, including statutory obligations of LAs about the 30 hours Childcare Offer, and model provider agreements with a view to standardising agreements across the country with flexibility for LAs to work out their own processes. It is expected that the model agreement will be used and DR confirmed that most of the previous agreement fits with the new model.</p> <p>Due to the reduction in the LA’s Early Years Team, and associated difficulties with capacity to support settings with ensuring quality, the LA has included a clause reserving the right to withdraw funding from settings following a second Requires Improvement grading. This often happens when a setting has no capacity to improve because they have no capacity to follow the action plan necessary to lift it out of RI. This also applies to Inadequate settings. However, it is noted that sufficiency may therefore be at further significant risk, including childminders.</p> <p>Members noted the LA’s discretion relating to charging deposits and date of return. It was agreed that these should be returned to parents by the date of the claim for funding, in order to guarantee that funding is going to be provided.</p> <p>Members noted that the LA has included process for funding to follow the child with the provider to send the balance of funding back to the LA for redistribution to the new setting.</p> <p>Members registered concerns about sustainability of settings, particularly in areas of high mobility as the new clauses will mean they are more vulnerable to closure. Sufficiency of places will also therefore be affected. However, it was noted that many LAs had already been operating a system of returning balance of funding to LA for following the child.</p> <p>With regard to funding the 30 hours Offer, it was agreed that the best option would be for settings to let the LA know within 3 weeks of the end of the previous Term how many places they are expecting to provide so that the LA</p>	

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<p>can provide funding up front (whilst noting it would be clawed back if places do not materialise). It is hoped that this option might encourage hesitant settings to offer the 30 hours.</p> <p>DR reported that 62% of providers in Oxon had indicated they will, or will try to, provide 30 hours care. It is noted that many providers have not yet decided and so it will be difficult to ensure free places are held and subsidised by paying places. Some settings will need to ask for voluntary donations in order to pay for 'extras' so that they can provide sufficient places. It is agreed that the situation is very confusing for parents as the Offer is not transparent or clear. DR will issue a note to providers encouraging them to contact the LA to discuss their funding models.</p>	
<p>7. 30 Hours Childcare Offer update, and charging for meals Paper 6 had been previously circulated and the issue had been covered in discussion under Item 6 above.</p> <p>Members noted the difficulties that this Offer presents, but despite this it is not possible to ignore it even though there are risks in terms of sufficiency and the more vulnerable providers and providers will be trying to make it work. The importance of transparency and management of parental expectations was emphasised.</p> <p>Funding for Vulnerable Learners It was noted that the issue of underspend and Early Years DSG was to be addressed in a paper on funding for Vulnerable Learners to go to providers but due to a potential overspend in another part of EY DSG this has been held until the situation is clearer. Final allocations are not known until late June or Early July. The Paper will not now go to the Forum Schools & High Needs Committee meeting on 7 June prior to Forum meeting on 22 June.</p>	<p>DR/ NB/ KH</p>
<p>8. Tax free childcare No further information due to General Election having been called.</p>	
<p>9. Late/deferred Entry Issue Neil Darlington attended this Item and briefed members on the current law. . Children have to be full-time educated from the Term after their 5th birthday. Summer-born children do not have to be in school until start of Y1. Children can enter in September or in January. The law changed five years ago when the Government stated that all children had to be offered a place from the beginning of the Autumn Term in the year in which they are 5, but parents do not need to take up this offer and the Schools have to accept late entry if deferral occurs within the year. Most parents take up the offer of a September start. Schools do have to keep a place for the child even if they do not start in September, despite not being paid for this place.</p> <p>Headteachers do not generally encourage parents to defer within year as they believe children take longer to catch up with their peers if they have not been attending school.</p>	

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<p>ND noted that Oxfordshire does offer school transport for under 5s unlike some LAs.</p> <p>A particular issue of concern is when parents defer uptake of place for the whole year so that children go into Reception a year later than their normal age group. This is usually because the child either has complex SEND needs or a child is Summer born and parents believe that they are not ready emotionally to transition to Primary School. However, it is known that sometimes children are being held back to a lower Year group in order to gain academic advantages. However, doing this is a risk for the parents as places do not have to be held if entry deferred for whole year and this might also affect the child's onward transition to the preferred secondary school (which may not accept a pupil being educated out of Year).</p> <p>ND noted that, although the final decision regarding admissions rests with the LA's Head of Admissions (ND in Oxon), the Headteacher's professional advice is always taken fully into consideration so that a consensus on the outcome is formed.</p> <p>EWYG members asked ND to provide written guidance on the processes so that consistent and transparent LA information can be provided to parents to ensure they understand them. ND will provide this as soon as possible to all schools, nurseries and PVI's, so that schools can use it for the current potential intake visits now being held.</p>	<p>ND</p>
<p>10. Items referred by Schools & High Needs Committee: None. Services and Contracts Committee: None.</p>	
<p>11. Items for referral to: - Schools & High Needs Committee meeting (7 June) – -Early Years Support Offer - Services & Contracts Committee meeting (24 May) – None.</p>	<p>KH/ GN</p>
<p>12. Date of next meeting As agreed at Item 4 above, the Group is temporarily disbanded and thus no meeting date was set. RS thanked all attendees for their hard work and input.</p>	

*The meeting closed at 1230
Kh/25.5.17*

Signed by Chair:

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