

EYFS Settings and Start Well Coordination Hub MINUTES

25th June 2020 – 1:35pm – 3:05pm
Skype / Remote

Present:	Helen Shearer (HS) Janet Lomax Baker (JLB) Julie Edwards (JE) Julie Robinson (JR) Jane Morrissey (JM) Vicky Hough (VH) Samantha Baron (SB) Rebecca Albrow (RA) Ali Hart (AH) Jasmine Saunders (JS) Laura Wright (LW) Helen Ashton (HA)	Interim HOS SW Professional Lead Croft House Nursery Bolton Council – Early Years Finance Eagley School House Nursery Rose Hill Nursery Saplings Day Nursery SW Service Development Officer SW Service Development Officer FIS Principal Information and Comms Bolton School Nursery SW Early Years Adviser Moorgate Primary
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Apologies:	Dawn France (DF)	SW Early Years Adviser
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A SECTION OF MINUTES

1 Meeting Welcome (HS)

HS welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes from Tuesday 11th June were agreed for accuracy by all.

HS outlined the actions relating to the minutes

Sufficiency survey: Clarity around specific terminology within the survey has now been addressed and the data received will be shared today.

R rating data: Public Health are now in the process of providing us with weekly updates regarding the R rating, which will be shared each Friday in a pack of information which will be accessible on the Start Well website. A link to this information will also be made available through our weekly email bulletin. In addition, schools will be able to access the information through the Extranet website. This should mean the information is accessible to you all.

2) Updates from DfE & Ofsted (Regional / National) meetings (HS)

All Local Authorities with strategic leads for Early Years meet every two to three weeks. The meeting is co-hosted by Elaine White, Senior HMI Ofsted, alongside representatives from the Department of Education. In addition to this, we also feed into the North West and Cumbria meeting.

In our discussions on Friday 19th June, we focused primarily on Bolton. To inform this meeting, I shared the minutes from this group and shared feedback from the sector about the local impact of Covid-19 during the first 10 weeks of lockdown.

The information demonstrated the successful uptake of childcare places from critical and vulnerable children and how innovative the sector are in implementing risk assessments and avoiding outbreaks within settings. The challenges of delivery models under the current 'bubble' guidance was highlighted as impossible for businesses to sustain.

Representatives noted the comments to feed back.

Bolton LA provided the latest figures from our data collections. This information demonstrated an increase in childcare places from 700 children accessing provision to 1,999. We are now capturing data on how many 'additional children' are accessing childcare places, in addition to vulnerable/key worker. This has highlighted that 204 'other' children have returned to settings, revealing a low take up from parents since the 1st June. The messages nationally, alongside the Government guidance are not explicit enough in highlighting to parents how they could be accessing provision or interacting with settings to plan for future places required; neither does it manage expectations about the current delivery strategies being implemented.

Wrap around care: With reference to childcare provision for children aged between 5 – 11 years, it is very striking that since the 1st June, schools have not been in a position to offer wrap around care, due to the environmental pressures put on their delivery models. We have highlighted to our colleagues at the DfE that we would really welcome clear and concise messages for parents to work with employers to offer a flexible approach in supporting their childcare needs. The Department took lots of notes and from conversations with colleagues across Greater Manchester, this concern is also being echoed.

Additional challenges: Further to this we shared our concerns about early education forming the bedrock for a child's life chances and therefore sufficiency should not solely be a discussion about the need for childcare.

£1 billion investment: The meeting took place on the morning when the £1 billion funding was announced for schools. As a result, this was also raised, highlighting that the investment does not support the Early Years sector and could result in lifelong challenges for young children. We hope this was taken on board and further announcements on this will be made in the near future.

Childcare Sufficiency: The DfE were particularly interested in childcare sufficiency and how the sector will come through this period. We emphasised the period of reflection that providers will have to undertake, which will evaluate business models (including numbers for autumn term and possible redundancies). In addition to this, the sector will need to take on board the rising unemployment rate and the possible implications on childcare demand.

All the other meetings, both internally with senior leaders and with external agencies have discussed Early Years provision in a similar context.

September provision: With the Prime Minister's announcement that "all schools will be open to all children in September", we are anticipating that further guidance will be released shortly. As a result, we have stressed the need for guidance to help prepare for this, particularly with regards to meaningful transitions into school and Reception. We raised the implications for both providers and parents. Again, the DfE were non-committal in their response, but they do recognise the challenges the sector face. We have explained our financial commitment to the sector, explaining that support has come through our DFG underspend, but we need clarity on the autumn term and whether any additional funding would be allocated for private providers. Again, no response was given. The Association of Directors of Children Services, alongside the Local Government Association are also raising these challenges with the DfE. The Local Authority have been invited, on the 9th July, to a DfE webinar, which we will share with providers thereafter.

Summer provision: Local Authorities across Greater Manchester are starting conversations to understand the demand from critical, frontline, Covid key workers and the supply our providers can offer. To emphasise, this is not an additional provision, but an offer from those that would already deliver holiday provision. We need to be aware of what the demand from parents will be, so we can meet this need. As soon as we have further information, we will share this with the sector. We need to be aware that there will be costs associated for critical workers, but as an authority we need to scope out what the demand will be. It is anticipated that further guidance will enable wrap around care to open during the summer months, but this will need evaluating against protective measures.

Hempsalls: We have also been working with Hempsalls to offer additional support to the sector (Covid-19 free information sessions and workshops). Some of the workshops have already been promoted and to date we have had 50 practitioners booked onto these sessions. The workshops will be run for different sector types. The Out of School Clubs (OOSC) are particularly keen to participate as they approach the summer period.

Questions

(VH) Things are still very uncertain, which is such a challenge when finances are increasing now staff are returning from furlough. This uncertainty will, in the long run, affect staffing levels. **(HS)** We are continuing to raise this with colleagues. Decisions need to be made now for the safeguarding of provision going forward. **(JR)** It is also having a huge effect on parents returning to work as places are limited.

(JS) Surely it would make sense for the numbers within bubbles to increase, as the furlough scheme is amended. **(VH)** Parental confidence is increasing, but in addition parents want to return their child for the social and emotional wellbeing of their children, however, the current measures just make it unfeasible. **(HS)** We are awaiting further guidelines as the Government work to return all children in September. Hopefully by having more sound data around sufficiency, alongside the information being pulled together by Family Information Services from parents, will enable us to provide the DfE with qualitative evidence highlighting challenges around the current delivery model.

3) Finance update (JE)

Clarification was given around maintained providers not having similar issues (finance) as private providers, Nursery Schools in particular have no other source of income.

Early Years Reserve: Funding should have been transferred into accounts today.

Clarification was provided on how the funding was split, detailing that it was linked to the DFG and weighted on the number of funded children each setting has, across all provider types, as the fairest way to do this. As a result, amounts varied from one provision to the next.

4) Childcare sufficiency (AH/ HS)

Start Well Sufficiency Summer 2020 - report shared with the group. Of the 134 childminders, 89 responded to the survey (66%). Of the 164 PVI's, 79 responded to the survey (48%). The data displayed the number of settings that are open, part open and not open. It also indicated from those that had responded, how many could now offer flexible care for parents (since 1st June).

(JR) can we share this information with families on social media? This will help families understand that sufficiency is now very limited.

Childcare information video – (AH) To support the sector requests about LA communicating positive, supportive messages about childcare to parents, there has been a video shared on the FIS website which providers can view and share with families to help them understand the situation within the borough for the Early Years sector, this can be viewed using either link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/BoltonFIS/videos/2551715794931085/> (Council website link)

<https://www.bolton.gov.uk/early-years-nursery-childcare/childcare-information/1> (COVID 19 Facebook page link). The video, 'Keeping everyone safe as your child returns to early education and childcare in Bolton' is a short video to support parents and carers to understand the implications for childcare providers as more children are able to access early education places. It may be helpful to share with your parents and staff.

(HS) asked the group to feedback, if there was anything or any points that could be addressed separately, that providers would feel would support families in understanding the current delivery models. The team could look to help provide some additional messages to go out to parents, including concise key messages from the videos on social media. **(HS)** we are also looking to recreate the video in other languages to better meet the needs of parents/carers throughout the borough.

(SP) has viewed the video and added it to their Facebook page. SP reported that the video was a helpful and clear message.

Autumn term sufficiency data collection - **(HS)** reported the need to reassess the sufficiency data next term (autumn), with more information to follow.

Actions:

1. HS to add the links to the video clip for parents to the Friday bulletin again (went out in last week's bulletin). Here are the links:
FIS Facebook page: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/early-years-nursery-childcare/childcare-information/1>
Council webpage: <https://www.facebook.com/BoltonFIS/videos/2551715794931085/>
2. Can all providers share this message with families and their staff/teams via their social media / communications platforms.

5) EYFS Communication and plans for message to parents (HS/AH)

Inclusion - As mentioned above, the LA are looking to produce the video/briefing (those aimed at families) in other languages to help our more diverse communities across the borough.

Digital offer – Bolton Council and Health Service teams are currently working together to roll out an online family engagement service (digital communications), which will see a range of family support and will be broadcast via social media. This will include some of the family sessions that would normally take place within the Start Well centres, but has currently been postponed due to COVID. More information will follow as progress is made. A briefing will go out to providers so that they can see how the digital offer for parents might work. Please share the messages / online sessions with your families as you see them.

2-Year-Old funding adverts - The LA receive information to show which children are eligible for funding but are not accessing Early Years education. The LA cannot share this information with providers. However, we are looking to increase our social media adverts, ensuring messages are seen by families across the borough. Again, the LA are looking to translate these messages into other languages to target some of our harder to reach families, where there are language barriers. Again, as these messages are published, providers can help by sharing these via their own methods of communications. (social media, emails etc).

(AH) Reassured the group that we do know which children are eligible / met criteria, so we will give the letters directly to those families concerned.

Citizens portal (AH) confirmed that the portal is in the final stages of testing and we are hoping to launch it soon. This portal is similar to the provider portal, but a parent version. Parents will do their own checks and print off their own letters to give to their provider. Please share in your own networks, as your parents might have friends that may be eligible.

Multidisciplinary work – The LA is presently working with midwives, public health nurses and the CCG. These health services have had to focus on their vulnerable offer during the lockdown period, but they are now looking ahead and considering how they can continue to meet the needs of all families across the borough. We are looking at how they can signpost and support parents who may meet the criteria for funding whilst Start Well centres remain closed to the public (except for prior appointment).

(JM) Reported that there are some SEND children that won't return until September, but Health Visitors have done some telephone communications with those parents and they have supplied the report from these meetings to the setting, which has been helpful.

(HS) advised the group about the SEND guidance which can be found on the Start Well website. Providers and families should find this useful, please share:

Bolton information and advisory service SEND bulletin

<https://www.boltonstartwell.org.uk/news/article/48/bolton-information-and-advisory-service-send-bulletin>

Transition support – adapted for COVID

<https://www.boltonstartwell.org.uk/resources/send-inclusion/5?documentId=7&categoryId=7>

Support for parent of children with SEND

<https://www.boltonstartwell.org.uk/resources/send-inclusion/21?documentId=7&categoryId=7>

Actions

1. DF/AH to update on the SEND offer at the next meeting.

6) Data capture changes for DfE (AH)

Data Capture (AH) advised the group that the [data capture](#) has been conducted weekly since the beginning of the lockdown period for Early Years providers (schools submit a different way). Private Early Years providers are asked to submit the data capture weekly (Monday before 11:30am) to the LA. The LA then collates this information ready for submission to the DfE. The DfE are changing the questions asked on the data capture to include questions to determine how many family's providers are turning away and how many can't access the provision. The survey will be updated to reflect the additional information requested by the DfE and will be ready from next week. The data capture is useful to the LA but it is primarily a way to inform the DfE/government policy.

Brokerage service – Please continue to ask families that are struggling to find alternative childcare to contact the brokerage service at the One Stop Shop on telephone: 01204 337220. The LA cannot guarantee that they will find an alternative/suitable place via the brokerage system but will endeavour to help.

7) Wraparound and OOCS (HS)

Already discussed – see updates section.

8) Summer/Autumn looking ahead (HS)

Already discussed – see childcare sufficiency section.

9) Questions and AOB

(JS) shared that a meeting between Early Years providers was held on a Monday 22nd June 2020. It was helpful to share experiences with each other. There will be more meetings as the group found them useful.

(JLB) asked if there will be more guidance for holiday club? **(HS)** confirmed that there may be more guidance on, or prior to, the 4th July, following the announcement made by the Prime Minister at the weekend that wraparound/OOSC could possibly look to reopen from this date.

(JLB) also asked if bubble numbers might increase. **(HS)** not known at this time.

(JLB) asked, do you think there will be further guidance on how to work over the summer period leading up to September? **(HS)** we have posed these questions to the DfE and it is recognised that you do need this information as soon as possible. HS reiterated that the LA continue to receive the Government information at the same time and in the same way as everyone else. HS acknowledged the need to prepare prior to the end of the summer term, and that any guidance released would need to be prior to this. We await further updates.

Baseline assessments (HS) confirmed we have just heard that baseline assessments for Reception children have been delayed for 12 months.

Interpreting the Government guidance (LW) reported that the GM group has had dialogue with the DfE, they wanted more examples about what providers can and cannot do upon wider opening of the settings (from 1st June). The DfE maintained that it was up to the providers to interpret the guidance and that no examples would be provided as all settings are different. The provider must make independent decisions about their setting and use professional judgement as to what can be done. Providers must maximise safety by considering the relevant Government guidance. HS advised to continue to risk assess and make sure insurance companies are kept informed. It is hoped that the next instalment of Government guidance will provide more clarity on how to run services leading up to the autumn term.

School deferred places (HS) – please speak to School's Admissions. HS reported, following correspondence with School's Admissions, that there has been no change in the number of school places deferred this year compared with previous years.

(LW) for summer born children, applications can be *deferred* so that a child can start Reception a year later than normal. Parents/professionals to make this decision in the child's best interest (see p.16 of admissions document). We will add links to the relevant doc to support deferred/delayed transition to the provider update this week:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summer-born-children-school-admission>

Parents must be supported to secure a school place via the admissions process as school places are oversubscribed.

Workforce Development/Safeguarding Certs – (LW) Workforce Development have confirmed that safeguarding certificates will have their life extended. More information will be sent out from workforce development.

Action:

1. Add the link to information to support providers with deferred/ delayed transition to school to provider bulletin (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summer-born-children-school-admission>)
2. Include information on Safeguarding certificates to the provider bulletin.

HS closed the meeting, thanking all for their time today.

Next Meeting: Thursday 9th July 2020, 1:35pm – 3:05pm