

Early Year Operations & Guidance Meeting

15/6/2020 @ 10:00

Attendees

Carly – Little Lambs Nursery
Allyson – Bolton School Nursery
Pam – High Meadows Nursery
Clair – Super Stars Nursery
Jane – Rosehill Nursery
Cath – Queensbrook Nursery
Janet – Croft House Nursery
Julie – Eagley School House Nursery
Tina – Wells House Nursery
Jasmin – Bolton School Nursery
Vicky – Saplings Day Nursery
Kimberley Milne – Bolton School Nursery - minutes

Apologies –
Kaylee – The Owls Nursery
Marie – Grosvenor
Care chiefs Nursery
Daisychains Nursery
The Olive Garden Nursery

Introductions and overview of setting

Introductions where made.

Bolton EY asked for minutes to be passed to them – all agreed that this was ok

No Covid-19 cases have been confirmed in any of the above Nurseries.

Some nurseries are only seeing very low numbers at this time, creating 1 or 2 bubbles, with low numbers, staff teams are small generally, one nursery is at roughly half capacity on average with 40-50 children a day, another about 20 a day, another which re-opened on 1st June averaging 10 per day.

Open discussion of the 'bubble' way of working and on solutions to issues in the guidance

Bubbles were discussed and all agreed that they were financially difficult and could be interpreted in different ways. Generally, most nurseries are unsure of what is the most practical way of working.

Discussion around what the guidance says we must do, which is different to what it says about how groups of children attend, and uses phrases like 'consider', 'use professional judgement', and 'as far as possible'.

Some nurseries rooms cannot be split and some nurseries had to go through each room to get to another room.

Some nurseries will have to make redundancies as the costs of being open are not viable with the small groups, especially when the furlough rules change.

Some nurseries have opened with shorter hours which is manageable whilst staff are on furlough but kept the costs the same, whilst some have discounted fees a bit.

Discussed the level of risk if some bubbles joined at the end of the day if the total children is less than 16. No nurseries are currently doing this, but when guidance changes, this would help logistically.

The group discussed the importance of risk assessing the choices we make to ensure provision can be opened as safely as possible with minimal impact on the business. Examples discussed included afternoon and part-time children joining a bubble, and as long as they joined the same bubble each time that this method also works. The same with part-time staff joining the same bubble each time they are in nursery.

Discussed the impact on staff, examples included overstaffing to ensure lunches are covered within a bubble, and how this was incurring excess costs, but that this is important to maintain safety.

Another example was that staff do not cross over to any other bubble at any time, this is assessed as being a higher risk than, for example, part time children joining the same bubble each time of attendance.

The organisation of staff, the Bubble rooms and Bubble groups is expected to become less sustainable when more children are expected to return over the next few weeks and months.

Discussed future possible changes to the guidance for Early Years when schools have finished for Summer. This would make sense as Early Years settings that are open all year round would find it extremely difficult to continue with the present restrictions until schools return.

Some expressed that there was very little legislation from the Government for Early Years, mainly aimed at schools Early Years provision, and no mention of under 2's, it was discussed that this must be up to our own risk assessing in line with existing guidance.

It was discussed and agreed that the Bubbles were up for interpretation as it has been written as a guide and not a legal requirement but no-one wanted to go over the 16 until they received more guidance.

The first few paragraphs of the guidance were discussed, particularly **'Every setting is different and it is not a requirement to use all or parts of this toolkit. Settings may use their professional judgement, and choose to follow alternative approaches depending on their particular circumstances, but at all times will need to take account of relevant public health guidance to maximise safety for those in the environment.'**

Examples discussed included if you can have 16 in a group in a day, or 16 in a group for the week, even if that meant only a few children could attend each day. One nursery said they will have no choice but to go over the 16 capacity as she may risk losing even more business.

It was agreed that the mixed age groups in the bubbles has worked for some nurseries. There also seems to be a less stressful approach to assessment and perhaps Ofsted could look at this approach.

Those nurseries that operate before and after school and holiday clubs are also waiting to hear more about how they could begin to operate, noted that guidance at present restricts this in most cases.

September 2020 entry to Reception

If schools are going to put a phased entry in place for September, this could potentially cause issues. Advice from Bolton Early Years Team on the following has been requested -

- Nurseries may need to keep children's places open for their phased entry, this could have a knock-on effect on taking new children in nurseries. Could there be some way nurseries can be informed by the LA what schools plan for September entry, rather than relying on parents to inform nurseries.
- Should funding forms be completed for those children for September 2020 in the event of phased entry to school.
- Would funding be paid to the Nursery or the school in this event.
- Could a letter be gained from the LA to confirm this request rather than it come from the nurseries if this is the case.

Other solutions and ways of working

Viewings at nurseries are being done by Zoom/Skype/photos and online.

Parents who are found to be not abiding by the social distancing guidelines are being asked to not enter nursery until a self-isolation period is over.

Staff are being reminded when necessary to abide by the social distancing rules or deal with disciplinary procedures.

Holidays whilst on furlough. Some confirmed that they hadn't allowed staff to cancel holidays and those that had staff who had been furloughed may not authorise holiday on their return if they were needed in nursery. Discussed the legalities of this and it was mentioned to check staff employment contracts.

Next meeting – Monday 29th June 2020 – 2pm