

**MINUTES of the meeting of Early Years Development and
Childcare Partnership held at Gateway Nursery,
Longworth Lane, Bartestree, Hereford on Thursday, 09
March, 2006 at 7.00 p.m.**

Present:

Gill Bilbrough	SEN Groups
Norris Boyland	Diocesan Authorities (C of E)
Jon Dudley	Social Care (Children)
Sheila Dunsford	OFSTED
Joyce Elliott	Private Sector Providers (0-4 year olds)
Di Gibson	Home Start
Janice Greenow	FE Colleges
Carol Jenkins	Sure Start
Sarah Kelly	University of Worcester
Liz Lord	Independent Schools
Jan McColl	Hereford and Worcester Education Co-ordinating Group
Liv Moss	Voluntary Sector Providers (0-4 year olds)
Councillor Sally Robertson	Elected Member of Herefordshire Council
George Salmon	Children's Services
Julia Stevens	Priv/Vol Providers (Out-of-School Childcare 4-14 years)
Klaus Wedell	Chairman

In attendance:

Karen Beadman	Speaker
Rebecca Coultas	Extended Schools
Heather Donaldson	Democratic Services
Sue Fiennes	Children's Services
Ros Hatherill	Children's Services
Councillor Jenny Hyde	Herefordshire Council
Alison Murphy	Children's Services
Nicki Ovel	Speaker
Sue Peasgood	Children's Services
Lorna Selfe	Children's Services
Bryan Twitty	Children's Services

564. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Lea Abbotts, Andy Gosling, Paul Haley, Tony Kew, Lyn Marsden, Councillor Don Rule MBE, Ruth Stallard, Richard Watson.

565. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

None.

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566. LATE ITEMS / ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

567. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

568. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 09 March 2006 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

569. GOOD NEWS EXCHANGE

The following is a synopsis of good news exchanged by members:

- The Leominster Children's Centre was now open (although it had not yet had its official opening), and so far the public had supported its events very well;
- Herefordshire Council's Healthy Eating Programme was developing well, with lots of workshops taking place. It had also received excellent coverage in the Hereford Journal;
- Herefordshire had received a grant of £300,000 from the Big Lottery Fund for play development;
- Herefordshire Council was on target for delivering the Children and Young People's Plan;
- The Council had received one-and-a-half days' consultancy to help develop the Childcare and Workforce Strategy;
- A fourth "Reggio Emilia" focus group had been formed at Blackmarston School, and the children there, some with profound learning difficulties, had responded very positively;
- A video on the Schools' Travel Plan was being circulated to all schools, and would be key in developing a countywide approach.

570. MERRY-GO-ROUND NURSERY

Nicki Ovel, Manager of Merry-Go-Round Nursery in Hunderton, shared her experiences in relation to a recent serious fire on the Nursery premises. She reported that the fire had been an arson attack, and because of the extensive damage, she had to make some rapid decisions about how to handle the situation. She developed the following strategy:

- The morning after the fire, she had called all staff and they had met and devised a plan;
- The priority had been to secure temporary accommodation so that the nursery could continue to provide its service. All of the Nursery equipment had also been destroyed. Nicki had contacted local radio stations, and Central News had also reported the incident. This helped raise public awareness, and donations of toys and equipment had started to arrive very quickly;

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- Hinton Youth Centre had offered temporary accommodation, and Merry-Go-Round would continue use this until its new accommodation was ready;
- It was important to contact OFSTED as quickly as possible, and Nicki had found that OFSTED was very supportive and in turn had acted very promptly to help the Nursery. This had been an important factor in providing continuity of service and in aiding the Nursery's recovery;
- All records had also been destroyed, along with some important coursework belonging to a member of staff. Nicki said it was important to think about what sort of information was being kept on the premises, and to consider providing a back-up system. As it was, the nursery had no back-up system for its paperwork and data, and this had been one of the most difficult things to re-establish. Members suggested that the EYDCP or an external company could be asked to hold a back-up system for each setting;
- Nicki advised that it was important to examine insurance policies carefully. She had found that insurance would not necessarily cover the clearance of the site, and she had had to oversee this herself;
- Undoubtedly, there were valuable lessons to be learned from the experience, and Nicki said that the Nursery owed a lot to parents, the local community, to OFSTED and to Hinton Youth Centre. She said that everyone had pulled together in a remarkable way, and some exciting developments had come out of the experience;
- The Partnership thanked Nicki Ovel for her presentation, and asked her to provide a written briefing note for the EYDCP explaining her strategy, so that others could learn from her experience.

571. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

Sue Fiennes reported on progress made with the Herefordshire Children and Young People's Plan (C&YPP), and introduced Lorna Selfe, Change Manager, who had taken on the co-ordinating role between the various agencies involved in the Plan (Children's Services, Police, Probation Service, Youth Offending Service, Primary Care Trust, Connexions, the Learning and Skills Council, the Alliance of Voluntary Agencies, and the Strategic Health Authority). The Consultation on the Plan had generated a high volume of comments, which was a positive indication that people were keen to engage in the process. The Plan would continue to change and grow as input continued, and ultimately it was likely that the progress on the C&YPP would be updated when the Council had its Annual Performance Assessment.

Lorna Selfe reported that the next stage in developing the Plan would be to hold a series of workshops aimed at developing an action plan and sorting out priorities.

*Note: At this point, the Partnership agreed to take Agenda Item 15 (**CHILDREN'S CENTRES**) due to its close links to this item.*

Ros Hatherill gave a progress report on Children's Centres in Herefordshire (which linked in with Page 30 of the C&YPP). The C&YPP had identified the development of Children's Centres as one of the Council's priorities.

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Round One of the funding programme had established 3 Children's Centres (Green Croft, Leominster Coningsby Centre and Hollybush/Hunderton Springfield Centre), and Round Two provided funding for 6 further Children's Centres in each of the market towns and in the Golden Valley. She emphasised that the funding was limited, and that a great deal of strategic planning would be required to achieve the Round Two objectives (refurbishing existing premises rather than constructing a new buildings was one possibility to keep costs down). Consultation on Round Two was under way, and had revealed that the public had not grasped an understanding of the role of Children's Centres, and this needed to be addressed.

She outlined the structural changes that had taken place within the EYDCP and Sure Start to enable Children's Centre development, and she provided information on some of the proposals, such as developing a corporate brand for Children's Centres, and devising a communication strategy. She also provided information on the individual proposals for Bromyard, Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye, Golden Valley, North Hereford and Kington/Weobley.

Klaus Wedell commented that the children's Centre issues reflected the complete issue of how Herefordshire was going to move towards a system of integrated services, and produce a needs-led Plan. The Partnership then divided into groups and considered the following three issues:

1. Service Delivery (and the distinction between services for all, and specialise services to cover individual needs);
2. How do you manage the various structures (e.g. centres in each area, specialist services)? How does management stay in touch with the community? How is accountability going to be decided?
3. Where should services be located? Should we have mobile services in remoter areas? Will we make use of Info shops too? How is an effective ICT system going to be set up?

The Groups made the following key points:

Group 1:

- Informing the public is the most important aspect of the C&YPP;
- We have to be clear about what services are available, and make sure everyone else is too;
- Parents must have the opportunity to steer, and flag up the issues that are important to them;
- We must actively search for and brief the relevant people to help deliver the Plan;
- Members of the Partnership must ensure that they understand the Plan and know what impact it is going to have on them as individuals/organisations.
- How will the Plan tackle situations when people refuse help?

Group 2:

- The Extended Schools model – as well as addressing how it fits into the wider Plan - needs to address falling rolls and school closures in rural communities, and be able to help support and sustain affected communities;

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- Need to establish what role the EYDCP Team will have;
- Need to win hearts and minds of the public and move away from traditional education.

Group 3:

- The Plan must find a way to include people in rural locations;
- The Plan must reflect the different aspirations and needs of the 5 market towns, and not assume that they are all the same;
- How are we promoting this? What will we do to raise public awareness?
- How will we achieve our goals? – Need to set this out clearly;

Group 4:

- Rural issue (and limitations) important. Can't expect people to push prams over long distances to access services;
- What does the EYDCP understand about the document? The emphasis is on Children's Centres, and the role of the EYDCP has not been highlighted in the document. Where does it fit in?
- We must ensure we have sufficient quality staff who can move around the disciplines;

Group 5:

- We must not overlook the fact that the Central Government agenda is to get parents into work;
- Concern was expressed at the levels of funding on offer;
- The Extended Schools model had a low take-up, and the funding for it might be better channelled into the C&YPP;
- Have to address the needs of different communities;
- Transportation costs were of particular concern in Herefordshire;
- How was the Plan to going to be co-ordinated?
- Some children may "fall between stools", and we need to ensure cohesive agency working.

Group 6:

- Balance of needs with service delivery. People want to choose;
- The Council's responsibility lies within the management structures;
- Professional accountability needs to be established and understood early on;
- Local co-operation is essential and we need to find ways to gain this. It is important the community knows who the key people are;
- It is important to retain perspective and keep "thinking outside the box".

Sue Fiennes thanked the Partnership for its important contribution to aspects of how to deliver the C&YPP. She said that she would maintain a dialogue with the EYDCP about how the Plan was developing, and added that one of the forthcoming workshops would examine the role of the EYDCP and where it fitted into the Plan.

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572. FINANCIAL REPORT 2005/06 AND 2006/07

Due to time constraints, the Partnership agreed to defer this item until the next meeting.

AGREED:

That this item be deferred until the next EYDCP meeting, to be held on 11 May 2006.

573. NURSERY EDUCATION FUNDING: EXTENSION TO 38 WEEKS

Karen Beadman introduced her report on funding arrangements for childcare providers, in the light of the forthcoming increase in Nursery Education Funding from 33 weeks to 38 weeks per year. The funding amounted to an extra £310,000 from Central Government, for Herefordshire, and it was available to all Private, Voluntary and Independent Early Years Providers. Karen reported that there were two different payment profile options to be considered, based on either a fixed or a variable number of weeks per term. She had set out the advantages and disadvantages of both options in her report.

In response to a question, George Salmon reported that, for those settings that did not provide 38 weeks, the funding would be distributed proportionately. He added that families would be entitled to 38 weeks even if their chosen setting did not provide them, and there were possible implications if they chose to make up the 38 weeks at another setting.

The Chairman suggested that representatives of settings met with their constituents/parents, and possibly with each other, to discuss the alternatives. He asked them to give their feedback to Karen. George Salmon reported that the funding would start from 01 April 2006, and the preferred option would be brought in the Autumn Term. The option would be reviewed after 12 months.

AGREED:

That Private, Voluntary and Independent Early Years Providers discuss the report with all relevant parties, forward their feedback to Karen Beadman.

574. REQUESTS FOR RECEIPT OF NURSERY EDUCATION FUNDING

George Salmon reported on two requests for receipt of Nursery Education Funding, from Much Marcle Nursery School, Kingsland Nursery Group. Both settings had been registered by OFSTED, were fully operational and had agreed to the terms and conditions required for the funding. Members noted that it was acceptable to backdate the NEF for Much Marcle. Kingsland, however, had not been operational on "headcount" day, and would receive NEF from May onwards.

AGREED:

That Much Marcle Nursery School and Kingsland Nursery Group be included in the Herefordshire Directory of Providers in order to receive Nursery Education Funding from 20 February 2006 and 25 May 2006 respectively.

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575. 2003 CHILDCARE AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

Bryan Twitty provided information on the early findings of the 2005/06 Childcare Audit. The aim of the audit was to plot the changes and scope of childcare provision within Herefordshire. The findings had been categorised into three groups, namely Schools, Childminders, and the Private and Voluntary Sector.

In particular, members noted that:

- there were still barriers to accessing appropriate training for some settings, and this would be investigated;
- costs had increased on average by approximately 8%, although full day-care costs had remained static;
- the place occupancy rate in the Private and Voluntary Sector was running at 70%, and most settings did not have waiting lists. This indicated that there was no lack of childcare provision in Herefordshire (although some of it was not necessarily in the place where parents wanted it to be);

It had also emerged that the community's perception of Children's Centres was unclear; a fact which had been highlighted in discussions elsewhere on the agenda.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

576. QUARTERLY CHILDCARE REPORT - QUARTER 3 - 2005/06

The Partnership noted progress made against Childcare targets in the Two-Year Plan for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged wards. The targets covered a total number of places created within pre-school, Out of School and Childminding during 2004 – 2006.

In particular, it was noted that the targets originally set at the commencement of the period, would be met.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

577. PROPOSAL TO REVIEW THE PROVISION OF SCHOOL PLACES

George Salmon presented information on a proposed review of primary and high school places throughout Herefordshire. The issue had arisen because of falling rolls, which were significant and would be present over the next ten years. He illustrated the extent of the fall in numbers by comparing the current figures for 14 year olds in Herefordshire (2,200) with the current number of 0-1 year olds (1,700).

A series of reviews would be conducted, and would explore various possibilities, including combining schools in some areas, and increasing the

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community role of schools (particularly in relation to family support). The review would be subject to the agreement of Cabinet.

AGREED:

That the proposals for the review of school places be endorsed.

578. CHILDREN'S CENTRES

The Partnership agreed that this Item be taken at the same time as Agenda Item 8 (**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN**) (Minute 571 above refers), due to the strong links between the two.

AGREED:

That this item be taken together with Agenda Item 8 (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN).

579. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

580. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the following dates of EYDCP meetings:

- 11 May 2006 – Coningsby Children's Centre, Leominster
- 12 October 2006 (Venue tba)
- 07 December 2006 (Venue tba)

It was also noted that, should anyone require transport to Coningsby Children's Centre for the meeting on 11 May 2006, they were to get in touch with Ros Hatherill before the day of the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:01 p.m.

CHAIRMAN