

# Early Years Working Group

11/01/2024

Attendees:		
Theresa Staunton (TS) <b>Chair</b>	PVI representative on Schools Forum	✓
Jeni Murphy (JM)	Early Years Strategic Lead	✓
Denise Bushay (DB)	Schools Places & Admissions Head of Service	✓
Leigh McGuinness (LM)	Park Hill Infant School and Tunstall Nursery School	X
Shelley Davies (SD)	Director of Education	X
Charles Quayle (CQ)	Finance Manager Education	✓
Maria Reeve (MR)	Head of Purley Nursery School	✓
Yetty Osonaika (YO)	Alpha Day Nursery	✓
Kim Berham (KB)	Head of Sparkles and Millie's Pre-schools	✓
Sophoya Davis (SD2)	Child Minder in Croydon	✓
Shamsa Akhtar (SA)	Nursery MD at J and S Playhouse Nursey	X
Jenette Indarsingh (JI)	Head of Thornton Hearth Nursery School	✓
Kate Lanning (KL)	Deputy Headteacher, Tunstall Nursery School	✓
Mori Bates (MB)	Clerk	✓
Alan Voyzey (AV)	Finance Officer	✓
Stephen Osonowo (SO)	Finance Officer	✓

## Minutes

<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies and welcome</b>	<b>TS</b>
	Apologies received from SD	
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes and actions</b>	<b>TS</b>
	<p>2.1 Minutes and actions of the last Early Years Working Group (November) were reviewed and amended – agreed to be a true record.</p> <p><u>Actions from Previous Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> November</u></p> <p>2.2 The forecast will be deferred and be added to the November agenda. CQ was not present at the November working group so this will be picked up at the January meeting – <b>ACTION – Carried forward.</b></p> <p>2.3 TS wanted clarity on <i>exactly</i> where the SENIFF funding comes from because it normally can only come from the 5% in order to pass through the 95%. CQ will seek clarity from the DfE – <b>ACTION – Carried forward.</b></p> <p>2.4 TS added that there has always been a line within the High Needs budget for Early Years but there is no breakdown into how the money is spent there or where it is going. CQ will come back with which sectors benefit from the Early Years line of the High Needs budget and also confirmed he would bring a combined paper from the service – <b>ACTION – Carried forward.</b></p> <p>2.5 CQ, TS and JM to come back together and look at the budget in greater detail, running it by DB – <b>ACTION – Carried forward.</b></p> <p>2.6 Access to the 251-paper pathway has been requested for members of the working group to have access to of which CQ will arrange for this. <b>ACTION – Carried forward.</b></p>	

	2.7 JI sent an email to SD regarding communications about the outcomes of the consultation period but has not received a response yet. DB will follow up with SD and inform her of the communications requested on the outcomes by those in the MNS consultation so that an update can be provided – <b>ACTION – Completed.</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Sufficiency Paper</b>	<b>JM</b>
	<p>3.1 JM presented a paper that provided updates and information on the spend figures, DSG, Supplementary Grant, an updated on MNS and details on support for accepting children post adjustment count whilst the window is open.</p> <p>3.2 In terms of figures, additional money was given to Early Years mid-year and as a result of this, a higher hourly rate was produced. This source of money was then not factored back into the DSG.</p> <p>3.3 DB provided an update on the MNS. Following on from the MNS consultation period, the outcomes were submitted to the Executive Mayor in Cabinet on the 6<sup>th</sup> December and it has subsequently been approved.</p> <p>3.4 There will be a three month window to complete the work of the submitted proposals, for which Julie Ralphs has been commissioned to assist with the project. The process will enforce collaborative working with the MNS. There is an understanding that meetings will be held with each of the maintained nurseries in due course.</p> <p><b>Q1:</b> TS: Three months seems like a very tight window to get the report together. Are they covering off the debt occurred by MNS in this time – are they looking to recover this.  <b>A1:</b> DB: There are a lot of external factors at play here. We are looking at income generated actions and have to investigate ways in which we can deal with the deficit being incurred during this time. The project will focus on how to make the MNS viable and then sustainable.</p> <p>3.5 In the future, Julie Ralphs (JR) will be invited to future Early Years Working Group when an update is required or can be provided.</p> <p>3.6 The Mayor has agreed that if a sustainable model cannot be found, a previous model will be adopted. DB asked that if anyone believes they have a methodology that would suit the management of MNS, then they can submit this for review. During the consultation period, there was a charity that offered to assist with the MNS – this could mean that there are potentially other key players that may want to get involved.</p> <p>3.7 JI, KL and MR all confirmed that meetings with JR were set to take place, all booked within the next couple of weeks, showing that the process is starting to move forwards.</p> <p>3.8 JM continued the report, focusing on the movement to Synergy. Such a move meant that there were changes to when payments were made to the settings. A change like this means that the headcounts had to be closed earlier to ensure that payments reached settings on time.</p> <p>3.9 For children that start within the adjustment headcount period and when the window is still open, settings are now able to contact JM and the team directly to manually have the children added on.</p> <p>3.10 If a setting has forgotten to complete the adjustment headcount, they will not receive the funding.</p> <p>3.11 YO queried that there were still historic details of children that had already left the setting on Synergy. JM requested YO email the team to find the appropriate solution. KB added that you can delete children on Synergy and that they will then show a waiting for deletion via the LA.</p>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Finance Papers Forecast and Outturn Outstanding Papers from Oct/Nov meeting</b>	<b>CQ</b>

	<p>4.1 TS has some queries about the finance reports over the last six months. The Early Years Budget has always been balanced and so there are some queries that ought to be raised by finance. It would appear that discrepancies are not being raised with the DfE in good time.</p> <p>4.2 There was a significant shortfall of £400,000 against the 2YO budget that the working group would like to know what was distributed for children in the LA against the amount received by the DfE. Normally, the indicative budget is based on the previous year's final outturn and there is an end of year adjustment the piece of work needs to record of which has not yet happened.</p> <p>4.3 CQ responded, saying that the DfE pay based on the census data across approximately 100 LAs with the budget being created on a weighted average. TS asked if there was a paper that showed specifically how the DfE calculates the budget. If JM only provides PVI data, who provides the school data and who then checks the data matches up.</p> <p>4.4 Based on CQ's comment connecting to the census data, TS stated that there should be further investigation into what the issue is if a discrepancy is being noticed. It was put to CQ as the finance representative of the EYWG to respond to. CQ explained that Oracle shows the overspend and so finance can only focus on this set of data. However, in the finance forecast, CQ said that the data from Oracle is unreliable.</p> <p>4.5 During the discussion, it was decided that an additional working group would be booked before the Schools' Forum on the 19<sup>th</sup> February. A Pre-Meet will take place on the 25<sup>th</sup> January at 2 o'clock in preparation for a working group on the 1<sup>st</sup> February from 10 until 12 where CQ will attend from 11:30 at the latest. The working group will focus on the Updated Outturn Report 22/23, picking up on SENIF funding and information regarding the top slice and underspend data.</p> <p>4.6 JM confirmed to CQ that the Synergy spend data has previously been provided, along with the number of children that have been paid. JM confirmed the information will be sent to finance again.</p> <p>4.7 JI commented that good communication has been received about SENIF money owed to MNS. JM and the team have been supportive and passed the necessary applications on to the finance team. However, the money has not yet been received which is making a bigger deficit for the MNS. The money in question should have been received in December (as agreed pre-hand with information supplied in July). CQ will investigate why this money has not yet been paid.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Budget 24/25</b>	<b>JM</b>
	<p>5.1 JM presented the paper on the new budget with new direction from the DfE. The paper will require a second look (due to take place on the 1<sup>st</sup> February) and will be sent out in due course, post-meeting.</p> <p>5.2 On 29<sup>th</sup> November, the rates on indicative budget for 3YOs, 2YOs and 9MOs and the options are currently as followed:  Option 1: 96.5% pass through to providers. 1.5% deprivation and 1% SENIF fund applied.  Option 2: 95% pass through to providers for 3&amp;4yo and 9mth; 97% pass through for 2yo. 1.5% deprivation applied.  Option 3: 97% pass through to providers. 1.2% deprivation and 1.3% SENIF fund contribution applied, and a 0.5% contingency fund applied.</p> <p>5.3 The tables on the paper depicted the hourly rate for each age group and how that would differ with those of the previous year</p> <p>5.4 The changes to supporting SENIF will lead to an increased workload for the LA. TS would be interested to know what this would look like and how it would be delivered to the settings.</p> <p>5.5 On the 1<sup>st</sup> February, the Early Years Working Group will vote on the option they would give as a recommendation to the Schools' Forum meeting due to take place later in February.</p> <p><b>Q2:</b> YO: What do we tell parents about the rates being delivered – when will it be agreed upon?</p>	

	<p><b>A2:</b> TS: The recommendation will have to be reviewed by members of Schools' Forum before the rates will be confirmed.</p> <p>5.6 The paper also covered the options that could be pursued in relation to the distribution of the MNS supplement. In particular, regarding TPAG (Teachers Pay Additional Grant.)  Option1: TPAG is provided based on the number of children on roll.  Option2: Takes out what has been allocated based on a particular rate and no of children.  Option 3: 97% pass through to providers. 1.2% deprivation and 1.3% SENIF fund contribution applied, and a 0.5% contingency fund applied.</p> <p>5.7 JM informed the working group that from April '24 where 2YO places are concerned, there will be guidelines put in place whereby if a setting has less than a 'good' rating, they will not be allowed to take on disadvantaged 2YOs.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<b>AOB</b>	<b>ALL</b>
	Papers will be sent out by email as soon as possible.	

**Next Meeting – Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024**

**Action Log:**

**Past Actions Post-June Meeting – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023:**

1.	CQ to update finance report, ready for July Schools' Forum	CQ	Completed Oct
2.	JM to raise Synergy whether the platform can be linked up with SIMS	JM	Completed Oct
3.	JM to investigate if FAQs and Top-Tips can be uploaded to the portal	JM	Completed Oct
4.	MB to update mailing list and double check membership	MB	Completed

**Past Actions Post-October Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023:**

1.	The forecast of the finance paper will be added to November agenda to be presented then	CQ	Jan'24 ( <b>carried</b> )
2.	CQ to seek clarity on exactly where funding comes from (in relation to the source of the SENIF funding – it normally can only come from the 5% in order to pass through the 95%)	CQ	Jan'24 ( <b>carried</b> )
3.	CQ will look at which sectors benefit from the Early Years line of the High Needs Budget as there is no breakdown into how this money is spent. CQ can present findings with a combined paper from the service	CQ	Jan'24 ( <b>carried</b> )
4.	CQ, TS and JM to meet and look at the budget in greater detail, running it by DB	CQ/TS/ JM	Jan'24 ( <b>carried</b> )

**Past Actions Post-November Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023:**

1.	ACTIONS FROM OCTOBER	CQ, TS or JM	As above
2.	CQ to share access to the 251 paper to the working group	CQ	Jan'24 ( <b>carried</b> )
3.	DB will inform SD of the updates being requested by the working group in relation to the outcomes of the MNS consultation period	DB	Completed

**Agreed Actions January Meeting – 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024:**

1.	ACTIONS FROM OCTOBER & NOVEMBER	CQ, TS or JM	As above
2.			
3.			