

Early Years Sub Group Meeting

Minutes

9th February 2021

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Jasmine Sanders	Private Provider
Helen Shearer	Head of Start Well Service
Julie Robinson	Private Provider
Anthony Slack	Primary Governor
Martin Rostron	Nursery Governor
Rob Dean	Primary Headteacher (Chair)
Sarah Bagshaw	Primary Headteacher (Rep)
Vinny Merritt	Private Provider
Kevan Hamer	School Finance Unit
Sue Pounds	Headteacher Grosvenor MNS
Laura Wright	Early Years and Childcare Adviser
Lisa Bentham	Administrator (minutes)

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

2. 2YO Funding Take up Issues

HS shared the 2YO dashboard which has come from Government and gives an indication of where Bolton's 2YO uptake is alongside statistical neighbours across England.

Regarding the Autumn term, Bolton is in the lowest grouping in respect of the data shown. National take up for two year old funding is 69%, which at this time last year Bolton were just under. The take up was recorded at 49% which was the lowest level due to Covid 19 pandemic.

The DfE survey is a snapshot, the figures will be updated. Bolton's figure at the end of the term was higher than reported from the 49% reported to 61%, just behind the national figure.

Bolton has been identified as one of 20 Authorities that have been offered support for 2YO take up, this is being provided by Hemsalls Consultancy and funded by DfE. The support will look at what can be done differently and how we can learn from others. HS will bring the information back to the group around what we need to continue to do and what we have available to us to get the information out to parents.

Question raised: is it just Bolton that has been affected by the take up due to the pandemic?

No, all figures are down, our figure of 61% that puts us in a much more favourable position.

The FSM winter voucher scheme at Christmas was used to invite families who have not yet taken up their two-year-old place to come into the Start Well Centre to do eligibility checks as well as giving out the winter vouchers. This activity gave a 3% increase for this spring. This is being repeated during half term.

Public Health Nursing during their mandated visits with families they will identify any family that may be eligible and will raise awareness around quality early education places for children with them. The citizens portal is now live for parents to do their own eligibility checks.

Other actions being taken are:-

- Providers are being approached to see if it would be useful for them to have some banners outside their provisions
- discussions are taking place with large employers to bring awareness for the 2YO funding to their employees, and talking about the 3-4YO funding and 30 hours also.
- increasing work with partners to see if families understand the offer that is available and to promote that to the families.

Local Authorities are sharing resources and Hemsalls who are linked in will bring ideas and information.

3. 2YO Funding appeals

There are two Day Care providers and one Childminder currently on the requires improvement Ofsted judgements. The last meeting the decision was made to not reinstating funding. Those settings are now not in a position through no fault of the own to be able to change their grade and can appeal through the appeals process. This will be done through an on line meeting and RD will Chair the Panel. LW has written to the settings asking them to submit some additional information and have said that they feel confident that the improvements will be made, and they would then have good or better from their next inspection.

4. DfE Childcare Sufficiency Report

It is our statutory duty to ensure that we have enough quality childcare for working families.

The DfE are asking us to facilitate the data return that is emailed out to all Early Years providers and Schools that we submit at the beginning of the week, to get an understanding of any barriers in terms of if any providers have had to turn away parents because they can't meet their requirements etc.

Our return is currently from 27% of providers, so the issue is that we are not giving an accurate return to the DfE. It is recognised people are incredibly busy and recognise this is a challenge but we need to have a true and accurate picture about childcare and take up in Bolton in order to plan and ensure sufficiency.

Currently data collection is once a week but we are hoping that the Government drops it down to fortnightly as that is how they did it previously.

***ACTION:* publish information regarding the Portal after February half term.**

5. Finance

It was reported that the funding rates for 2021-22 were approved by the Executive Member on 8th February.

The Early Years funding cycle was presented to the Group to illustrate the impact of the annual census on the termly payments.

Spring 2021 is being funded based on actuals. Summer 2021 funding to the LA will also be based on the Spring 2021 census unless further changes are announced by the Government.

There was a discussion about the current projected overspend on the Early Years Block due to Autumn Term protection.

6. AOB

It was raised that at the Schools Forum meeting Early Years tends to be at the end of the meeting and it was suggested that maybe they be put higher on the agenda.

JE to suggest to the Chair that Early Years and Formula Review minutes are alternated at each Schools Forum meeting.

7. Date & Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 30th March 1pm-2pm – MS Teams