

Early Years Working Group – 18/09/2025

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

2.00pm to 3.30pm

Attendees:			
Theresa Staunton (TS) Chair	PVI representative on Schools Forum	✓	
Jeni Murphy (JM)	Early Years Strategic Lead	✓	
Denise Bushay (DB)	Schools Places & Admissions Head of Service	✓	
Leigh McGuinness (LM)	Park Hill Infant School and Tunstall Nursery School	X	
Shelley Davies (SD)	Director of Education	X	
Mark Southworth (MS)	Consultant Lead, Locality Inclusion Project	X	
Melanie Farris (MF)	Croydon Locality SEND Support Senco	✓	
Maria Reeve (MR)	Head of Purley Nursery School	✓	
Yetty Osonaike (YO)	Alpha Day Nursery	✓	
Kim Berham (KB)	Head of Sparkles and Millie's Pre-schools	✓	
Sophoya Davis (SD2)	Child Minder in Croydon	✓	
Shamsa Akhtar (SA)	Nursery Managing Director at J and S Playhouse Nursey	X	
Jenette Indarsingh (JI)	Head of Thornton Hearth Nursery School	✓	
Kate Lanning (KL)	Head of School, Tunstall Nursery School	✓	
Keran Currie (KC)	Maintained Primary School Governor	X	
Mori Bates (MB)	Clerk	✓	
Abioye Aimolowo (AA)	Finance Manager	✓	
Brian Smith (BS)	Finance Officer	X	

Agenda Items

1	Apologies and welcome	TS
	Apologies received by SD, KC and JB	
2	Previous Minutes	TS
	2.1 Minutes were reviewed by the working group and agreed to be a true record. 2.2 Update on SENIF & CLSS Payments: This will be an ongoing situation whereby progress is being made, but further work is required in relation to a distribution methodology and calculations.	
3	Sufficiency Update	JM
	3.1 JM provided the working group with an update, confirming that the data has been extracted for Outturn with Synergy, but this needs to be compared with Oracle.	

	<p>3.2 An error occurred with the MNS supplement distribution. Payments should have been based on incorrect figures. Payments were delivered based on the original DSG predicted figure from the indicate DSG budget rather than the planned delivery of the grant based on census data. . This has led to an overpayment of which will be investigated further to ensure this does not happen again.</p> <p>3.3 Table 1 showed the expenditures across the various areas, indicating an underspend of £3.6m despite there being some overspend.</p> <p>3.4 Working families can now apply for 30 hours free or funded children per week for 38 weeks in the year.</p> <p>3.5 Table 4 showed the distribution of grading across childminders and group based settings against the national average. In MNS, 40% in Croydon have an outstanding rating which is 21% lower than the national average. 60% of the MNS in Croydon have a good rating which is 22% higher than the national average.</p> <p>3.6 MR voiced concern about the MNS clawback affecting the budget setting, however JM reassured the working group that this should not have an effect given that the budget provided to schools would have been based on the amount given on 322 children and based on the census data rather the DSG indicative budget. KL added that there may be use in including the formulas on the papers in order for members to carry out the calculations themselves, thus giving additional clarity where possible.</p> <p>3.7 The Government has also published its target for the percentage of children expected to achieve a Good Level of Development by 2028. For Croydon, the targets are as followed: a) 78.3% overall and; b) 66.6% for children eligible for FSM. These targets appear ambitious for Croydon, and there will be additional information in the newsletter in due course.</p>	
4	Finance Update	AA
	<p>4.1 AA confirmed that finance are due to reconcile Oracle against Synergy, with a mention of there being thought going into how the underspent in Early Years is dealt with.</p> <p>4.2 JI brought up a query that was initially brought to AA's attention in Summer, of which an update is required. AA responded that the finance team can only send money to whichever settings they have been instructed to distribute it to. Any funds that are received have to be paid out the following month.</p> <p>4.3 In general, there were queries about the various grants available to Early Years providers and when the rates for these are released.</p>	
5	AOB	
	<p>5.1 SENIF Payments – JM stated that ongoing work is being carried out into the SENIF payments. As a SENIF mechanism and distribution methodology is being created, providers should have received information on payments for 2YOs and U2YOs. For 3 & 4YOs, payments can be requested through the Early Years SEND Team.</p>	

Action Log:

Current Actions:

1.	Finance paper update for 24/25 budget for the next meeting	Finance	Jan'25	Pending
2.	An update was requested regarding the CLSS and SENIF payments for the Early Years Sector	LA Officers	Mar'25	Pending