

Early Years Sub Group Meeting

Minutes

20th October 2020

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Jasmine Sanders
Helen Shearer
Julie Robinson
Anthony Slack
Martin Rostron
Rob Dean
Sarah Bagshaw
Vinnny Merritt
Kevan Hamer
Laura Wright

Private Provider
Head of Start Well Service
Private Provider
Primary Governor
Nursery Governor
Primary Headteacher (Chair)
Primary Headteacher (Rep)
Private Provider
School Finance Unit
Start Well Early Years and Childcare
Adviser

Apologies- Julie Edwards

1. Minutes 8th September 2020

The minutes were agreed

2. Impact of Covid – Start Well

The commencement of the Autumn term to date had recorded only a small amount of positive Covid 19 cases being confirmed in Private Providers, approximately 2% of total cases recorded across wider education provision. These cases are a result of community transmission which highlighted that Provider's had been successful in Implementing the Government guidance and have ensured COVID secure establishments.

Self-Isolation is adding pressure to the private income funding stream for Providers. The issue of sustainability is continuingly being raised with Regional Schools Commissioner and the DFE on behalf of all providers.

Providers with no access to Early Years Funding Entitlements (primarily out of school provision and Childminders) report they are continuing to struggle for a second term.

The changes to the Furlough scheme from the 31st October was expected to see an increase in redundancies. Providers may need to redesign their offer, to offer a flexible business model and respond to a change in parental demand. New business models may result in a reduced offer so Providers can ensure sustainability. Start-Well, supported with MBK consultants, would explore further training to help develop plans to reflect the changes in subsidised support and reduced revenues.

It was important to note that no additional closure notices from Summer had been reported currently.

The start-well Quality and Outcome team continue to provide support and to all providers with the increased emphasis on managing staff “bubbles” and COVID-19 related issues. Now need to support Provider recovery plans, focussing on Teaching and Learning.

3. Impact of Covid – Finance

Following the decision to protect sector sufficiency in the Autumn term and fund providers on the greater hours of autumn 20 or the previous autumn 19, the group was informed that the second quarter budget projection was estimated to be at a level of £250k overspend. (first quarter underspend of £271k)

With most initial claims received, data had revealed a net loss in take up of approx. 250 2yo places and net loss of approx. 430 3yo places. However, the overspend resulted from Providers who exceeded previous autumn 19 hours and were receiving additional funding, which for this one term to protect future sufficiency could not be offset by “losing” Providers

Finance would produce a per provider breakdown at a later date, but it was schools and academies who appeared to have suffered the larger % losses in up-take when compared to the previous autumn numbers.

Spring 21 funding – the expectation was that, unless a change in Government directive, funding of Providers would return to the payment of actual hours only.

An overspend of £250k would be manageable as funding and payment returned to normal levels over the next 1-2 years.

Questions around new hourly rates and maintained Nursery school supplement could only be addressed following the spending review and the future LA settlement.

The group agreed in discussion, that Providers needed to prepare for the Spring 21 term.

4. Ofsted Visits to Requires Improvement settings

There are 2 RI Providers who had received an Ofsted visit to address previous safeguarding issues but were advised that they would not receive a full inspection re-judgement.

The safeguarding action had been resolved and it was now the LA who had the discretion to reinstate funding for the 2yo provision.

Example of the visit letter was shared; the group was concerned that the Ofsted letter which followed the visits was of a minimum level input only and did not take into consideration the Teaching and Learning, or other areas it only reported on the safeguarding and welfare actions. The group acknowledged that there are no childcare sufficiency needs across the Borough and in fact there is a surplus of places. Consequently, the Early Years Subgroup decision was that funding should not be reinstated as there is sufficiency of free childcare places across all areas of the Borough. The Sub group endorsed the statement that the Local Authority should ‘Rely solely on the Ofsted inspection judgement of the provider or the childminder agency as the benchmark of quality’

The sub group noted that the next graded inspections should take place before March 2021 and if this was not the case, or Ofsted indicate that graded inspections will not resume in January the decision will be reconsidered and further information sort from the provider to support any further actions.

5. AOB

Guidance would be expected from the DFE in the event of any imposed lockdown or circuit breaker, although this type of restriction may not include education and childcare.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 15th December 2020
Microsoft Teams 1.00pm -2.00 pm