

EARLY YEARS AND EXTENDED SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

Date: **Wednesday 7th November 2007**

Time: **7.00 p.m.**

Place: **The ICT Suite, Whitecross High School, Three Elms Road, Hereford**
(Note: A map is attached)

Notes: Please note the **time, date** and **venue** of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

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**County of Herefordshire
District Council**

AGENDA

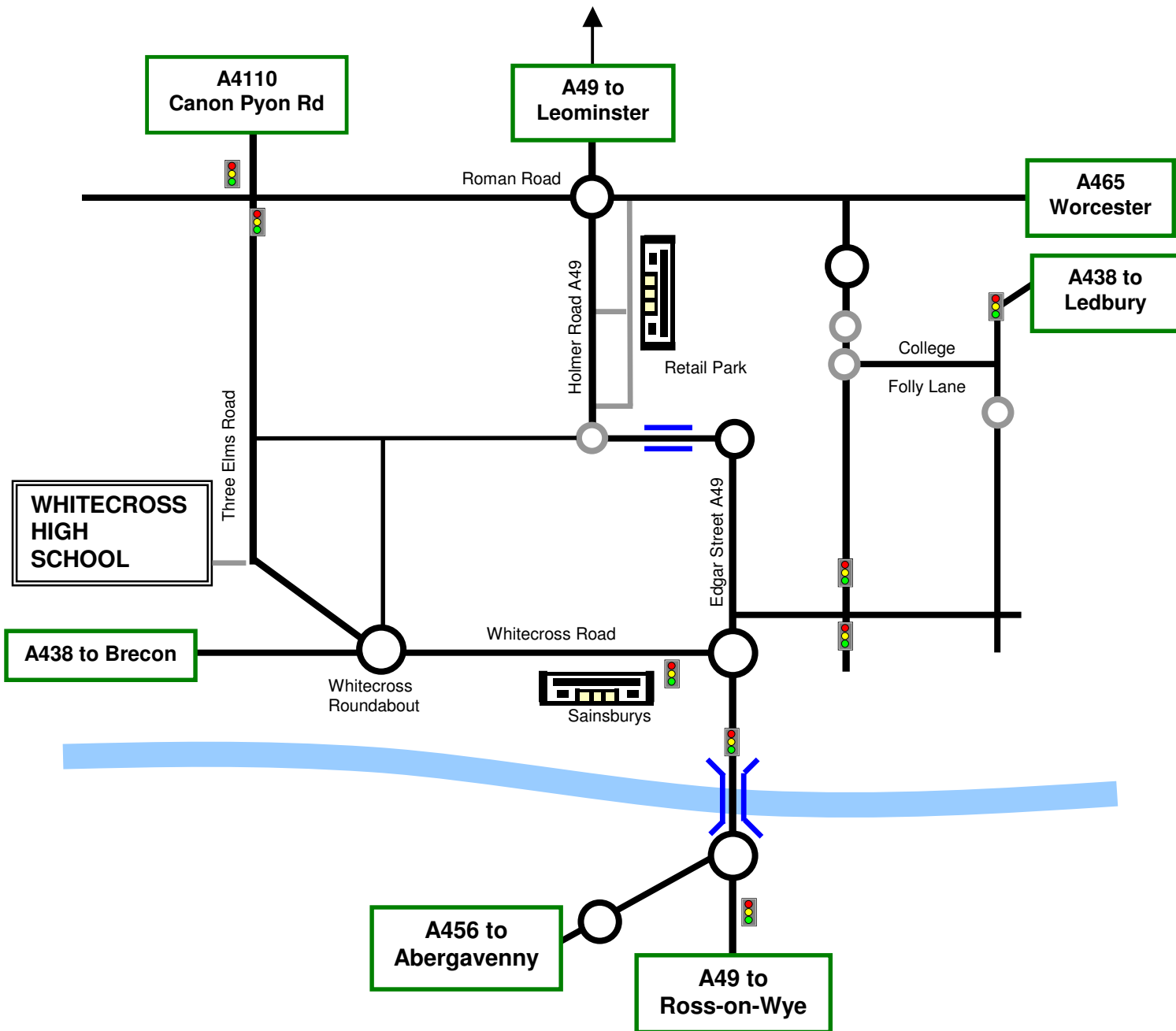
for the Meeting of the Early Years and Extended Schools Partnership

To: Representatives of the EYES Partnership

	Pages
Attachment: Whitecross High School map	1 - 2
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
To receive apologies for absence.	
2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES	
To receive details of any Members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a Member of the Partnership.	
3. LATE ITEMS / ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
To receive notice of any item it is proposed to raise under any other business and consider whether any item do identified may be so raised or should be deferred.	
4. MINUTES	5 - 12
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 06 June 2007.	
5. BRIEFING ON DEVELOPMENTS TOWARDS A CHILDREN'S TRUST	13 - 16
To receive an oral report from the EYES Manager on developments in relation to the Children's Trust. These developments have implications for the proposed contents of the EYES Constitution, the most recent version of which is attached.	
ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:	
6. NEW CURRICULUM QUALITY	
To receive a presentation from Sue Peasgood, Early Years Inspector, on the Foundation Stage Development.	
7. IT COMMUNICATION ARRANGEMENTS	
To receive an oral update on communicating electronically with partners and constituents.	
ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:	
8. NURSERY EDUCATION FUND/QUALITY ASSURANCE WORKING PARTY	17 - 22
To receive an oral report from a Working Party representative on the review of NEF and Quality Assurance. The notes of the Working Party held on 17 September 2007 are attached, and Liv Moss and Joyce Elliott will provide a further update and progress made since then.	

9. NEF FUNDED SETTINGS AND INCLUSION IN THE DIRECTORY OF PROVIDERS	23 - 24
To receive a report from Bryan Twitty, CIS Manager, on the NEF entitlement for new settings.	
10. REFORM OF EARLY YEARS FUNDING	25 - 44
To receive a report from Ros Hatherill, EYES Manager, on the Central Government's reform of funding legislation, in line with the schools forum representation review.	
11. UPDATE ON PUBLIC SERVICE TRUST	
To receive an oral progress report on the proposed Public Service Trust from Anne Heath.	
12. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT	45 - 50
To receive a report from Bryan Twitty, CIS Manager, in respect of the consultation on sufficiency of childcare in Herefordshire.	
13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
To note that the next meeting will be held on 19 th March 2008. Venue to be confirmed.	
Future meeting dates are as follows:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18th June 2008• 5th November 2008	

WHITECROSS HIGH SCHOOL MAP



Please note:

Car park is available within school grounds. Entrance into building is on side facing the road

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COUNTY OF HEREFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**MINUTES of the meeting of Early Years Development and
Childcare Partnership held at : Education and Conference
Centre, Blackfriars, Hereford. on Wednesday, 6th June,
2007 at 7.00 p.m.**

ATTENDANCE**Present:**

Bella Barron	Independent Schools Sector
Cath Beeks	Association of Primary Head Teachers
Di Gibson	Home Start
Linda Goodson	Maintained Schools with Nursery Classes
Lynne Marsden	Herefordshire Childminding Association
Liv Moss	Voluntary Sector Providers
Councillor Sally Robertson	Herefordshire Council
Ben Straker	Travelling Families
Phil Vallely	Jobcentreplus

In attendance:

Lea Abbotts	Children and Young People's Directorate
Michele Allan	Green Croft Centre
Marj Bevan	Kington Children's Centre
Debbie Bourne	Hereford Travellers' Playscheme
Viv Daly	Green Croft Centre
Liz Davies	Children and Young People's Directorate
Heather Donaldson	Legal and Democratic Services
Alex Fitzpatrick	Children and Young People's Directorate
Ros Hatherill	Children and Young People's Directorate
Ann Heath	Children and Young People's Directorate
Emma Hughes	Children and Young People's Directorate
Councillor Jenny Hyde	Herefordshire Council
Rose Lloyd	Bridges Childcare
Alan McLaughlin	Legal and Democratic Services
Sharon Menghini	Children and Young People's Directorate
Kate Moss	Broadlands Bright Sparks
Alison Murphy	Children and Young People's Directorate
Sue Peasgood	Children and Young People's Directorate
Kathy Peers	Dollymixtures Pre-School
Lianne Piggott	Bridges Childcare
Amanda Preece	Fourways Day Nursery
Pam Stevenson	Jumpstart
Sue Smith	Green Croft Centre
Bryan Twitty	Children and Young People's Directorate
Alison Webb	Whitecross Day Nursery
Sarah Wilson	Elms School
Clare Williams	Children and Young People's Directorate
Donna Williams	Hunderton Neighbourhood Nursery
Philip Wood	Jumpstart

626. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Norris Boyland, Sarah Chedgzoy, Joyce Elliott, Andy Gosling, Janice Greenow, Tracey Kneale, Janet Murray, Ailsa Robbie, Frances Roberts, Rose Spitzmaul.

627. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Kathy Peers for Joyce Elliott; Cath Beeks for Tracey Kneale.

In addition, Councillor Sally Robertson introduced Councillor Julie Woodward to members, reporting that she would represent the Council at future Partnership meetings.

628. LATE ITEMS / ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Sue Peasgood reported that she had received two additional applications for Nursery Education Fund after the agenda had gone to print. The Partnership agreed to consider them with Agenda Item 8 (APPROVAL REQUEST FOR RECEIPT OF NURSERY EDUCATION FUND).

629. MINUTES

AGREED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th March, 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

- **Minute 614 (APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE):** Joyce Elliott's name be added to the list of those giving their apologies.
- **Minute 620 (MINUTES):** The paragraph headed "Minute 604 (MINUTES) be amended to read: "Sue Peasgood said that the documentation for the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework had been delivered, and the Framework would be launched shortly. It would be in place fully in 2008."

630. DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

The Partnership welcomed Sharon Menghini, the newly appointed Director of Children and Young People's Services, to the meeting. She said she was excited about being in Herefordshire, and about the various tasks which she would complete over the coming months. A key element of her role would be to implement the Children's Trust by 2008. In the interim, she suggested that the Partnership considered ways to interface with the forerunner to the Trust: the Children and Young People's Partnership Board. She felt that communication and celebration of good practice were key elements of the Partnership's work, adding that she did not underestimate the difficulty of this due to the large number of partners and organisations involved. She said that she aimed to make the Partnership fit sensibly between existing meetings.

In response to a question, she said that the Children's Trust would work alongside the emerging Public Sector Trust (PST), although no decisions had been made

about how this would happen in practice, because both bodies were still evolving. The PST would involve the creation of one local authority comprising Herefordshire Council and the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust. It was envisaged that this would lead to better services, easier communication, and greater efficiencies and economies of scale. She said that the Children's Trust would be shaped by the needs of the public and professionals in Herefordshire.

631. FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDCARE SETTINGS

George Salmon presented a report which compared funding (and other) arrangements for places for three and four year olds, in Local Authorities, and Private and Voluntary Settings. He highlighted the following essential differences:

Local Authority Settings	Private and Voluntary Settings
Funding allocated as part of the overall school budget on the basis of £2,517 per place for 190 days per year. Equivalent to £419 per child per term.	Funding allocated on the basis of £552 per child per term to a maximum of £1,656 per place for 190 days.
Receive funding per place provided, regardless of whether the places are filled or not.	Receive funding only for each place occupied.
Have no choice over the number of places on offer. Any changes have to be subject to statutory notice and public consultation.	Cannot exceed the number for which they are registered, but can choose how many places to offer beneath that limit.
Staffing levels in schools are set at a maximum rate of 26 children per 2 adults. 1 must be a fully qualified teacher; the other must have a minimum of Level 3. All staff have the same terms and conditions as teachers.	Staffing levels are set at 8 children per 1 adult. Qualifications can vary. No legal constraints on pay levels.

George Salmon said that the Council acknowledged these differences, and said that it was debatable which arrangement was the most favourable. He advised that any changes might risk detriment to one of the sectors, and he sought members' views on the matter. Members made the following points in discussion:

- In response to a question, George Salmon said that the school set-up was dictated by statute, and that schools could not refuse to provide a place if asked. This meant that schools could fill a place at any time during the year.
- Sue Peasgood explained that all LA nurseries were under continuous review to keep spending on places to a minimum, and that staff redundancies did happen in LA nurseries.

- One nursery provider felt that the arrangements discriminated against private and voluntary sector providers because of the bureaucracy surrounding place provision. She said that her establishment often had to make places available at short notice, and the current arrangement meant that this was a difficult process. She highlighted the apparent discrepancy in accountability, saying that private and voluntary providers were immediately accountable for every place, and LA providers were not. George Salmon explained that Nursery Education funding was public money, and as such, needed to be fully accounted for and subject to stringent audit processes. He acknowledged that there was sometimes pressure on private and voluntary sectors to adhere to the necessary measures. He added that Central Government dictated some of the processes.
- One issue which needed to be addressed was the misconception amongst parents that they could split their free provision between different nurseries. In general, LA nurseries could not allow for this practice.
- Members felt that there was merit in forming a working group to list all of the issues involved in funding arrangements, and their implications. It would then make proposals on how to address some of the perceived inequalities. The group would take account of additional factors, such as the falling numbers of children in the county.

AGREED: that a Nursery Education Fund Working Group be established, involving stakeholders, in consultation with Ros Hatherill and George Salmon, to review the funding arrangements for LA, private and voluntary sector childcare settings, and make recommendations to address any inequalities.

632. CHANGES TO THE NURSERY EDUCATION FUND AGREEMENT

Bryan Twitty presented a report on the proposed changes to the Nursery Education Fund (NEF) Provider Agreement for 2007/08. All providers of free nursery education funded places had to sign the agreement every year. In doing so, they were obliged to abide by the "Code of Practice on the Provision of Free Nursery Education Places for Three and Four Year Olds: February 2006". He highlighted the specific differences between the current agreement, and the proposed one. The proposed changes were necessary because of the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Sue Peasgood explained that one of the key changes brought about by Central Government, was that the LA was accountable for inadequate settings. Alison Murphy added that, although Quality Assurance had been part of the agreement since 2002, the new proposals meant that national Early Years standards would need to be raised. Settings were required to follow a continual quality assurance assessment, and to invest in a "Kite Mark" for children. The system was currently under review. She reported that 82 settings were currently working through quality assurance programmes, and that they were achieving a high number of "outstanding" and "Good" accolades.

AGREED: that the changes to, and clarification of the Nursery Education Funding Provider Agreement be endorsed.

633. LATE PAYMENTS

Ros Hatherill presented an oral report on the issue of late payments of Nursery Education Fund (NEF) to providers. Joyce Elliott of Gateway Nursery, who had highlighted the difficulties that late payments had sometimes caused, had raised the issue. Ros said that the issue had been reviewed, and that there was now no reason why NEF payments should be late. She added that previously, settings had received an interim payment of 50% of the funding, with the remaining 50 % being payable upon receipt of all paperwork and evidence that the children had been attending. The second payment usually followed 4 or 5 weeks after the initial payment. She reported that the funding arrangements would be changed for a trial period starting in September 2007, with 80% payable initially, and a further 20% payable on receipt of the paperwork. She said that some settings had requested all of the funding in one payment, because they had to operate a commercial basis. It was possible that these settings could make a final financial settlement with the LA in the final term of the year. However, administering the full funding at the start of the year would prove difficult to calculate accurately, because terms varied significantly in length. She reported that, starting in September 2007, nurseries would also receive their paperwork earlier, so there would be no reason why they could not obtain the funding earlier.

Ros Hatherill said that the "head count" date was also important in relation to the timing of funding. This was the date several weeks after term started, when settings were asked to verify how many children were actually attending out of those that had signed up at the start of term.

The Partnership felt that there was merit in referring the issue of late payments to the Nursery Education Fund Working Group, to form part of its review.

AGREED: that the Nursery Education Fund Working Group review the issue of late payments of Nursery Education Fund.

634. APPROVAL REQUEST FOR RECEIPT OF NURSERY EDUCATION FUND

Sue Peasgood sought the Partnership's approval for 3 new early years settings that had applied to be included in the Herefordshire Directory of Providers and to receive Nursery Education Fund from September 2007. The settings were:

- Down on the Farm, at Norton Brook Farm, Grafton, Hereford
- Holmer Pre-School, Holmer, Hereford
- Sparklers Nursery at Holmer, Hereford

All 3 providers had agreed to the conditions required of settings wishing to receive NEF.

AGREED: that the inclusion of Down on the Farm, Holmer Pre-School, and Sparklers Nursery in the Herefordshire Directory of Providers be approved, in order for them to receive Nursery Education Fund from September 2007.

635. CHILDREN'S CENTRES AND EXTENDED SCHOOLS

The Partnership received a presentation on progress made with children's centres and extended schools. The core offer for extended schools and children's centres was the provision of quality care, health services, access to information, training, advice, family support and parental outreach.

The various stages of development were outlined for areas of Herefordshire, including progress made with the Leominster Children's Centre, Green Croft, Bromyard, Kington, Ross-on-Wye and Hunderton. The latest stages of development involved the creation of more children's centres, and widening the extend schools programme to meet community needs and fill gaps in service provision. A key feature of extended schools in some locations, was to develop additional services alongside ones that already existed in a community. The aim was for all schools to offer some extended services by 2010.

AGREED: that the report be noted.

636. THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE EYDCP

Members considered a draft constitution for the EYES Partnership, which had arisen following an extensive consultation on its role and function. Members also welcomed the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Alan McLaughlin, to the meeting. He had revised the proposed draft before the meeting, and he circulated a copy with his suggested amendments, which reflected all the legal requirements that would be necessary, and provided further guidance on operational issues.

He highlighted the following points in his revisions, which he asked Members to consider:

- It was important to set out clearly the Partnership's aims and objectives so that Members and the public knew what to expect, and how things would be done;
- The Partnership could have a consultative role, whereby key partners were asked for regular feedback on Early Years and Extended Schools matters;
- The agenda should be time-limited;
- Reports must come back to the Partnership after they have been looked at by other bodies;
- Under "Decision Making", he had added an additional "Paragraph 22" which would allow members the flexibility to change the constitution;
- A working group might be a useful way of dealing with a particular single issue. The group should receive a report from the Partnership with proposed actions and recommendations – and the Group must compile a similar report when presenting its findings back to the Partnership.

The Director of Children's Services and Young People, Sharon Menghini, felt that the Partnership was still a very necessary forum, even though it was no longer statutory. She added that the EYES Partnership should feed into the Children and Young People's Partnership Board because it was the main

policy-and decision-making body. It also needed to report to the developing Children's Trust (although this structure was still evolving and not fully in place yet). This reporting procedure needed to be a standing item on every agenda. She expressed an opinion that the emerging Trust needed to be strategic, and charge the Partnership with specific tasks.

Klaus Wedell spoke about the need to increase communications with partners prior to, and after every meeting, and he cited noticeboards, websites, and newsletters as ways to achieve this.

AGREED: That Alan McLaughlin, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, would make further revisions to the EYES Constitution, with a view to further consultation and finalising it at the next Partnership meeting.

637. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Bryan Twitty reported on a major consultation underway in relation to assessing the sufficiency of childcare within Herefordshire. The Council had been charged with this task as a statutory duty, and would need help to complete the consultation. He would need to assess supply, demand, and any gap in the market, and wanted to enlist the help of parents and providers with the task. To this end, he had circulated a questionnaire, and asked providers to issue them to a random selection of parents.

Joyce Elliott had forwarded a query about register marking, and had stressed the importance of filling in the start and finish times so that those settings offering 2 hours (as opposed to 2) could be identified.

The Partnership felt that the issues surrounding quality assurance merited further discussion and exploration, and asked for this to be a future agenda item. Alan McLaughlin suggested looking at what other authorities were doing with quality assurance, as a benchmarking exercise.

AGREED:

That

- (i) the comments made by Joyce Elliott about register marking be noted and incorporated into future practice; and**
- (ii) the issue of quality assurance be examined at the next partnership meeting.**

638. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Partnership noted that the next meeting was programmed for 11 October 2007. They agreed to change this date to **07 November 2007**, to fit in with the meeting and reporting cycle of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

The meeting ended at 9.10 p.m.

CHAIRMAN



Early Years and Extended Services

DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR THE HEREFORDSHIRE EARLY YEARS AND EXTENDED SERVICES PARTNERSHIP

Function:

1. The members of the EYES Partnership's main function is to promote develop, maintain good quality, accessible, affordable childcare and early years education and review early years and extended schools provision within the Herefordshire Council's policies for the Children's and Young Peoples' Service, and within relevant national policies.

Aims:

2. To achieve this the Partnership will: -
- Recognise the importance of all sectors and the role they play
 - Promote and respect the diversity of provision
 - Work together to develop high quality services
 - Support the development of integrated services for children aged 0-5 years by partnership working with colleagues in health education and family support services
 - Respond to the aspirations and needs of local communities
 - Make the best use of available resources
 - Promote the best interests of children and improve their life chances
 - Value the importance of play and consistency of care
 - Celebrate success and share good practice
 - Emphasise training and encourage, develop and maintain good communication between Partners and the wider community

Principal Objectives:

3. The Partnership will: -
- Share information
 - Debate issues
 - Consult with key partners and agencies
 - Receive reports from working groups or sub groups of the Partnership
 - Report issues to the Children and Young People Partnership, and consider issues referred from it
 - Help to shape childcare and extended schools services for all children and young people
 - Meet the diverse needs and aspirations of children locally, and of their parents
 - Address diversity issues
 - Bring together the maintained, private and voluntary sectors in a spirit of co-operation and partnership, based on existing good practice

Membership:

4. Membership of the Partnership will include the following: -
 - A representative of Herefordshire Council
 - Representatives of providers and parents in early years provider groups
 - Representatives of Children's Centre Services areas
 - Representatives of Herefordshire schools
 - Representatives of the National Health Service in Herefordshire
 - Representatives of relevant local and national agencies and bodies involved with early years and extended schools provision in Herefordshire
5. Officers of the Herefordshire administration of early years and extended schools provision will be attending in supporting roles
6. The membership of the Partnership will normally not exceed 30. The Partnership has powers to co-opt.

Tenure of Office:

7. It is for each nominated body to decide who should represent them at the Partnership, and the period of time each such member should serve. Each nominated body should notify the Democratic Services Officer accordingly. If requests are received to become a nominated body by an organisation that carries out services compatible with the partnerships functions this should be put in writing and considered at the meeting of the partnership following receipt.
8. Membership of the Partnership shall cease if the nominated body: -
 - resigns in writing
 - if the representative of a nominated body fails to attend for three consecutive meetings then that nominated body will be notified by the Head of Legal and Democratic services in writing seeking an explanation or request the nomination of an alternative representative. Such nominations shall be approved by the Partnership.

Substitutes:

9. Each nominated body may arrange for a substitute to attend when its formal representative cannot do so. That arrangement is designed to ensure that a nominated body can always be represented, though it is important for there to be as much continuity as possible from one meeting to the next.

Chairman and Vice-Chairman:

10. At its first meeting at the beginning of each municipal year, usually the meeting following the 1st April in any year, the Partnership will elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman.
11. If both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are absent from the meeting the Partnership will elect from its number a Chairman for the meeting.
12. If the Chairman and Vice Chairman resign then the Partnership will elect from the meeting following such resignation a new Chairman and Vice-Chairman until the following 1st April.

Calendar of meetings:

13. The Partnership will meet at least once a term and will determine the dates of meetings as far as possible on an annual basis.
14. Extraordinary meetings may be convened at the request of 3 members of the Partnership. In such cases, the timing and date of the meeting will be determined following consultation with the Chairman.

Timing of meetings:

15. Meetings will start at times acceptable to the Partnership, and will normally be limited to two hours duration.

Quorum:

16. The Quorum for the Partnership will be one third minimum number of members of the approved membership.

Convening and notice of the meetings:

17. All meetings will be convened by Herefordshire Council Democratic Services officer or a delegated alternative at the request of the Chairman or in accordance with the approved programme of meetings agreed from time to time.

18. Written notice of meetings and the agenda will be sent to members of the Partnership 7 clear days before the meeting (or 3 clear days in the case of an Extraordinary meeting).

19. Non Receipt by any members of notice of a meeting will not invalidate the meeting.

Agenda:

20. The Agenda will be prepared by Herefordshire Council's Democratic Services officer or a delegated alternative in consultation with the Chairman.

21. Items may be placed on the agenda by any member of the Partnership in consultation with the Chairman by notice in writing to Herefordshire Council's Democratic Services officer.

22. Papers relating to the agenda items will be sent to members with the agenda. The Chairman may agree that papers should also be tabled at the meeting.

Late items/Any other business:

23. Immediately before the minutes of the previous meeting have been approved, Members should inform the meeting of any item they wish to raise under any other business. The meeting will decide whether any items so identified may be raised under any other business or whether it should be deferred to a subsequent meeting.

Minutes of meeting

24. Minutes of meetings, including a record of persons attending, will be drafted by Herefordshire Council's Democratic Services officer or a delegated alternative.

25. The draft minutes of the meeting will be considered for approval or amendment at the start of the following meeting. Any agreed amendments or dissenting view will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting, if that is the wish of the majority of members present.

Conduct of Members:

26. Members of the Partnership should have regard to the following principles: -

- To serve the interests of Herefordshire residents
- To deal with issues on their merits
- To be open and prepared to give reasons
- To respect and take account of others' views
- To promote equality and diversity by not discriminating against any person and by treating people with respect, regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability
- To respect the impartiality of employees of Herefordshire Council and of service providers
- To act in a way that engenders public confidence in the way the Partnership operate

Decision Making:

27. Decisions should normally be made through consensus.

28. In the event of an item receiving two separate motions, the matter would be resolved by simple majority voting with each representative entitled to one vote. The Chairman will have the casting vote in the event of a tie.

29. The Constitution of the Partnership can be amended or altered by agreement by way of resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the members present and voting at the meeting provided that such amendments comply with any legal requirements or changes in the nature of the Partnership. Any proposed change in the Constitution shall be set out in writing at least two weeks before the meeting at which such amendments are to be discussed.

Working Groups:

30. The Partnership may establish working groups to gather information and/or make recommendations to a full meeting of the Partnership each working group shall elect a chair and/or a vice chair.

31. When establishing working groups, the Partnership will -

- Ensure that at least 3 members of the Partnership are members
- Establish terms of reference
- Determine procedures for reporting back to the Partnership
- Minutes shall be taken of such meetings and will include action and recommendation points to be reported to the Partnership

32. The Partnership may co-opt non-members to working groups, but such non-members may not vote on any matter.

Rights of press and public to attend meetings

33. The press and public will be entitled to attend meetings of the Partnership but may be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of items containing information capable of being treated as exempt information if meetings of the Partnership were meetings of a local authority.

34. At the beginning of each meeting, for up to a quarter an hour, members of the public will have an opportunity to receive answers to any pre-received written questions they have submitted to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services. Such questions should be received at least 5 working days before the date of the relevant meeting. If the question is not answered for whatever reason an answer can be sent in writing following the meeting and copied to the Chairman.

35. A Herefordshire Council Democratic Services officer or a delegated alternative will arrange for a public announcement of meetings of the Partnership, and will also arrange for minutes and papers relating to the Partnership meetings to be available for inspection in Council Offices and Public Libraries after the draft minutes have been approved by the Partnership.

October 2007



Early Years and Extended Services

**EYES Working Forum Group
17 September 2007**

Meeting Notes:

Ros Hatherill:

- Welcomed providers to meeting.
- Gave overview of original EYDCP Partnership, when and why it was formed and how it has been reconstituted to EYES Partnership in line with up to date developments.
- Gave overview of current situation in Herefordshire re Early Years and Extended Services development.
- Drew providers attention to Children's Trust arrangements for Herefordshire, the evolving Public Service Trust and the benefits of having avenues for representation from the early years sector.
- Beneficial for a working forum group to continue – would look to alternate meetings between day/evenings, would look to hold 3 a year, prior to EYES Partnership meetings – agreed by representatives of the provider group attending that this should continue.

Issues raised for Discussion: (From EYES Partnership meeting 6th June 2007)

Nursery Education Funding: NEF

Ros acknowledged there had been some challenges ie payments, timelines, and change in staff. Ros assured group that systems have been implemented to minimise delays etc. All relevant departments within the LA are conscious of the need to get payments out to providers on time.

Ros advised group of how the NEF funding is managed and the process through the school's standards grant, and as such the benefits for a representative/s from early years sector to join Schools' Forum Group (statutory formed group), which Ros is invited to attend. The LA has recently been formally issued requirements to make sure this representation is in place, resulting in the early years sector having input into funding issues for eg shared funding etc.

- Ideally to have 3 representatives – daycare, childminders (now confirmed 2 places available)
- Have representation in place for spring term 2008
- New funding allocation will be made in autumn 2008
- EYES department would support representatives

Suggested postal vote be held for nominations etc. EYES to send info out.

Ian Sockett, Statistics & Information Officer (representing Forward Planning Dept):

- Advised group that at present dept is one staff member short, but looking to employ.
- Next term's processing of funding on schedule regarding administration/funding
- First payment should have been received, some late claims still being processed

Questions/queries from group:

- Cut off dates – Ian advised that these are statutory and LA has no control over when dates are set.
- New NEF agreement sent out – providers must notify LA when new child arrives or child leaves setting.
- New child – when child starts after headcount date (irrespective of whether they have moved into county, or from another group), notify Forward Planning, and they will amend records, payments. Adjustments will be made to settings in 3rd term. Only impact will be on 4 year old children living in Wales as Welsh Assembly guarantee every 4 year old a school place or Herefordshire children that are 4 and wanting to claim NEF in Wales.
- School Placement – no NEF funding in place for children if school staggers intake – for example if a child is in a childcare setting from September but is due to go into school that same term then they are not eligible to claim NEF funding for those sessions prior to them starting school.
- Schools receiving all NEF funding irrespective of number of sessions child attends – formal agreement between school and setting then funding could be shared – is this still in place – RH to look into. *This arrangement is one that has historically been in place between **reception classes** and private and voluntary sector providers and is still in place.*
- It was requested that any amendments made to agreement be highlighted and drawn to providers attention
- Parent forms – forms being returned as postcode information being missed, or claiming 6 instead of 5 sessions, can this not be amended by dept. Providers were informed that dept is audited and cannot be seen to be making these amendments.
- Delivery of forms to dept – difficulties had been experienced regarding dept receiving forms on time, being delivered by hand but not being passed through. Ros confirmed systems in place at Blackfriars, post tray checked 2-3 times a day.
- Electronic processing – can system be dealt with electronically, online – will actively look into this - give providers the option.
- Inequality of funding – Consultation held, inequalities have been noted at a national level. LA to look at funding arrangements and change accordingly. Partnership to take forward. This will be represented at Schools Forum.

Quality Assurance:

Ros advised that QA Coordinator post filled – Sue Thompson.

Growing Together scheme, which Herefordshire uses is being updated/amended.

Providers currently going through won't need to start process again and will be supported by the QA team if any amendments are required for their award

- NEF agreement states that providers must have a relevant Quality Assurance scheme in place or be working towards
- New groups coming on board – making good progress
- EYES and School Improvement Service Quality Team are conscious that groups need to be happy with systems and process, and are actively working towards this aim
- All modules are not available electronically on request

- Target for Herefordshire is that all settings work towards achieving outstanding Ofsted outcomes. This can be actively supported and achieved through engaging in the reflective practice supported by a recognised quality assurance scheme.

General Questions/queries from the attending group:

- The amount of paperwork was questioned – frustrations over duplication
- Ofsted don't appear interested in QA work
- Feeling from some elements of the attending group that QA can be an additional chore, lots of paperwork, reviews, very time consuming
- QA Meetings/information sessions – previously held, can they be reintroduced
- QA Award – groups with Inadequate Ofsted inspections, still retaining QA award Policies – Ofsted approved yet asked to enhance for QA needs, is this necessary.

*** QUESTIONS ON THE ABOVE ANSWERED AT END OF NOTES***

Surveys:

Number of surveys providers are asked to complete raised – for example DfES (now DCFS) send questionnaires which can only be completed by phone, very time consuming. Ros asked for providers to give her a list of those asking for information.

DC2/CRBs:

Clarification on who needs to complete one – to be taken to regional Ofsted meeting; Clarification on CRB renewal checks – no timescale set, but good practice to renew.

EYFS Training:

- The limits placed on the numbers of staff who could attend training was questioned – the Local Authority has a duty to ensure all schools and settings (including childminders) are ready to implement the EYFS by September 2008. The limit of 2 initially per setting was to ensure all settings had the opportunity to have at least 2 staff trained. Once all settings have booked, extra spaces will be allocated to larger settings and schools. Repeats of courses will be available throughout the year for additional staff who wish to attend. No supply cover is available for these additional courses.

Suggestions from group:

Felt it would be useful if an information sheet be sent annually to providers informing them of, for example:

- Important changes in legislation
- Ofsted requirements
- Good practice

Those attending:

Lynne Marsden - Childminder
Margaret Beeley - ABC Nursery
Howard Beeley - ABC Nursery
Liv Moss - Broadlands Bright Sparks
Sheila Bee - Bubbles Nursery
Elaine Campbell - Little Acorns Day Nursery / KES
Sue Podmore - Burley Gate Playgroup
Joyce Elliott - Gateway Nursery
Donatelle Lecci - Hereford Waldorf School
Marjorie Bevan - Hunderton Neighbourhood Nursery / Kington Nursery.
Nicki Ovel / Sharon – Merry-Go-round at Green Croft CC
Sue Marshall - Oak House Nursery
Marcus Wrinch - The Wye Nursery
Liz Sheers - Staunton-on-Wye Pre-school.
Gill Billborough - Bargates Nursery
Sue Parker - Oak House Nursery

Apologies from:

Bridges Childcare
Supervisor - Dolly Mixtures
Hayley Downing – Fun-2-Sea Nursery

Quality Assurance questions answered

- Q.** The amount of paperwork and frustrations over duplication
A. The QA pilot programme highlighted difficulties in portfolio building and the amount of paperwork. The QA team has worked hard to streamline systems and support settings to adapt to the new systems, including electronic modules and revised re-accreditation procedures.

Duplication with these new systems in place is not unlikely – the Quality Mentor would be able to further clarify these systems on request.

- Q.** Ofsted don't appear interested in QA
A. This has been raised with Ofsted at local and regional level. Herefordshire provide schemes that were chosen primarily because of content, but also cost to provider. In other parts of the country LAs do not subsidise the costs and with many schemes costing £400-£600, it has not been possible for all settings to access a quality award. It is for this reason that having achieved a QA award cannot be taken as part of the Ofsted inspection. It has been made clear to the team, however, that settings who are fully engaged with the reflections practice necessary for a quality award and who engage with QA mentors, Mentor Teachers, Development Coordinators and other advisory staff, often achieve high Ofsted inspection outcomes. The quality assured network childminders in particular, have achieved a higher proportion of good and outstanding Ofsted inspection outcomes.

Group settings reflecting on practice – Quality Mentors and other advisors have raised with some settings that they have not been meeting minimum standards of care. Where settings have not taken this advice on board, and not taken action it has sometimes led to 'inadequate' Ofsted outcomes. As soon as the team are aware of new issues that might impact on a setting, information is sent to advise them. We would urge all settings to take this information seriously and act accordingly.

- Q.** Feeling from some elements of the attending group that QA can be an additional chore, lots of paperwork, reviews, very time consuming.
- A.** Initially there may be extra paperwork to ensure policies and procedures meet minimum standards and are fit for purpose. Support is given to settings who need it, including a small grant to support extra hours involved. Once policies are robust they are easier to keep up to date and review, and should result in less paperwork in the long-term. There is no need for paper evidence to be placed in a portfolio. Links to where evidence can be found in the settings is a better use of time and can be used to support evidence for Ofsted inspections.
- Q.** QA Meetings/information sessions – previously held, can they be reintroduced
- A.** Evaluations showed that specific QA training was not well received and drop-in sessions held monthly were not well attended – at time no-one attended.

It was decided to link all training offered to support Birth to Three and Standards, to the QA Modules, Birth to Three themes, key elements of effective practice (KEEP) and the 14 National Standards for Daycare. This also meant less evening out for setting staff and childminders. The Quality Mentor would then support each setting and respond to their individual needs.

- Q.** QA Award – groups with Inadequate Ofsted inspections, still retaining QA award
- A.** Settings are required to have a minimum ‘satisfactory’ Ofsted inspection outcome to join the Quality Assurance programme. Any settings who have previously achieved a quality award and subsequently have an ‘inadequate’ inspection will:
- Have the quality award suspended with immediate effect
 - Have reference to the quality award removed from publicity and public lists generated by the Childcare Information Service (CIS) for parents and carers
 - Be referred to the Development Team, Mentor Teachers and Quality Team in order to support the setting to raise standards
 - Will be re-introduced to the quality scheme and supported to achieve quality status following a subsequent satisfactory or above inspection outcome.
- Q** Policies – Ofsted approved yet asked to enhance for QA needs, is this necessary.
- A.** Ofsted when inspecting do not always have the time to read and study all of the policies/procedures and systems, and as Ofsted inspect against minimum standards they are not looking at them being of a higher standard. A setting recently received an inadequate due partly to policies not being robust, and are beginning to look more at them during the inspection process. If a policy is not robust, not followed or updated, the setting’s insurance company may not pay out on a claim following an incident, and/or Ofsted may deem the setting inadequate 1 or 2 depending on the incident.

Policies should be in place to protect children, families and staff in settings and should be robust and reviewed regularly (at least annually).

We hope that queries put to the forum on day have now been fully answered, however if you do have any further queries then please do not hesitate to contact Sue Thompson on 01432 261681.

R Hatherill - October 2007

NURSERY EDUCATION FUNDED SETTINGS AND INCLUSION IN THE DIRECTORY OF PROVIDERS

Report By: Bryan Twitty, CFIS Manager

Purpose

1. To consider the appropriate action for the EYES Partnership when a new setting requests inclusion within the Directory of Providers of NEF.

Background

2. From its inception in 1998 the EYDCP has considered applications from settings to be included within the Directory of Providers eligible to receive Nursery Education Funding (NEF) formally referred to as Nursery Education Grant (NEG). These settings were initially included within the EYDCP Implementation Plans.
3. During the period 1998 to 2002 the Partnership understood it held the power to refuse the application on the grounds that inclusion could jeopardise the viability of other local providers.
4. However the 2001- 2002 document "The Requirements of Nursery Education Grant" states in Annex 1 – 18

"Providers can be rejected only because they fail to meet the conditions for registration set out in this document"

and

"It is suggested that LEAs do not include providers on their register until the term starting after the date on which their registration is confirmed" (this phrase was also included within the 2002-2003 Code of Practice)

Reports from this stage forward were brought to the Partnership by the General Inspector Early Years detailing new applications and asking the members to note the inclusion of the named settings within the Directory in line with the above. This was in some quarters seen as disadvantaging parents and children who were attending the setting once it had opened (i.e. having to wait until a Partnership meeting took place the following quarter)

5. During 2003 a precedent was set when, at a meeting of the Partnership during September, Directory inclusion was agreed for a setting, which opened for business at the commencement of that term and therefore allowed NEF claims

to be made immediately. Since that time however the Partnership has reverted back to the form of business highlighted in 4 above. However the phrase:

“It is suggested that LEAs do not include providers on their register until the term starting after the date on which their registration is confirmed” was not included within the Code of Practice valid from 2003 to 2006 nor the latest revision printed February 2006 and still in force. (www.surestart.gov.uk)

6. It should also be noted that within the present Code of Practice, Annex A – 13 details the Appeals procedure for providers whose application to the Directory is rejected. The phrase:

“It is suggested that LEAs do not include providers on their register until the term starting after the date on which their registration is confirmed” is no longer included within the text therefore not including a provider until the following term could be seen as rejection.

Proposal

7. That, as the EYES partnership, as it currently stands, has no power to refuse inclusion within the Directory (except under specific circumstances when a provider does not agree to the terms of the NEF agreement) the Partnership accept reports from the General Inspector Early Years as “Information Items” only and accept that, once registered, an eligible setting, having agreed to abide by the terms of the NEF agreement, is automatically included in the Directory once Ofsted registered. Thus allowing Parents and children access to NEF immediately.

Recommendation

That either:

- EYES Partnership agrees to the proposal in 7. above
- EYES Partnership continues with the status quo detailed in 4 above

REFORM OF EARLY YEARS FUNDING

Report By: Ros Hatherill – Manager Early Years and Extended Services

Purpose

1. To request the EYES partnership to consider the implications of the reform in aiming to support better outcomes for children aged 5 and the extension of the free entitlement by September 2010 and to note that there are a number of changes to the LA funding system to be implemented over the next three years. The Government is making changes to the membership of School Forums to bring a wider expertise to support funding reforms.

Background

2. In March 2007 the Department for Education and Skills published a consultation document on the arrangements for schools, early years and 14-16 funding that will apply from April 2008. Further detail on arrangements and decisions were announced to Parliament on 25 June 2007.
3. The two main areas effecting Early Years are:
 - Development of the funding arrangements for early years education to support the extension to 15 hours and increased flexibility of the **free entitlement to early years school budgets** from April 2008
 - Changes in the membership of **Schools Forums**, to put them in the best possible position to support the programme of changes to school funding – particularly for early years and 14-16 provision.

Recommendation:

4. That the partnership notes the following
 - During the autumn term (2007), Ministers expect local authorities to carry out an analysis of the costs of Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers in their area and to present it to their Schools Forum and relevant sub-group to inform setting the budget setting process for 2008-11
 - Authorities that do not currently have representatives of the PVI sector on their Schools Forum are strongly encouraged to do so. We will be changing the regulations this autumn (2007) to allow extra non-schools representatives and looking to legislate to make such representatives compulsory.

- From 2009-10 all local authorities will be required by regulations to change how children are counted in the maintained and PVI sectors. Local authorities will be encouraged to introduce the formula from April 2009 wherever possible.
- From 2010 –11 local authorities will be required to use a single formula for funding early years provision in the maintained and PVI sectors. Local Authorities will be encouraged to introduce the formula from April 2009 wherever possible.

Additional information:

At a recent Schools Forum (Wednesday, 10 October 2007), it was agreed that two (2) new members on the Schools Forum would be offered to the Early Years.

Membership would then include Early Years Sector Representatives. Two representatives at manager level to be appointed from fulltime daycare, sessional day care, and breakfast and after school clubs.

R Hatherill – Oct 2007

4. Reform of Early Years Funding

Summary

77. There will be a staged approach to the reform of early years funding - the aim is to support better outcomes for children at age five and the extension of the free entitlement by September 2010:

- . During the autumn term, Ministers expect local authorities to carry out an analysis of the costs of Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers in their area and to present it to their Schools Forum and relevant sub-group to inform setting the budget setting process for 2008-11.
- . Authorities that do not currently have representatives of the PVI sector on their Schools Forum are strongly encouraged to do so. We will be changing the regulations this autumn to allow extra non-schools representatives and looking to legislate to make such representatives compulsory.
 - . From 2009-10 all local authorities will be required by regulations to change how children are counted in the maintained sector so that there is a consistent approach to pupil counting across maintained and PVI providers.
- . From 2010-11 local authorities will be required to use a single local formula for funding early years provision in the maintained and PVI sectors. Local authorities will be encouraged to introduce the formula from April 2009 wherever possible.

This chapter sets out the background to and rationale for the reforms, and offers guidance on implementation, including case studies of two authorities who are already implementing innovative approaches to early years funding. In addition, the Department will be working with a group of local authorities to identify approaches to developing a single formula for early years funding across both maintained and PVI providers.

Context and objectives

78. All three and four year olds are entitled to 12 and a half hours free early learning and care per week for 38 weeks a year. This will be extended to 15 hours per week by 2010. There will be a gradual roll-out of the extended offer – 20 Pathfinder local authorities are currently delivering 15 hours and also exploring how the entitlement can be made more flexible⁷. The funding reforms set out below are designed to support the extension of the free entitlement and address historic inconsistencies in how different settings are funded, so that the system becomes fairer and more transparent and all children can receive free provision.

⁷ See www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/earlyyears/flexibleentitlement for more details.

79. Securing the free entitlement is one of the key levers that Local Authorities have, alongside the delivery of integrated services through Sure Start Children's Centres, to meet their new statutory duties to ensure there is sufficient childcare for local families, to improve child outcomes at age 5 and to narrow the achievement gap. The entitlement delivers better outcomes for children now and in the longer term. There is clear evidence of the benefits of pre-school provision for children's learning and development, especially for the most disadvantaged. Free provision also makes a significant contribution to childcare costs, supporting working parents and those making the transition into work. This reinforces the benefits of the entitlement for children – helping to increase family income and the positive impact that parental employment has on children's life chances in the longer term.

80. Our main objective is to maximise take-up of high quality, free early years provision. Take-up is lower in disadvantaged communities and we know that the predominant pattern of delivery (through five 2 and a half hour daily sessions) can be a constraint on children benefiting from all of their entitlement. The government is clear that the free entitlement should be delivered through a diverse market that provides choice for parents. Stable funding and sustainability are critical to continuously improving quality in all settings. The reform of the free entitlement funding system is designed to support those objectives by:

- . Removing barriers in the funding system to the flexible use of the free entitlement, so that children can take up their entitlement at more than one setting, and in different sectors.
- . Supporting the sustainability of all settings, giving them stability to plan for the future and improve quality.
- . Ensuring that the entitlement is free at the point of delivery for all parents.
- . Putting the right incentives in place to increase take-up of the free entitlement.

Case Study 1: Pathfinders for the extended, flexible free entitlement - Rochdale MBC

Rochdale has been offering 15 hours of flexible free provision since April 2007. Following consultation with all sectors and with the agreement of their project steering group Rochdale adopted the following model of flexibility:

- children can access a minimum of one hour and a maximum of six hours free provision between 8am and 4pm each day
- the entitlement can be accessed over a minimum of three days and can be taken up in more than one setting across both sectors

Rochdale engages with all providers through a mixture of all sector briefings and meetings on a borough-wide basis, and smaller cross-sector ward meetings and individual sector meetings. A regularly updated FAQ email ensures all providers are kept up to speed on progress.

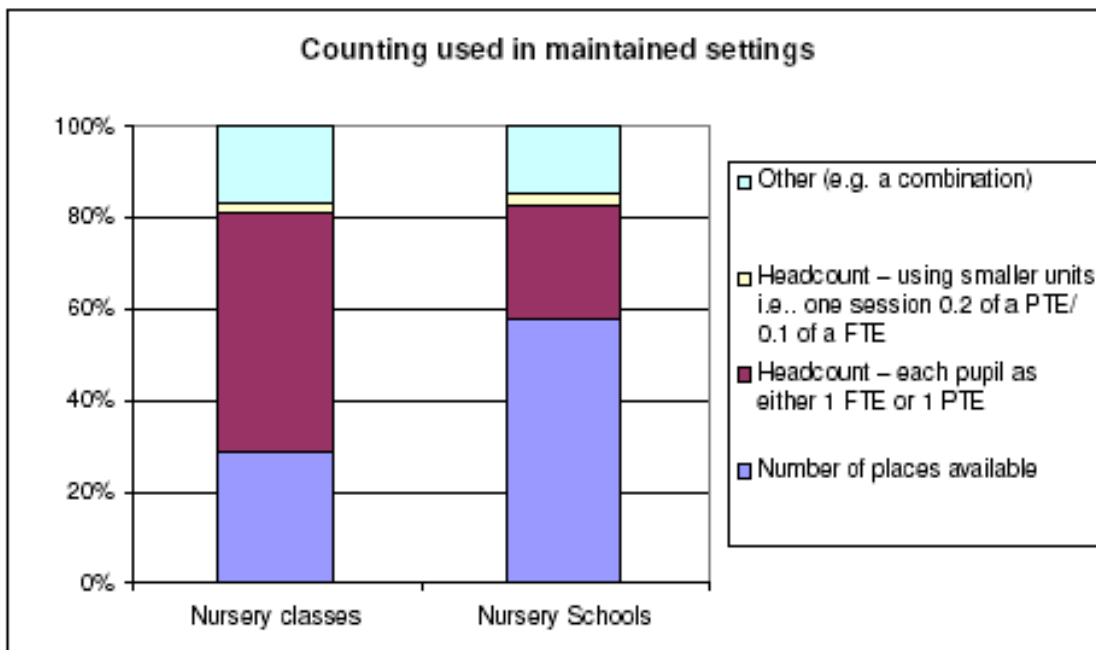
The funding system has been also been changed: PVI rates of funding are now differentiated by provider type (following an analysis of costs of provision in different settings) and are paid on an hourly basis. (Maintained settings are funded for the additional 2.5 hours at an agreed rate separate from existing formula funding by hours of attendance).

Nearly all providers are now on board - 71 offer the full 8 till 4 flexibility, 11 offer extended sessions up to 4.5 hours and 8 have extended to five hours. 30 providers deliver 3 hour sessions over 5 days. Five childminders are also offering full flexibility. 85% of local children are accessing the new offer and this is expected to increase in the Autumn term.

The case for reform

81. The current entitlement is delivered through a mixed market and the pattern of provision varies from one local authority to another. 36% of children benefit from free provision in the private, voluntary or independent sector, including at full day care settings, playgroups and with childminders. The consultation on school, early years and 14-16 funding set out a number of issues with the current funding system, mainly caused by inconsistencies in how maintained and PVI settings are funded. Some of these inconsistencies make the system less effective at meeting parents' needs and will be a barrier to increasing the quality, flexibility and take-up of the entitlement in the future. They include:

- Children are counted differently for funding purposes in the maintained and PVI sectors. In PVI settings funding is based on how much provision each child takes up while in nursery schools and classes funding tends to be on places and/or a headcount of children. Our survey showed that 80% of local authorities funded maintained settings on this basis (see the chart below). This means that there is little incentive for maintained providers to encourage parents to access the full entitlement and it often prevents children from accessing their entitlement at both a PVI and a maintained setting (because all the funding goes to the maintained provider, or else there is double funding).



- 94% of authorities fund the PVI sector on a flat rate. So funding levels are not differentiated according to a clear assessment of the circumstances in which PVI providers operate, whereas formula funding for maintained providers is likely to take a whole range of factors into account (such as deprivation, staffing needs and

premises costs). This unsophisticated funding system for PVI means that authorities may not be getting value for money or funding the entitlement appropriately.

. The emphasis in the school funding system is on stability and predictability of budgets each year (and setting out budgets for 3 years ahead) but there is little stability in PVI budgets, which respond to children's movements throughout the year. There are benefits in both approaches, but extensive instability in PVI budgets can undermine quality and sustainability.

. Local funding decisions on the level and means of funding the free entitlement are subject to discussion and consultation at each local authority's Schools Forum, but the data we have collected on schools forums shows that the early years sector is often not represented on that forum (only 11 of the 119 forums surveyed had a non schools member from the PVI sector). Changes in this area are set out in full in chapter 5.

82. The reform of the local funding system for the free entitlement will address all of these issues. The following sections set out the rationale for each change in more detail and discuss the local implementation issues which may arise. Our approach to reform is predicated on the assumption that local authorities will need to develop local solutions to these issues in consultation with providers and in line with the general guidance provided here. We also expect the new Childcare Regional Networks, which have been established to provide to support to local authorities in implementing the key duties in the Childcare Act 2006, to be a key forum for sharing ideas and approaches to these reforms. The networks will meet at least four times a year and will be supported by Government Offices. The second round of meetings is currently underway.

Stage one: analysing costs in the PVI sector

83. Before setting local budgets for 2008-11 all local authorities are expected to undertake an analysis of the cost of delivering free entitlement provision in their local PVI sector and to present that analysis to their Schools Forum, to inform the budget setting process. Where authorities do not already have a representative of the PVI sector on their Forum, they should endeavour to make special arrangements to ensure that such a representative is able to attend the meeting where the analysis of costs of delivery is considered. This cost analysis is an important first step towards the development of a local formula and will help address any immediate sustainability concerns, providing a clear process for providers to feed in their views and evidence on costs. A guide for local authorities on analysing costs in the PVI sector, including local case studies, has been published at:
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/earlyyears/fundingreform

Case Study 2: Shropshire - A new way of funding PVI providers to deliver the free entitlement

Shropshire County Council moved away from the typical 'flat rate' system for funding the free entitlement in 2004, because of concerns about variations in cost and the need to ensure that rural settings were sustainable.

The new system is based on an analysis of the cost of provision for 3 and 4 year olds and other key characteristics of the provision. There are two categories: place-led funding for PVI settings operating in rural areas on school sites and pupil led funding for all other settings. There are six different bands of funding for these providers – three for private providers and three for voluntary and independent settings. Private providers receive an allocation that accounts for additional costs such as business rates, which are not payable in the voluntary sector. There is also a mechanism for guaranteeing minimum levels of funding for some rural PVI settings.

Consultation and collaboration has been the key to success. Shropshire held a range of meetings across the county with all providers to ensure that everyone was informed and given the opportunity to contribute to the planning. Since moving to the new system Shropshire has seen a marked reduction in requests for sustainability funding - the clarity and openness of the system enables settings across the county, and particularly in more rural areas to operate on a much more secure footing. This means that parents get sustained provision, in particular in rural areas that would have otherwise struggled to offer the entitlement.

For more detailed information on the approach see:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00178/>

Stage two: changing the early years count arrangements

84. From April 2009 all Local Authorities will be required to use a count of children for funding purposes that is consistent across the maintained and PVI sectors. The presumption will be that providers are funded according to the amount of provision children take up, and this is consistent with the long term direction of travel for national funding arrangements (as set out in chapter 2). To do this we will change the current presumption in school funding regulations that under-5s in the maintained sector are funded on places or headcount (i.e. where each child counts as either 1 or 0.5 regardless of the number of hours they actually access at the school). Instead, the presumption in regulations will be that under-5s in maintained settings are funded on 'provision' (i.e. hours taken-up). There will still be an option to fund some, but not all, settings on places. This approach will apply across the board i.e. there will be an option to fund some PVI settings on places set out in the Code of Practice for non maintained early years provision.

85. As highlighted above, one of the key drivers for this change is our ambition to increase the flexibility of the free entitlement in response to the needs of parents and families. This includes enabling children to access their full entitlement at more than one setting – the current position on maintained funding restricts this in many LAs or results in double funding. This change is also intended to ensure there is an incentive on all settings to stimulate full take-up of all the hours that children are entitled to – current data on the PVI sector indicates that 42% of three year olds do not access their full 12 and a half hour entitlement.⁸

Assessing the impact and smoothing transition

86. The new count will feed through into the calculation of the Minimum Funding Guarantee for primary and nursery schools. However, we recognise that for some schools - especially small or rural ones – using the new count could mean they do not get adequate protection from the Minimum Funding Guarantee – their per pupil funding will be protected, but not their pupil numbers, which could be reduced by the new count method. In the absence of national data on the actual take-up of provision in the maintained sector it is difficult to model this impact at national level. For this reason we will expect all local authorities to conduct their own impact assessment of the change on local schools and present this to their Schools Forum for discussion before the changes come into effect (see box 1 below for more details on impact assessments). Authorities will also want to consider, with the Schools Forum, options for smoothing the transition to the new count for some schools in the light of that assessment, which could include:

- . Continuing to fund a limited number of settings on places or headcount – temporarily, for transition, or (in the case of places) in the longer term;

⁸ Statistical First Release, 2007 available at www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000729/index.shtml

- . Applying a locally agreed level of protection to the old pupil count until it converges with the budget guaranteed by the MFG (on the basis of the new count);
- . Using the resources released by the change of count to provide transitional support (e.g. a lump sum or other locally agreed protection) to those settings that need it.

Box 1: Impact assessments

We would expect an impact assessment to be presented to the Schools Forum and to include:

- Representative data over a suitable time period to allow for reasonable assumptions to be made about the difference between a place/headcount-led count and a provision-based count. To achieve this, LAs should consider sampling maintained providers soon to build up a local picture of the pattern of actual take-up.
- Modelling of the effect on school budgets
- Consultation with relevant partners on the impact of the change and different budget scenarios for schools – including consultation with the non-maintained sector for comparison.
- Scenario analysis, including the effects of applying different protection options for some schools and the long term implications of those for funding the free entitlement
- An account of parental demand for the free entitlement and how the impact of changes would affect the authority's ability to meet its statutory duties

87. The impact assessment will also be important in managing the interaction with 3 year budgets for schools. All schools with free entitlement provision should be made aware now of the planned formula review, the change in the count from 2009 and the process that local authorities will go through to implement that change. Where possible, authorities may want to provide some indication of the expected impact on the second year of the three year budget period and give assurances to schools regarding the opportunity to identify and deal with risks to their budgets through the impact assessment.

88. Some maintained Nursery Schools may face particular challenges when the counting methodology is changed. Nursery schools are more likely to be funded on places (57% of LAs funded nursery schools in this way). They may only be providing the free entitlement and in some cases may have proportionately higher overheads

than other local providers. Where relevant, authorities will need to assess the impact on nursery schools and discuss appropriate protections with the Schools Forum. In many cases authorities will want to consider this alongside the other support available to the many nursery schools that are becoming part of children's centres and the scale of parental demand for the provision.

Stage three: a single local formula to fund the free entitlement

89. The introduction of a single local formula for funding the free entitlement at local level is intended to ensure consistency and fairness in the way that all providers of free nursery education and care are funded. It does not necessarily mean that providers will all be funded at the same level, but that the same factors should be taken into account when deciding on the level of funding. The consultation document included a proposal that local authorities should have a standardised methodology for setting the per pupil unit of funding in the maintained and PVI sectors. The commitment to a single formula incorporates that proposal – as LAs will need to have a consistent way of calculating the per pupil unit of funding in order to develop the pupil-led element of a formula – but it also goes beyond that, by bringing into scope other factors which LAs currently use to determine levels of funding in the maintained sector.

90. The requirement to fund the free entitlement through a single formula will be reflected in the new Code of Practice on the provision of free nursery education places for 3 and 4 year olds (in relation to PVI providers), which will sit alongside the existing requirement in the regulations on school funding to use a formula to fund maintained settings. The requirement will come into effect from April 2010 but we are encouraging local authorities to introduce this change from 2009 wherever possible.

91. Authorities will want to consider now the planning and data collection implications of the new requirement and, in particular, to regard their analysis of the cost of delivery in the PVI settings as the first step in that process (see para 83 above).

92. The DCSF will be setting up a formula development project with a small number of local authorities to identify and work through approaches to developing a single local formula for the free entitlement. We currently expect the project to be up and running by November and for findings and case studies to be available in Spring 2008. This work will enable us to identify ways of building a formula that are appropriate to early years provision and tested in different local contexts.

93. In advance of the detailed findings of that work local authorities may wish to consider the following questions in planning for the formula:

. **Which factors are relevant to funding all children regardless of their characteristics or the setting they are in.** For example: staff to child ratio requirements (which will be aligned between maintained and PVI settings from September 2008) and assumed costs of space and facilities in line with national standards. These will underpin the new Age-Weighted Pupil Unit which is likely to be common for all settings.

- . **How to meet the specific needs of some children** e.g. disability, special educational needs and looked after or vulnerable children.
- . **How to respond to specific characteristics of the setting or settings.** Ownership is likely to be relevant as all private providers have to pay full business rates while voluntary and some maintained settings do not.
- . **What method of apportioning premises costs to use in the formula**
- . **What indicator(s) of deprivation to use in the formula.**
- . **How to reflect other circumstances, such as rurality or small settings** in the formula e.g. through lump sums.
- . **Ways in which the funding generated by the new formula can contribute to improving the quality and sustainability of provision.**
- . **How to treat children in reception classes.** Although it is not intended that the single formula will cover children in Reception (as in statutory terms, the school starting age is the term following a child's 5th birthday) we know that many local authorities offer earlier entry into full time provision in reception classes during the year leading up to a child's fifth birthday. Drawing a distinction between children taking up the free entitlement to part time nursery education and children in reception classes will not always be straightforward, especially during transition terms, but authorities should start from the principle that, for funding purposes, once a child is in reception they are in full-time statutory education and no longer accessing the free entitlement. Authorities will also need to consider the interaction of the free entitlement funding formula with reception class funding to ensure that the introduction of a single formula does not make the exercise of parental choice more difficult.
- . How to ensure that the **process** for building the single formula and any differentiation in the AWPU is carried out in a transparent way, in partnership with local providers, and results in a formula that is transparent, fair and simple.

94. **Stability** of funding will be a key consideration in developing a formula for funding the free entitlement. Having greater certainty about the level of income from the free entitlement at the start of the year will help providers plan for the longer term and help to improve the quality of provision. In the consultation document we recognized that in the present system there appeared to be too much place-led funding in the maintained sector and too little stability in the PVI sector. The most popular by far of the alternative approaches suggested for the PVI sector was the use of a minimum guarantee of funding which could be adjusted in the light of actual take-up. Equally, in the maintained sector we will move away from a place-driven approach to funding (see paragraphs 84-88 above). Once a single formula is in place this can be used to ensure stability for all settings that need it, for example through lump sums or other mechanisms that reflect the fixed and semi-fixed costs of delivery.

95. In the meantime, local authorities may want to consider interim measures which increase stability for PVI settings. We are not prescribing a particular approach – because it should be tailored to local market conditions and setting circumstances and may not be necessary in the longer term once a formula is in place.

Box 2: Options for providing a minimum guarantee of funding in the PVI sector

In addition to giving providers clarity at the start of the year over what level of funding they can reasonably expect, a minimum guarantee means that authorities share the risk of unfilled places with the provider rather than devolving it to them (as now) or absorbing it all themselves (as is the case with place-led funding). In particular it could enable authorities to incentivise higher take-up of the entitlement – access to free provision by lower income families is low and may be erratic, with higher drop-out rates. With more guarantees about minimum funding (and a reduced penalty for occasional non-attendance) settings will have more of an incentive to market their provision to harder to reach families.

There is a range of ways that authorities might offer a minimum guarantee of funding to PVI settings, including:

- . Funding a minimum number of children (agreed separately for each setting) based on a proportion of the previous year, then fully funding anything above that but damping any downward adjustments (i.e. if 2 places are not filled the provider only loses funding for 1 place).
- . As above, but applying different levels of protection to different settings e.g. in a small rural setting funding 0.75 of an unfilled place.
- . Funding a guaranteed minimum number of pupils, with adjustments only in the event of higher numbers. This approach could restrict local flexibility to move money around the system in-year, but it could be particularly valuable in settings or areas where authorities want to incentivise providers to increase take-up of the offer.

Local authorities will need to come to a view on the balance between increasing the complexity of the system and the potential benefits for some local providers of these or similar approaches. The additional cost of funding unfilled provision could be off-set by reducing the rate at which some places are currently funded – or by applying the approach selectively in relation to setting need. If LAs were to reduce the level of place-led funding to such an extent that the impact on cost was completely neutralised there would still be potential benefits in this approach for provider stability, planning and risk management, although the other incentive benefits described would probably be reduced.

Improving the transparency of the funding system

96. There was a proposal in the consultation document on School 14-16 and Early Years Funding for separate identification of early years funding within the Dedicated Schools Grant. This will not be implemented for the time being. As set out in the introduction, the Department has announced a wider review of the distribution formula for DSG with a view to having a single formula available for use from 2011-12.

97. One implication of this is that early years funding could be clearly identified in each authority's funding allocation. In the meantime we will be taking a number of steps to improve transparency in the current system. We have published the results of our survey of local approaches to distributing funding and our estimates of local spending on the entitlement (in 2006-07) based on local authority Section 52 returns. These resources will help all partners have a full and informed debate about local funding decisions. The option of separate identification of early years funding in future national arrangements will be kept under review in light of the reforms described above.

⁹ These can be found at: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/earlyyears/fundingreform/survey/ and www.dfes.gov.uk/localauthorities/section52/subPage.cfm?action=section52.default&ID=87 respectively.

5. Schools Forums

A. Introduction

98. The evidence from our programme of visits to Schools Forums is that in general relationships with authorities are good, business is managed well, and members are clear about the issues. However, there are a number of changes to the funding system to be implemented over the next three years, and the Government is making changes to the membership of schools forums to bring in wider expertise to support those funding reforms. There will be a lot of local decisions to take on how the reforms are implemented, particularly on early years and 14-16 funding.

99. Local authorities and their schools forums will also have to take decisions on the distribution of funding increases that are not as high as those for the previous ten years, against a background of a much sharper focus on efficiency and value for money, and a Minimum Funding Guarantee that is below cost pressures. It is important to get the decision making structure right for this programme of work, and also to ensure that Schools Forums have the right membership and skills to fulfil what we expect to be a demanding role.

100. In summary the changes will mean that:

- a. headteachers will be able to elect other members of the senior management/leadership team among their Forum representatives;
- b. named substitutes can be nominated, by a method determined by the local authority after consulting its forum;
- c. if their Forum has “non-schools” members, local authorities must appoint representatives of early years private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers and of the 14-19 partnership. We encourage all authorities to have non-schools members on their Forum and will be looking to legislate to make this compulsory; and
- d. forums may have up to one third of non-schools members – to date the limit has been one fifth – so schools members will maintain the majority of at least two schools members for each non-schools member.

We also recommend that Forums establish a sub-group on early years and that local authorities should consider ways to support their new Forum members.

101. The Government is undertaking two reviews of Schools Forums: in the short term, to determine whether further changes are needed during the CSR period; and for the longer term, to consider how Schools Forums will relate to the developing arrangements for Children’s Trusts and the wider Every Child matters agenda.

B. The Programme for Forums

102. As well as the regular programme of consideration of formula funding issues, Schools Forums will be involved in local changes to funding arrangements over the CSR period. We expect that local authorities will present to their Schools Forums the specific additional items set out below.

- a. Prior to financial year 2008-09
 - i) an analysis of costs to PVI providers of delivering the free entitlement as set out at paragraph 83 in chapter 4;
 - ii) arrangements for funding specialised diplomas, where there has been a successful consortium to deliver them to an authority's secondary schools; and
 - iii) proposals to use centrally retained funding from the Schools Budget for joint working in support of the ECM agenda, that will increase the overall amount retained for that purpose within the Schools Budget.
- b. Prior to financial year 2009-10:
 - i) an impact analysis of changes to pupil numbers for primary and nursery schools flowing from the revised counting method to be introduced that year, with proposals for local protection arrangements for those schools where it is necessary; and
 - ii) proposals for a single funding formula for early years provision, where the authority has decided to implement such a formula for this financial year.
- c. Prior to financial year 2010-11 - proposals for a single funding formula for early years provision, for the remaining authorities.

C. Changes to MFG Methodology

103. Since 2006-07, local authorities and their Schools Forums have had the power to approve variations in the MFG methodology, where the formula set out in regulations would produce an anomalous result, provided that all the variations proposed do not affect in total more than 20% of the maintained schools in an authority. This devolution of power has generally been a positive experience, and the Government is extending and amending this power, to allow Forums to agree with the authority variations that would affect up to 50% of the pupils in an authority (measured by the number of pupils in the schools affected by the complete package of proposed changes). As now, local authorities and Schools Forums will not have the power to agree a change in the level of the MFG. If agreement cannot be reached, the local authority can ask the Secretary of State to approve changes to the MFG methodology.

D. Membership

Other Members of the School Senior Management Team

104. We are making changes to regulations to allow local headteachers to choose to be represented by other members of the school senior management team. At present only headteachers and governors can represent schools on the Schools Forum. The changes will mean that:

- a. Headteachers can elect a representative to the Schools Forum who is not a headteacher but another member of a school senior management/leadership team; and
- b. Local authorities will make arrangements, after consulting the Forum, for schools members of the Forum to be represented by named substitutes when not all of them can attend. These named substitutes could also include senior managers other than headteachers. We anticipate that the most relevant members of the senior management team for these roles (other than heads) are bursars and others with significant financial responsibility.

105. These changes will help to produce a wider base of membership and bring in relevant experience from other people in an authority's schools. They will also help to spread the workload of the Forum and may be a useful way of encouraging the development of other members of the senior team.

Representatives of early years PVI providers and the 14-19 partnership

106. We will change regulations so that authorities are required to appoint representatives of early years providers and the 14-19 partnership on the Schools Forum, where the authority has non-schools members on the Forum. We are seeking an opportunity to amend the primary legislation to make the appointment of non schools members compulsory. The authority will decide who to appoint, consulting local representative groups, the coordinator of the 14-19 partnership and perhaps local colleges.

Early Years

107. At present, Forums must have representatives of early years maintained providers¹⁰, a few Forums have a member or observer representative of early years PVI providers, and in some cases a council officer is expected to represent early years.

108. The Government makes available over £3 billion a year through the Dedicated Schools Grant for early years provision in the maintained and PVI sectors. In 2006,

¹⁰ Forums must have Primary representatives and therefore have representation of nursery classes, and they must have a representative of nursery schools if the authority has nursery schools, though this could be a Primary representative in certain circumstances.

over a third of parents used their free entitlement in PVI providers. We want to ensure that there is a balanced debate on local allocations of this funding – and the Schools Forum is the key local consultative body on this issue.

109. We also want to make sure that good representation is in place to inform local decisions on local changes to early years funding. Representation on the Forum will give a voice in discussions about relative distributions of funding, and a formal opportunity to set out the implications of funding decisions on the PVI sector. We recognise that it may be difficult for one or two representatives of the sector to wield significant influence in a large schools-dominated forum, and this is partly why we are expecting LAs in addition to set up consultative arrangements with the sector – perhaps an early years sub-group of their Forum.

14-19 Partnerships

110. As they are rolled out from 08/09, Diplomas at KS4 will be funded from the Schools Budget. It is proposed that the additional costs of Diplomas, including those arising from the delivery of Diplomas in partnership with colleges and other local providers, will be met from an annual specific formula grant to the LA supplemented by contributions from Dedicated Schools Grant. The focus for planning the delivery and funding of Diplomas pre and post 16 across an LA area, including partnership provision, will be the 14-19 partnership.

111. We are not aware of any Schools Forums that have representation of 14-19 partnerships per se, although with LSC enjoying observer status there will be overlap between Forum and partnership membership. Representation of the partnership on the Schools Forum will ensure that:

- a. The partnership can contribute to discussions in the Forum on the contributions from school budgets that are needed to deliver the Diploma plan.
- b. Forums are aware of and able to incorporate a Diploma funding perspective into wider decisions on the distribution of LA/school funding including the decisions on Central Expenditure, varying the MFG, and other issues which may impact on DSG contributions to Diploma funding.

E. Support for early years representatives

112. Many authorities provide excellent support to their Schools Forum members. The good practice guide¹¹ suggests a range of support that authorities may want to provide to new members. Some members, such as an early years provider member, may need extra support. They are unlikely to have the same level of support as a headteacher with a senior management team or a representative supported by the 14-19 partnership.

¹¹ This can be found at: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=9370>.

113. An early years sub-group of the Forum can help to support early years representatives: this is outlined below. Other sources of support for early years representatives may include:

- a. Contact with a representative organisation of early years PVI providers.
- b. Your regional childcare network.
- c. The local authority Early Years team.

F. Non-schools members:

114. We will change regulations to require Forums to have at least two-thirds schools members – those members elected by headteachers and governing bodies to represent schools. As present Forums must have at least four-fifths schools members.

115. We are making these changes to allow authorities to add new representatives of early years PVI providers and the 14-19 partnership without having to make substantial changes to the rest of the membership of their Forum. We also believe it is important to preserve a substantial majority of schools members, as schools are the major recipients of funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant. Clearly the reviews of Schools Forums mentioned at para 101 will include in their scope the membership and composition of Forums.

G. Early Years sub-group

116. Some local authorities have established sub-groups of their forums on early years and other reference groups to engage early years providers. These may have grown out of EYDCP arrangements, been set up for the national consultation on funding or be in response to the need to consult them on the sufficiency duty. They are working well. We expect all authorities to have in place a mechanism for consulting PVI providers on the early years funding reforms – this will also be necessary for work on the sufficiency duty¹². We recommend that all authorities consider establishing a subgroup of their Forum for this purpose. These arrangements need not be as formal as the full Forum as such a group would have no specific powers, but we see it as a good opportunity for the authority to:

- a. Seek the views of a greater range of early years maintained and PVI providers directly. Only a small number of early years providers will be represented on the Forum and the PVI sector in particular may be very large and very diverse. It may be a challenge for only one or two people to represent this group and they may not have the capacity to attend all meetings and understand all the issues.

¹² See guidance at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/earlyyears/sufficiency/).

- b. Engage providers in a more detailed discussion of early years funding. It may not be possible to get into the necessary detail at the Forum given the size of their agenda.

H. Further support and advice from the Department

117. The Department will offer a range of support to authorities to implement the funding reforms – some of it will be particularly relevant to Schools Forums including:

- a. an updated good practice guide for Schools Forums, which will take account of the latest funding reforms;
- b. ongoing support and guidance provided via the Schools Forum web pages of the Departmental website; and
- c. the Department will be holding a series of regional conferences in the autumn: as with previous conferences, these will offer colleagues from local authorities and Schools Forums the opportunity to discuss the funding changes with officials from the Department, and with each other.

CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT (CHILDCARE ACT 2006 – SECTION 11)

Report By: Bryan Twitty, CFIS Manager

Purpose

1. To request the EYES partnership consider the draft findings of consultation and audit of childcare which forms the basis of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment locally

Background

2. The Childcare Act 2006 placed a duty on local authorities in April 2006 to carry out a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for their area. Guidance demanded consultation with a raft of partners to ascertain the nature of both supply and demand for childcare locally across a number of age ranges and the sector as a whole as well as a number of specific scenarios such as childcare for children with special needs. Supply was then mapped to demand and conclusions drawn with recommendation for action. The EYES team have compiled a draft assessment ready for consultation with users and partners, the Executive Summary of which is attached to this item.
3. From April 2008 the Act places a duty on the authority to secure sufficient childcare. The conclusions and recommendations within the assessment will therefore inform a forthcoming local authority action plan to secure sufficient childcare.
4. The assessment will be available to Directorate Management Team in November and will therefore be available for consultation shortly

Recommendation: That the partnership considers the draft Childcare Sufficiency Assessment once it has been released by the Directorate Management Team and forwards comments to the EYES team at Blackfriars. The document will be forwarded to Partnership members once released.

Early Years and Extended Services

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment – Executive Summary

Duties within the Childcare Act 2006 require Local Authorities to shape and support the development of childcare provision in their area (so far as reasonably practicable). The aim is to enable parents to find childcare that meets their needs locally and make real choices about their lives.

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment will enable the Local Authority to identify gaps in the market and, in consultation, plan how to support the market to address these gaps. It will form part of the overall needs assessment, consultation and preparation for the Children and Young Peoples Plan and will address the current level of supply and the demand for childcare within Herefordshire.

The authority pro-actively sought to survey Providers, Service users, Parents, Employers, Planners and Schools and worked with a partner to consult countywide with parents. The authority details in the assessment its current understanding of the market and its gaps; this understanding was further shaped by the outcome of further supply and demand mapping and the outcome of consultations.

The findings are, briefly, as follows:

- Two thirds of respondents use childcare at present however the pattern across the county varies area to area
- Non users of Childcare tend to have lower income levels
- Users are likely to be employed (or self employed) and work more than 16 hrs weekly
- Non users are less likely than users to want to be in work
- Non users are likely to have only children over 5
- Over 40% of all non users of childcare were able to fit the care of their children around their work hours, these families are referred as “Adaptors”
- Few families saw a lack of childcare as preventing them from working, they made do with what was available and greater choice would only allow them to adapt in a different manner
- Each family has an ideal pattern of childcare and in the main those with younger children (0-5) are most happy with the pattern they already adhere to. Those with over 5’s would like to move away from the use of

friends and relatives to formalised after school clubs – this is the greatest area of unmet demand

- Parents appear to understate the need for childcare as informal care is rarely seen as childcare – there is therefore a latent demand to be explored
- 72% of respondents use NEF places within Herefordshire, however the LA is funding over 85% of eligible children
- Quality of childcare is seen as the most important factor for over 75% of respondents
- At least 25% of respondents had childcare needs outside of “normal working hours”
- Parents of children with special needs see the lack of respite care as their priority, accessing childcare as a general issue was not seen as high on their agenda as many feel expected to stay at home as cares; childcare is therefore “not needed”

Based on these findings the assessment concludes that actions for Herefordshire are based on the following theme gaps that have been highlighted by the report:

- Out of School provision for 8-14 year olds coupled with demand from parents for early morning and early evening care highlights a gap across categories which, if filled, will support parents who work and parents who wish to return to work.
- Variable hours care particularly for 0-8 years of age. Parents who work part time demand a more flexible pattern of care for their children. This may mean different days each week or a pattern of care alternating weekly.
- Holiday childcare for all ages in all areas
- Cost of childcare countywide appears underestimated by parents particularly those who have younger children, however it is not high on parents list of priorities when accessing childcare
- Nursery Education Funding (3 and 4 year old) take up is >85% countywide although some sub local authority areas are lower. There is no indication that children are not accessing NEF because of lack of places, however, if the PVI settings expand their NEF capacity to meet demand the capacity for non-NEF places is diminished.
- Issues surround the extension of hours from 12.5 weekly to 15 as both PVI settings and maintained settings require extension of staff hours. Those settings running in leased buildings may have difficulty extending lease hours.
- Rurality and transport issues are raised by parents and settings as a restriction upon parents and their ability to maintain care for their children outside of school hours and to return to work, increase hours at work or study
- Some Wards in certain Children’s Centre areas have less than 800 0-14 year olds in them and based on the ratios detailed in the text settings in these areas, unless subsidised hugely, would have sustainability issues

- Care for children with special needs/disability is an issue, which the LA must explore more fully over the coming period. Parents of children's with disability did not in general highlight particular gaps. What was apparent was that the whole sector appears closed to them because of the position in which parents find themselves
- Individual sub-local authority areas have gaps in supply which development work by the Early Years and Extended Schools team will work to close
- Neighbouring Authorities do not see gaps in the sufficiency of childcare from their interactions with parents but local employers do see a need for flexible hours care.
- There remains a need to consult further with parents of children with disability and children regarding childcare sufficiency and plans will be made over the coming period (prior to the next Assessment publication date of March 2010) to pursue this avenue as a priority.

Herefordshire Council will need to prioritise the need to close the above gaps within its action planning for Childcare Sufficiency, which will be carried out once the assessment has been ratified via consultation with partners and public.

The duty to secure sufficient childcare locally re-enforces partnership with the private and voluntary sectors and expands and clarifies the role of the local authority as strategic leaders in facilitating the childcare market. To enable the identified gaps to be closed the LA will play a strategic role in "commissioning" services locally using effective local planning and partnerships, fairness of funding, regulation via Nursery Education Funding agreements and requirements placed on financial assistance, Business support, long term and one off financial support to groups or parents, extended services in and around schools and formal commissioning of services.

