



Bristol Schools Forum
Early Years Task & Finish Group

MINUTES

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Location</i>
Early Years Funding Task & Finish Group	12 May 2021	8:30	Zoom

<i>In Attendance</i>	
<p>Bristol Schools Forum Members Rob Davies (RD) Simon Holmes (SH) Sam Packer (SP)</p> <p>Bristol City Council Officers Abioye Asimolowo (AA) Su Coombes (SC) Samantha Flowers (SF) Richard Hanks (RH) Corrina Haskins (CH) Alison Hurley (AH) – Chair Ruth Taylor (RT)</p>	<p>Nursery Governor Rep, Speedwell & Little Hayes Nursery Nursery Head Rep, St Phillip’s Marsh Nursery Private Voluntary Independent (PVI) Early Years Rep</p> <p>Interim Finance Manager Equalities in Education, School Partnerships Education Programme Manager Head of Service, Learning City Clerk to Bristol Schools Forum Director of Education & Skills Finance Officer</p>

		<i>Action</i>
1.	<p>Introductions and purpose of the Group</p> <p>Following introductions, AH outlined the purpose of the Group as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To input into the DSG Management Plan to ensure co-production and joint ownership. To look specifically at finance issues relating to Early Years/Early Years SEND. To meet and feedback to Schools Forum on a termly basis for a 12-month period. <p>The Group noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> There was a requirement by the DfE for BCC to produce a DSG management plan. BCC officers had used the DfE toolkit as a starting point to develop the plan although it was a complex document and some other authorities had decided not to use it. The DfE toolkit used language such as “savings” but 	

	<p>BCC was clear that it was not a cost saving activity, instead it was about understanding the demands for increased costs, clear forecasting and delivering best value;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. BCC officers had drawn up the first iteration containing baseline information and forecasting based on a “do-nothing” scenario; 5. The first step for the Group was understanding and accepting the first iteration of the plan with a view to seeking the support of the Forum to submit the plan to the DfE; 6. It was important for both the Group and Forum to own the plan and work collaboratively with BCC to review the data and identify gaps as the sector held a lot of knowledge and expertise. 7. Key issues for the Group to consider were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Early Years Funding from central government. The Early Years block was based on census information with no increments. b. The particular financial pressures for maintained nurseries. <p>Review Terms of Reference</p> <p>The Group agreed the Terms of Reference as circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Nominate Chair for future meetings</p> <p>AH asked Schools Forum members to consider chairing future meetings in the interests of co-ownership, stressing that it was important for the plan to be co-produced and not led by the Council.</p> <p>RD agreed to meet with AH to discuss this further before making a decision.</p>	<p><i>AH to arrange meeting with RD.</i></p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Overview of DSG Management Plan</p> <p>The Group considered the information circulated in advance of the meeting and noted the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The DSG budget had moved from a surplus position of £2m in 2018-19 to deficit of £11m in 2020-21 and if it was to move in the same trajectory, there would be a £35m deficit by 2024. 2. PVI nurseries were funded by per unit funding and this had remained static for a few years. 3. It was important to identify areas where there could be further issues and to understand what the drivers were and have clear recommendations of how these could be addressed going forward. 4. The national funding of Early Years was not sustainable, 	

and this needed to be articulated as part of these investigations.

5. The government had committed to prioritise children's early years (May 2021 Queen's Speech) but there was no information about when or how this would happen.

The Group raised the following comments:

1. It was difficult for Forum Members to understand why there was a surplus in the Early Years Block when the majority of maintained nurseries were in deficit.
2. BCC had started to work with nursery settings to move away from their historic deficits to an in-year balance. This was a challenge as nurseries had similar costs to schools but were not funded in the same way. Officers were looking at other models to reduce costs without impacting on quality and visiting each setting with a data pack to ensure information was accurate. There was a commitment from Heads/Governors for change.
The Group agreed that an overview of this work should be referenced in the DSG Management Plan, whilst acknowledging that the different options were being discussed elsewhere. This could be listed alongside the other projects and activity including wider nursery transformation.
3. The nursery transformation was a separate project, but the financial impact needed to be reported to the Group on route to Forum.
4. There was an argument for SEND in Early Years to be funded from the High Needs Block and officers were looking at examples of this from other authorities.
5. The key strategies in the text of the plan had been drafted by officers, and these would have to be developed with the Group for further iterations to ensure co-production and co-ownership.
It was agreed that, once data was available, the Early Years Strategy would be brought back to the next meeting of the Group for input.
6. The plan looked to control costs, rather than make savings by looking at the key drivers and identifying inadequacies within the system.
7. Accessing support for children during Early Years would not only be beneficial to the child but also be cost effective in the long term.
8. It was clarified that the SEND inclusion fund was retained centrally for support such as speech and language rather than everyone in the sector trying to commission services independently.

<p>3.</p>	<p>Agree approach to report back to Schools Forum</p> <p>The Group agreed the following approach for reporting back to Schools Forum and seeking support for the first iteration of the DSG Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forum to receive DSG Management plan iteration 1 with officer led baseline; “do nothing” forecast scenario, narrative; validated data and issues raised by the Task and Finish Group. 2. Forum to receive a forward plan of ongoing projects to include timeframes for implementation. 3. AH to arrange a meeting before 8 June Schools Forum with RD and Aileen Morrison (Chair of High Needs Task and Finish Group) to discuss details of the presentation to Forum. 	<p><i>AH/AA to prepare papers for Schools Forum.</i></p> <p><i>AH to arrange to meet AM/RD before 8 June.</i></p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>SP raised a concern about the national shortage of nursery staff and advised that a lot of employees were leaving the sector and it was difficult to recruit new staff as a consequence of Brexit.</p> <p>AH undertook to look into whether the City of Bristol College/UWE could offer students for apprenticeships and consider if there were any further actions BCC could take to support the sector on this issue.</p>	<p><i>AH to speak to Jane Taylor/consider other appropriate actions.</i></p>

The meeting ended at 9.50am