

**Early Years Working Group – 21/11/2024**

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

10a.m. to 11:30a.m.

<b>Attendees:</b>			
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	X	
Leigh McGuinness (LM)	Park Hill Infant School and Tunstall Nursery School	X	
Shelley Davies (SD)	Director of Education	X	
Charles Quaye (CQ)	Finance Manager Education	✓	
Mark Southworth (MS)	Consultant Lead, Locality Inclusion Project	✓	
Melanie Farris (MF)	Croydon Locality SEND Support Senco	✓	
Maria Reeve (MR)	Head of Purley Nursery School	✓	
Yetty Osonaike (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 Managing Director at J and S Playhouse Nursey	X	
Jenette Indarsingh (JI)	Head of Thornton Hearth Nursery School	✓	
Kate Lanning (KL)	Deputy Headteacher, Tunstall Nursery School	✓	
Keran Currie (KC)	Maintained Primary School Governor	✓	
Mori Bates (MB)	Clerk	✓	
Abiola Banjo (AB)	Clerk	✓	
Abioye Aimolowo (AA)	Finance Manager	✓	
Asim Saleem (AS)	Finance Officer	✓	

**Agenda Items**

1	<b>Apologies and welcome</b>	TS
	Apologies received by MB from DB and SD	
2	<b>Previous Minutes</b>	CQ
	2.1 Minutes were reviewed by the working group and agreed to be a true record.	
3	<b>Nursery School Finance Update</b>	CQ

	<p>3.1 AA presented in place of CQ a paper on the performance of nursery schools in Croydon whereby intervention from the LA and the work within nurseries is helping with the deficits at some of the settings.</p> <p>3.2 Table 1 showed the deficit trends from Mar'22 until Mar'24 for each of the maintained nursery schools, showing that where there were four in deficit in March '22, there are now only two in March '24. The total deficit was -£235,200 in 2022 and then £132,860 in 2024. The projected forecast for this year is looking positive, though this information has not been released due to it not yet being verified.</p>	
4	<b>Summer Adjustment for 23/24</b>	
	<p>4.1 TS queried the Summer Adjustment for 23/24, as there has been a significant increase in the budget of which should go through to the sector. A paper has not yet come to the working group given that the money is supposed to go out in August.</p> <p>4.2 CQ explained that in July we reported the current position in the Safety Valve – if after the data is published and additional funds are given to Early Years, we need to review the balances and reconcile the figures in order to see how much money for EY can be dished out. CQ confirmed that the next 5% will still be issued for the sector and will make sure this is done.</p> <p>4.3 TS indicated that there is no shortfall balance from the EY budget that is being uplifted by Central Services and that the budget is what is spent, leading to no overspend. The new budget was published in mid-July and the sector are still waiting for money from 23/24.</p>	
5	<b>Current Financial Position for 24/25</b>	
	5.1 Carried forwards to January meeting	
6	<b>SENIF Breakdown</b>	
	<p>6.1 It was looked at having an amount of money within the distribution line in the sector to help support SENIF as part of the 97% which is separate to the 5% top slice that sits with the LA and the money accessed through the High Needs Early budget. The SENIF fund is designed to focus on Early Years intervention to help the sector and meet the needs of the children in the LA.</p> <p>6.2 It is currently an open framework that is still in the development phase. Overall, the SENIF funding and support has positive benefits, but we need to know how we get it out there, how it has the best impact and what it looks like.</p> <p>6.3 MS added that in 2023, he queried the SENIF budget total as the LSS will be supporting the MNS. Instead of being told what the SENIF budget was, they were given a budget of £100,000 with no indication as to what this was to be used for – other than that it wasn't enough for the SENIF needs in a mainstream school. In the 23/24 academic year, the cost of SENIF payments for PVI's was £560,727 and £535,433 for maintained settings</p> <p>6.4 JM clarified that there are lots of SEND contributions that come from different areas, but historically, the SENIF fund came from the High Needs Block. The SENIF fund that has been calculated through the pass rate this year was to support the increase in the number of SENIF applications that we see. Contributions to SEND do come out of the top slice that supports universal and SEND services.</p> <p>6.5 Further investigation needs to be carried out regarding SEND as to what is available and how it can be allocated in a fair way for the two team.</p> <p>6.6 MF stated that in some nurseries being supported by the work of the CLSS, there is very little low level banding of SENIF being given out. The increase in SEND means that a higher band is having to be used for some children who may actually need a low level band. If there are pots of funding available, then</p>	

	<p>there is potential for projects to be started up – for example with speech and language needs in nurseries of which in turn would reduce the amount of SENIF required.</p> <p>6.7 KC commented that discussions have been ongoing for SALT, specifically in Early Intervention and how this looks. It would appear that Chatterbox is not an appropriate model for the current circumstances. Commissioning is in process for this, but it may be worth inviting Patricia Terror to the next EYWG meeting to better understand how SALT will look for Early Years.</p>	
7	<b>ACTION: £300,000 overspend from Early Years CLSS SENIF Spend</b>	
	7.1 Carried forwards to January meeting	
8	<b>Sufficiency Paper</b>	JM
	<p>8.1 JM presented the paper, drawing attention to the recommendations, including C of which relates to the distribution method for the Early Years Budget Grant whereby a recommendation will be taken to the main Schools’ Forum meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec.</p> <p>8.2 The Childcare Reforms came into effect, meaning that in April ’24 parents of W2YO could access 15 hours of funding and from September, parents of U2YO could receive 15 hours of funding.</p> <p><b>Q1:</b> TS: If we are having more children than the budget was anticipating, how will we see that reflected and how is the funding being checked?  <b>A1:</b> JM: The termly headcounts we provide them with will help with this, which is why the validations of the codes is so important.</p> <p>8.3 The DfE announced that it would be providing an Early Years Budget Grant (EYBG) following the recent teachers’ pay award. The total amount allocated to Croydon is £225,282.00 for which Table 1 displayed how the grant has been awarded. There was a suggestion to use a child rate rather than an hourly rate.</p> <p><b>Q2:</b> JI: In Table 1, for MNS where it says £166.25 per child, is that just 3 and 4YOs or are 2YOs included in that?  <b>A2:</b> JM: It would just be the 3 and 4YOs as it is the MNS supplement, based on the figures from April as it shouldn’t lead to an under or overspend.</p> <p>8.4 For 24/25, the LA has so far received £85,766 from the Early Years Capacity Funding grant for staffing and Early Years training, £636,170 for the Wraparound Programme Delivery funding to provide grants to support the expansion and/or creation of wraparound places, £55,380 from the Wraparound Capacity Funding grant and £712,257 from the Childcare Reforms Capital Grant. Table 2 also depicted indicative figures for 25/26.</p> <p>8.5 JM confirmed that currently have sufficient places, but there is a prediction that there will be a shortfall of places next year. The shortfalls could be covered by neighbouring wards. Table 3 showed where the shortages of hours we have for next year in each of the wards across the LA. If wards do not appear in the table, this is because there is not a shortage in that ward.</p>	
9	<b>AOB</b>	
	<p>TS suggested further discussion should take place around SENIF and Early Intervention because the voices of the sector need to be heard, whether that is a questionnaire etc.</p> <p>Chatterbox Profession Feedback:  <a href="https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=-ZiztPbSDUatD_Rzq8C7LeI5GVVW0AFOInnm_LdPAT9UQkU0TkxTU0oxTUg1VEc5SExSN0RFVJVRy4u">https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=-ZiztPbSDUatD_Rzq8C7LeI5GVVW0AFOInnm_LdPAT9UQkU0TkxTU0oxTUg1VEc5SExSN0RFVJVRy4u</a></p> <p>Lataanya Curling – Croydon Active/Voices</p>	

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Next Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> January

**Action Log:**

**Current Actions:**

1.	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>	In progress
2.	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>	Pending
3.	CQ to present a supplementary paper for Early Years High Needs Budget over the past three years	CQ	July'24	Pending

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