

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