

EYFS Settings and Start Well Coordination Hub

MINUTES

23rd July 2020 – 1:35pm – 2:30pm

Skype / Remote

Present:

Helen Shearer (HS)	Interim HOS SW Professional Lead
Janet Lomax Baker (JLB)	Croft House Nursery
Julie Edwards (JE)	Bolton Council – Early Years Finance
Vicky Hough (VH)	Saplings Day Nursery
Samantha Baron (SB)	SW Service Development Officer
Rebecca Albrow (RA)	SW Service Development Officer
Ali Hart (AH)	FIS Principal Information and Comms
Laura Wright (LW)	SW Early Years Adviser

Apologies: Dawn France (DF) SW Early Years Adviser

A SECTION OF MINUTES

1 Meeting Welcome (HS)

HS welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes from Thursday 9th July were agreed for accuracy by all.

HS outlined the actions relating to the minutes

DfE webinar update: (LW) The slides are still to be circulated. As soon as they become available, we will make them available to the sector.

2 Half day school closures (HS)

At the last meeting it was shared that a school had announced they were going to close every Friday afternoon from September with wraparound care being provided to parents at a cost. The LA have undertaken a snap survey of primary schools and have found that three primary schools are planning for half-day closures in September. Colleagues have spoken with the Head Teachers concerned, about the impact of this on working parents. The schools have undertaken consultation with Governors and parents and have shared their rationale. The rationale outlines adjustments made in school operational hours, as well as measures put in place for wraparound care to support working parents and employers. As a Local Authority we have outlined the barriers of half-day closures. All three schools have confirmed that they will review the impact of the closures with Governors at their next meeting. In addition, all have stated they have the full support of their parents.

(VH) The school in question have confirmed they will go ahead with the half-day closure each week but have reconsidered charging parents for wraparound care. Numbers will be capped at 50 children. This has been welcomed.

3 Headteachers & EYFS Leads – Transition arrangements (HS/LW)

A meeting was held and schools confirmed transition arrangements in the main will be as normal. Some Headteachers and Early Years leads have recognised that they have not been able to undertake transitional activity in the Summer term and will therefore undertake a staggered approach in September. Some schools have been undertaking transitional meetings this term, through doorstep visits and digital introductions. All schools have acknowledged that there needs to be a personalised approach to transitions, so will review on a case by case basis.

4 Funding (JE)

The Government have recently provided an update regarding Early Years funding for the Autumn term, stating:

On 20 July DfE announced that they will pay local authorities for the places they would normally have funded in the autumn term 2020. This means that if providers are open, but caring for fewer children than they usually would be in the autumn term - as a result of low demand from parents or for public health reasons - they can continue to be funded as if the coronavirus pandemic were not happening. This gives another term of secure income to nurseries and childminders who are open for the children who need them.

To ensure local authorities have sufficient funding to support providers during the autumn term, we are making an exception this year to the way we normally allocate early years funding to local authorities. Normally DfE would use the January 2021 census data for funding allocations for the 2020 autumn term. By exception, the January 2020 census data will be used for funding allocations to local authorities for the autumn term 2020.

This means, DfE will be paying local authorities in autumn 2020 for the number of children who were receiving the free childcare entitlements *before the pandemic began*. DfE expect local authorities to pass that support on to providers who are open, but may not be as full as usual. The guidance sets out in more detail that council funding will not be reduced next term, but this will be a transitional period.

In Bolton we are mindful that some settings may have higher numbers this year than last, so we would consider adjusting the figure to capture the additional headcount.

For example: *if a setting had a headcount of 50 children in Autumn 2019, LA would continue to fund that in Autumn 2020 (even if the figure is lower this year). If the setting has an increase of 5 children, raising the headcount to 55, additional funding would be honoured for those 5 children.*

This seems to be the most appropriate methodology of distributing funding.

JLB: Would there be any clawback if a child moved setting, would the funding move with them? **(JE)** The new setting will only receive more money if they go above their Autumn 2019 headcount. We are aware of some anomalies and need to consider how this will be implemented for childminders.

(JLB) When will this be confirmed and communicated to the sector? **(JE)** We need to speak to Finance, but this should be imminent **(AH)** We also need to take into consideration the rule of the parental declaration form **(HS)** We will send out clarification in August regarding how this will work and will include a short update in this Friday's provider bulletin. This will also include an update on the headcount portal. We will ensure there is clarification ahead of 10th August.

(JE) The DfE have made clear this is a transition term and the Spring term will resume as normal in January.

Actions

1. HS to include update on the new Autumn term payments in Friday's addition of the weekly provider bulletin.
2. Press release/briefing to the sector giving guidance on the transitional financial arrangements for the Autumn term. This information should include an example and clarification, if needed, for different sectors, i.e. childminders.

5 Numbers for the Autumn term (HS)

Early years funding and the GM campaign - HS shared that communication work continues with the aim of increasing the messages going out to parents, including messages from childcare works and the GM campaign (2-year-old funding). HS has met with colleagues across GM last week and shared this was a positive meeting and it was good to hear what other LA are doing to promote awareness. There are barriers, particularly with regards to the sharing of data. Currently the LA receive confirmation to confirm which children are eligible and haven't taken up their early years entitlement, but this information cannot be shared with other colleagues, and those that could make a difference to uptake. HS informed that this is being raised as an issue.

Citizens portal work continues – (HS) there has been an issue which could have potentially delayed the rollout, but a solution was found. Families should be able to complete their own funding eligibility check from the end of July 2020 as originally planned.

6 COVID-19: education, childcare and activities / summer provision (HS)

A short survey was issued to all registered and unregistered providers in education, childcare and those providing summer activities last week. The survey helped to determine which services would be open over the summer period so that Families Information Service are able to better signpost parents looking for provision. Thank you to those completing the survey. The signposting service is now available and we ask providers to refer families to that: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/schools-children/covid-19-childcare-education-keyworkers/1>. The LA have also just completed a best practice guidance document that will be forwarded on to all of the providers that have informed us that they are/will be open during summer. This will encourage settings to follow the Government guidance, no matter if they are registered or unregistered. That guidance will be sent out this week. We have one provider who has made a parent's guide and they are happy for us to share that guide with other providers.

Wraparound Care - We anticipate that there will be further guidance for wraparound services from September as current guidance only covers the summer period.

7 COVID-19 update for education settings (public health briefing held 16th July 2020)

A public health briefing was presented by Dr Helen Lowey, Director of Public Health and Susanne Gilman, Consultant in Public Health. (HS) It is crucial information that will aid understanding of the COVID-19 situation and help to improve public/sector confidence. The messages given within the briefing are useful for all early years practitioners, so please ensure all staff within early years are able to see this. Here is a [link to the briefing](#).

JLB/VH both reported seeing this and confirmed it was very helpful.

If you have any further questions about the public health briefing or would like any information about the summer holiday period, please email:

policyandperformace@bolton.gov.uk.

8 **AOB (all)**

JLB – Asked opinions about swimming lessons starting again in September. JLB has been offered the same session as last year and advised they may lose the session if not taken up this September. LW advised regarding seeking reassurance around the safety measure in place with the leisure centre staff and to enquire if they are able to share their risk assessments and policies with them and then to seek the approval of parents. Transport if applicable would also need consideration. JLB hasn't consulted with parents but plans to.

VH – The practices that have changed due to COVID-19 have just become normal now. Confirm that they are slowly bringing furloughed staff back into setting. Numbers are only lower for funded children in comparison to this time last year, but this is because some of the children aren't eligible for funding until January 2021.

JLB – confirmed that they are almost at capacity from September 2020. They have lost about 5 children but feel this is due to parents deciding to keep their children at home or with grandparents or they have moved to school nursery. The situation is looking positive from September/October time.

DfE data capture – (HS) reported that it is anticipated that this will continue into September 2020.

Programme for the new academic year - LW confirmed that the Start Well EYFS offer programme of activity is in the process of being finalised and more information will follow with regards this over the summer period.

6 **Next meeting**

The group discussed the value of this meeting. (VH) Having a digital platform for support has been invaluable during this period and much more attentive to the needs of my setting. I have seen more of the Local Authority in the past 4 months than I have in 10 years. I am mindful of the time it takes for the Start Well team to physically visit premises and feel this form of digital engagement has been extremely positive and welcomed. VH/JLB both agreed that they have found this group very beneficial.

After consideration, noting that the group has diminished in size over the weeks and today has 2 early years sector representatives, it was agreed by all that this would be the last meeting. However, LW/HS discussed the purpose of the 'early years subgroup' meeting which meets regularly during the term, and recommended group members become actively engaged with their representatives on that group. The next meeting will be held in September 2020. The Start Well EYFS offer will continue to provide opportunities for the sector to come together and share successes and challenges through network meetings.

HS once again thanked all participants of the group, past and present for taking their time to meet and for their valuable input. The early years update, usually emailed every Friday, will continue as updates present and as usual, the service will be available throughout the summer period should any additional support be needed.

Actions

1. LW/HS to provide more information about the early years subgroup to the members of this group.

