

EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP

AGENDA & DISCUSSION PAPERS

Wednesday 1st July 2009 at 3.00PM

Training Room 5, Building 2,
North London Business Park,
Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP

Early Years Working Group Members					
Anthea	Abery	Rosh Pinah	Maintained	Nursery Class	Faith
Liz	Bartlett	Wingfield	Maintained	Children's Centre	
Pauline	Congdon	Little Acorns	PVI		
Marina	Economides	Bright Sparks	PVI		
Perina	Holness	Moss Hall Nursery	Maintained	Nursery School	
Sharon	Lee	FRS	PVI	Setting	Faith
John	Maxwell	Holly Park	Maintained	Nursery Class	
Julie	Paice	Senior Childminding Co-Ordinator (LBB)	PVI	Childminders	
Christine	Read	All Saints, N20	Maintained	Nursery Class	
Diana	Rose	Kerem House	PVI	Independent School	
Elaine	Rosenthal	Playsafe	PVI	Sessional	
Sarah	Vipond	Middlesex Uni	PVI	Full Day Care	Schools Forum
OTHER ATTENDEES					
Stuart	Gray	Principal Inspector	Children's Service	Chair	
Martin	Baker	Acting Director of Children's Service	Children's Service		
Sheila	Abbott	Early Years & Extended Services Manager	Children's Service		
Stav	Yiannou	BRSI Manager	Children's Service		
Sarah	Hargreaves	Extended Services Development Manager	Children's Service		
Diane	Lewis	Early Years Inspector	Children's Service		
Zahid	Parvez	Business Manager	Children's Service		
Carol	Beckman	Schools Funding Manager	Children's Service		
Lisa	Horne	Barnet Pre School Learning Alliance			
Akos	Adu	Research & Mgmt Information	Children's Service		
Claire	Gray	School Resources & Support Officer	Children's Service	Minutes	
OBSERVERS					
Liz	Pearson	Schools Forum member			
Jodi	Gurney	Schools Forum member			

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of previous meeting: 6th May 2009
3. Matters Arising
4. Items for information
 - Operational update
5. Items for discussion:
 - Draft response to the DCSF EY Code of Practice consultation
 - Phased admissions/home visits
 - Top-Ups
6. Any other business

Dates for future meetings:

30 September 2009 (Training Room 1)

11 November 2009 (Training Room 2)

Please contact either Sarrosh or Claire if you have any queries about this meeting:

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E: sarrosh.malik@barnet.gov.uk

Claire Gray Tel: 020 8359 7377

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4. Items for discussion:

- **The following is an extract from the LA Draft response to the DCSF EY Code of Practice consultation.**

The full DCSF document can be viewed at:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1634&external=no&menu=1>

This question relates to paragraphs 25-33 of the discussion document.

1 Does this delivery model provide the right balance between nationally set principles and parameters and a locally determined entitlement?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

National set parameters are the right ones and are balanced equally with the local parameters. However there are concerns around some of the local parameters such as "parents demand" ie "demand" being an unrealistic expectation on LAs for local authorities and PVI providers to adhere.

Barnet Council will be seeking the views of parents through a questionnaire of parents participating in the extension of the free entitlement in Autumn. The key questions will be around "did the times suit the needs of the parents?"

This question relates to paragraphs 25 -27 of the discussion document

2 Are the nationally set parameters the right ones? If not what changes would you like to see?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

No further changes. The parameters need to be flexible in order for the local authorities to tailor the offering suited to the circumstances of providers as well as the varying needs of the local community.

This question relates to paragraphs 27-32 of the discussion document.

3 Does the process for reaching a locally set entitlement properly balance the need to respond to parental demand (including the needs of those least likely at present to take up a full free entitlement) with the need to ensure delivery is practical and sustainable for early years providers?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

As mentioned above in question 1, "parents demand" is an unrealistic request. As part of our phase 1 extension to the free entitlement is rolled out we will evaluate, review and plan appropriately in response and take some learning. We plan to further consult with parents on what would be the best time to take up the free entitlement.

It must be noted that there are automatic differences between a maintained school and a non-maintained provider PVI as one operates on a pure business focus whilst the other is managing with local authority budget.

This question relates to paragraphs 27-32 of the discussion document.

4 Do the requirements for consultation with providers strike the right balance between the need to consult and our desire to limit bureaucracy in delivering the free entitlement?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Barnet Council has employed a project officer whose key responsibility is the roll out of the extension of the free entitlement; the PO will co-ordinate consultation and administration as extensively as possible within a manageable framework and we will seek learning from that.

This question relates to paragraph 34 of the discussion document.

5 Is there a useful role for agreements between providers and parents in helping to manage the practicalities of delivering a more flexible entitlement?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

We are looking at contracts with parents accessing provision in the maintained sector. This is not an issue with PVI's as they already operate on contracts. In addition to the current DCSF code of practice Barnet Council also employs its own local policies and procedures which explains in detail the mechanics of the free educational entitlement.

This question relates to paragraph 35 of the discussion document

6 a) Do you agree that all LAs should be required to establish childminder networks, to enable childminders to deliver the free entitlement?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Barnet Council believes that a preferred network should be a Children Come First network. In Barnet we have an established and successful network with 63 members of which 10 are accredited to deliver the free entitlement.

This question relates to paragraph 35

6 b) Do you think this strikes the right balance between ensuring flexibility and a level playing field, with the need to deliver high quality provision?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Having childminders offering the free entitlement gives parental choice as childminders can be more flexible than other types of childcare providers in the market. It does not create a level playing field as PVI's don't have to go through the same process as childminders to access the free entitlement.

This question relates to paragraphs 37-41 of the document

7 What would you identify as the main challenges to delivery of an offer which can be 'stretched' over more than 38 weeks of the year? And how can those challenges best be overcome?

Comments:

The key challenges would be tracking children taking up the entitlement which would be a significant & time-consuming administrative burden of resources on the local authority. In addition it would then rely upon a number of different childcare providers to liaise closely and talk to each other (this is an EYFS expectation) about each individual child which in turn would need to be monitored for consistency and continuity.

To address and overcome the challenges the local authority could perhaps offer a two tiered approach, for example with 38 weeks and 48 weeks.

This question relates to paragraph 37-41 of the discussion document.

8 Do you think it would be feasible to deliver a stretched offer in your area, for all parents who want it, by 2012? If not by then, what would be a sensible date?

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Yes

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No

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Not Sure

Comments:

As per above question, it would be more achievable to plan for deliver 38/48 weeks only.

This question relates to paragraphs 42-46 of the discussion document.

9 Should we put an expectation in the Code of Practice that local authorities deliver the free entitlement through providers who are leading the way in terms of quality and continuous improvement?

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Yes

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No

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Not Sure

Comments:

The local authority advocates quality and continuous improvement in all childcare provision and would want 'quality' included as a requirement / expectation within in the Code of Practice.

This question relates to paragraph 50 of the discussion document

10 Are "provider agreements" on the free entitlement the right way to set out expectations around quality?

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Yes

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No

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Not Sure

Comments:

The local authority has its own policies and procedures which outline what the provision needs to work with our early years support teams' advisory teachers and plan for action to improve quality. In the event of this failing to produce identified improvements within an agreed timescale, minimum standards not being achieved and no forthcoming action received from the provider, the local authority may then discuss (at its discretion) the withdrawal of funding.

The local authority also has procedures to identify and monitor the quality of provision across settings and a number of quality of initiative tools it uses to monitor the provisions' quality.

11 Are the principles in paragraph 52 appropriate parameters for delivering improved quality in the free entitlement? Are there other principles which should be applied?

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Yes

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No

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Not Sure

Comments: No comment

This question relates to paragraphs 53-54 of the discussion document.

12 Do you agree that local authorities should incentivise quality through the use of a quality supplement in their local funding formulas? What factors would it be useful for LAs to take into account when deciding on how to build quality supplements into their funding formula?

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Yes

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No

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Not Sure

Comments:

We would question whether it is incentive or recognition when building supplements into the formula on the qualifications. There is a small allocation of funding that is currently apportioned to the quality supplement. The factors that we use are the qualifications of the leader, in line with CWDC requirements for all leaders to have graduate status by 2015. Settings are encouraged / expected to have a CPD policy to extend knowledge, skills and qualifications of all staff; we would like to acknowledge the value of additional / higher qualifications and subsequent costs to the provider through a quality supplement. Going forward we would like to consider the qualifications of all staff in our provisions.

This question relates to paragraphs 55-56 of the discussion document

13 Do you think that the Code should encourage local authorities to fund childminders to deliver free entitlement provision only where they have a Level 3 qualification?

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Yes

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No

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Not Sure

Comments:

In Barnet, quality assured network childminders have either a level 3 qualification or are working towards it.

Evidence gathering

14 a) What types of flexible provision work well for a) full day care and b) sessional providers? What is the impact on each of these categories of providers of contributing to a local flexible offer?

Comments:

No comment. The issue around flexibility for daycare providers is less of an issue, however we are aware some sessional groups may not be able to offer the full entitlement/flexibility due to the restrictions imposed through sharing premises with other organisations.

Evidence gathering

14 b) To what extent do providers offer hourly provision and not just fixed sessions?

Comments:

The provision is mixed in Barnet with daycare providers more likely to operate on hourly provision and sessional providers working on timed sessions. As we move towards the single formula and extension of the entitlement we expect all providers to operate hourly.

Evidence gathering

15 What are the challenges in your area to implementing flexibility, and how you are overcoming them?

Comments:

General

Manageability of extended hours
Limitations of space, premises / resources
Additional administration needs/costs

Maintained sector challenges:

Staff contracts
Rigidity of school timetabling
Amount of funding
Security
Concern around perceived erosion of quality

PVI sector challenges:

Top-up fees
Additional services to access a free place
Free at point of delivery
Lack of staff experience/training/qualifications
High staff turnover
Disparity in quality across settings
Low pay (poor average wage) & status

To address these challenges we have, as mentioned above, employed a project lead officer whose remit will be to find appropriate suitable solutions to these challenges.

Evidence gathering

16 What is your experience of working in partnership to deliver a flexible offer: the challenges and benefits, and the different types of partnerships which operate in your area?

Comments:

In Barnet we have a very mixed partnership across the maintained and non-maintained sectors, e.g. children in different settings, school & childminder, childminder & children's centre etc which would include PVIs to PVIs, childminders to children's centres, PVIs to childminders etc.

However these are all localised arrangements that the local authority is aware of but does not have a guiding set of principles that they are working towards.

In the extension to the free entitlement the local authority expects partnerships to become a common arrangement.

Evidence gathering

17 Do providers in your area consult with parents about the patterns in which they wish to access the free entitlement? How does this consultation help you shape your local offer?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Phase 1 providers are offering a combination of options and we will be consulting with parents about their experiences of the extension to the free entitlement.

Evidence gathering

18 Do you have delegated conditions or written agreements in place between LA and PVI providers?

Tell us what works well and what doesn't work well and how you balance implementing these arguments with the need to minimise burdens?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

As discussed above the local authority has detailed policies and procedures on settings claiming the NEF. This is a document that is reviewed on a yearly basis and is tailored towards Barnet providers. However it must be noted the policies are intrinsically linked to the current Code of Practice and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

Evidence gathering

19 Tell us about your local childminder network: the model you use; how you established it; the proportion of childminders in your area who belong to it and whether it is open to all childminders. Or, if you have not established one, tell us why.

Comments:

Barnet childminding networks use the *Children Come First* (CCF) scheme. This has been running since Summer 1999. The network was originally established in the West side of the Borough and was approved by NCMA in September 2001.

The scheme proved to be very successful, and was then gradually rolled out across the whole Borough over a number of years. It was finally available to all registered childminders in Barnet in January 2007. In Barnet we have a 'cluster' model of 4 networks, each are run by a full time network co-ordinator and the cluster is managed by a Senior Co-ordinator.

We currently have a membership of 63, which amounts to about 16% of our registered childminders in the Borough. Membership of the networks is a self referral system and is open to any childminder in the Borough, although we have a capacity for approx 100-125 members

Evidence gathering

20 What demand for a “stretched” offer have you identified in your area, and how are you meeting this demand?

Comments:

None. This is primarily due to parents and providers not aware of the offer. The local authority has not tested the appetite of this offer. However in the childcare sufficiency assessment 2007, parents had requested the NEF to be more flexible to meet the needs of working parents.

Evidence gathering

21 How are Local Authorities using free entitlement funding and provider agreements/delegated conditions to drive quality improvement?

Comments:

See above, it is linked to our local policies and procedures.

Evidence gathering

22 Do you have examples of best practice - where Local Authorities are using delivery of the free entitlement particularly effectively in improving quality? Are there examples where Local Authorities efforts to improve quality are having a negative impact?

Comments:

At the moment the free entitlement is not directly linked effectively to some of our systems which quality tools that measure quality improvements.

The local authority will consider linking the free entitlement to quality to bring them closer together.

Second part of the question the LA is unable to answer.

Evidence gathering

23 What quality principles or criteria do you use in relation to the Free Entitlement to drive quality improvement locally? How do you monitor or measure improvement?

Comments:

See above. As part of the evaluation process of phase 1 providers the LA will measure the impact in relation to quality in this group of providers.

Evidence gathering

24 Is a quality supplement included in your local funding formula (where there is a single funding formula in operation)? If so, what are the criteria on which it will be awarded? Do you think that will be effective in improving quality? If not, what is the rationale for not including a quality supplement?

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Yes

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No

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Not Sure

Comments:

Yes. Qualifications of the leader, as research evidence demonstrates this has a direct impact on quality of provision.

- **Phased admissions/home visits**

A number of schools and settings operate phased admissions and/or home visits when admitting nursery children at the start of each term. This means that the child cannot always access the full 38 weeks and funding to the setting is reduced. In some cases, children may not start accessing their free nursery entitlement until almost October half term.

Discussion: Should the Single Early Years Funding Formula (SEYFF) allow for 1 week phased admission/home visits at settings that operate in this way?

- **Top-Ups**

Top-Ups paper to be tabled at the meeting.

(Carol Beckman)

5. Items for information

- **Operational update**

Operational update paper to be tabled at the meeting.

(Sheila Abbott)