

Early years Provider Reference Group - Meeting

Date and time: 14 May 2025

Venue: Teams

Present: Alison Bishop (Chair),
Chris Barton, Mitchell Clark, Sharon Griffiths, Gemma Hope, Caroline Maryon, Deborah Parfitt (Vice Chair), Karen Scott, Kate Spencer Allen, Hayley White

Apologies: Caroline Allenson, Charlie Baxter, Annette Brooker, Jenn Barker, Lesley Hart, Lisa Peacock

Notes: Donna Mills

1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Barton, Senior Advisor for Access and Inclusion in the Early Years Childcare and School Readiness Service. • Donna Mills, Business Officer • Caroline Maryon, Service Manager for Coram PACEY – PACEY became part of the Coram family from May 2, supporting childminders in Cambridgeshire. • Sharon Griffiths, Early Years Business and Governance Advisor, Early Years School Readiness Service. • Gemma Hope, Senior Advisor, Intervention, Safeguarding, Sustainability and Wraparound in the Early Years Service. • Hayley White, Early Years Alliance. Children’s Manager looking after Cambridgeshire and Luton. • Mitchell Clark, Finance Business Partner for Education supporting the Early Years Service. • Karen Scott, Head of Histon Early Years Centre, maintained nursery school. • Kate Spencer-Allen, Assistant Head Teacher for St.Matthews Primary School, maintained nursery class. • Alison Bishop, Head of Babraham Nursery and Chair of the Group.
2	<p>Current membership</p> <p>PowerPoint shared will be circulated with minutes.</p> <p>Since the last meeting, two new members have been invited to the group and accepted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlie Baxter at Stretton Preschool

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caroline Allenson at Eaton Socon Preschool <p>LW has stepped down from the group. No one is now appointed to 'other' members. LW was part of a chain.</p> <p>LW's replacement at the chain would be interested in joining the group, potential other chains would also be interested.</p> <p>The group agreed we should go out to other contacts in large chains who are operating in Cambridgeshire and try and gain nominations from them.</p> <p>The group doesn't have an Independent school representative, we will also go out to this sector.</p> <p>Caroline Maryon mentioned Coram needs to be added to her title for future reference.</p>
3	<p>New funding system – EYES</p> <p>Testing has started on the new system. There will be two rounds of testing, then a practice 'go live' in July. With a live date of mid-August.</p> <p>The system is called EYES – Early Years and Education System. Created by system C, and part of Liquid logic. Has an overlap with EHM.</p> <p>The funding part of the system works through a portal. Main change for providers which will be helpful it operates a live register, can find out how you have been paid, what you have been paid, what's due.</p> <p>Key change for the Funding team was the change in language, currently using interim and actual, will change to estimates and headcounts moving forward.</p> <p>There will be a significant training offer, currently developing guides, videos as well as live sessions, to be offered late afternoon and evenings, so people can access learning that suits them. The training won't be offered till the system is live for providers.</p> <p>The dashboard will give you alerts; you will now be able to register future starters, will give information on estimates and headcount status.</p> <p>Live register shows information around recent actions you have completed, there is a future starter button and an eligible two-year-old button. The 'two-year-old' button won't be there when the system goes live. The future starter button will be and will allow you to look at children</p>

you have, how old they are, their funded entitlement, how many hours they are attending, delivery method (AYR All Year Round, TTO Term Time Only)

It has a Live check facility, if a family arrives at a setting and doesn't have a code, you can do the application with them on the system, or signpost them to the parent portal. Can check a child's age, and what funding they are eligible for. Also has an eligibility checker.

The live register keeps all your information up to date. Instead of completing tasks you will make a submission.

Once a headcount is complete, if you need to make a midterm change, it is currently known as an adjustment or amendment. Will just need to add to the register, it will give an option, do you want to notify the LA that this is a midterm change. If clicked yes, the additional payment can then go through. Saving time with emails back and forth.

There is more information provided on the payment screen, you can see what you've claimed already, what's due to you and how much you've had. DAF payments are also shown on this page.

On the payments tab, you can click each payment and drill it down to child level.

Key dates are used. Will have access to a calendar, showing what is coming up in the next month, when children are joining, submissions periods open, headcounts and estimates are due.

Census is done differently. When it's a census term, currently spring term, it is completed as part of your spring head count. You can't submit headcount until you've submitted your census data. All part of same submission wizard. From LA's perspective it's helpful as eliminating chasing for census data.

Round two of testing starts in three weeks' time. If anyone would like screenshots of the new system, request them from CB.

Thoughts on the system from the group

- looks more interactive and intuitive.
- Hayley has already used the system in the other Local Authority she is part of. As an Area Manager it's helpful to see all sites under one umbrella, the dashboard is really good for an oversight, total number of children. Positive feedback.

	<p>Question on whether liquid logic will change - Liquid logic will stay the same, from an EHA perspective. Are looking at other options, on the establishment portal, in the future will use an online form on the portal. There is a separate pathway looking into whether it can be used for Early Support. Some complexity around this.</p> <p>Question as to whether settings can claim for 51 weeks on the portal. This would be looked at in the next stage of testing and what the impact on children will be, and if the system has the full functionality to do this.</p>
4	<p>Local Provider Agreement Feedback</p> <p>Feedback from the LPA has been positive, providers preferred the format. Some queries and concerns. So far 180 settings and 197 childminders returned.</p> <p>There have been technical issues, the Agreement was originally sent via e-sign, but one paragraph had been omitted, when tried to re-send, e-sign has failed. Have had to re-send as a fillable PDF document.</p> <p>LA are aware and mindful of the difficulties that have occurred with sending the agreement out and won't be hard on the signing date that was agreed. Looking at providers having a signed agreement in place prior to autumn term estimate.</p> <p>Will start chasing next week for those not returned.</p> <p>The parent declaration form sparked more enquiries than the Local Provider Agreement.</p>
5	<p>Local Funding Formula</p> <p>The local funding formula is how the LA work out the rate of funding to pay out to providers.</p> <p>Information on slide.</p> <p>The funding formula needs to be discussed now as in October/November will start looking for rates for next year, it's too late to look at changing the formula then.</p> <p>A few providers had mentioned that other LAs are paying a quality supplement or pay more SENIF. If SENIF is increased, it will lower the</p>

base rate and that would be true for all the elements for the funding formula.

There has to be a universal base rate, that is the same for all providers, money has to be put aside for SENIF, there has to be a deprivation fund for our three-four year olds (it's not mandatory for any other age group), there is optional supplements that we could have, Cambridgeshire have chosen not to employ, part of the budget we retain at County Council to pay for the statutory services we have to deliver.

Question - are the group happy with the funding formula going forward and did we want to consult the wider sector with changes?

Comments and thoughts from the group:

- Historically Cambridge used to pay a flexibility supplement. The guidelines for it were hard to meet. The rates of being flexible didn't cover the costs of being flexible. Most Childminders were fully flexible, they would claim, but looking at the bigger picture might not work.
- Recently there has been a lot of change, leave the rate alone and let everything else settle, if there are changes, there will be a consultation that needs to go out. If it's not broken don't fix it.
- Other LA's offer the quality supplement. The quality sometimes being dictated by increased qualifications and strong leadership, the quality supplement is there. It can be a retaining factor, keeping the right staff in the right place. Is quality on qualification or Ofsted Judgement, The DfE guidance mentioned workforce qualifications alongside the quality supplement. Guidance across the different LA's differ, some have awarded with just one person on site, but there are stipulations, 50% of the time they need to be working in a room with children. Managers can drive quality even if they aren't in the room. How can you set a parameter that so it's fair for settings. For smaller settings and childminders that's a catch 22 and could be harder to gain.
- The feeling is the sector is struggling, retention isn't necessary about quality, there are staff members moving around and leaving the sector. If linked to how long you have your staff members, to drive up salaries. Salaries have risen so much in the sector, due to lack of staff there, adding something else that potentially drives the employer to drive up salaries more, maybe not right for sector at the moment.
- The summary of the discussion was that the base rate is what it is, we should be putting the most we can into the base rate so all settings can benefit from it.
- The quality supplement could be tricky as work across schools, could be unfair on other settings as they have three qualified teachers. Feels it is currently working. There is a concern that

	<p>the funded two's are going to work their way up and have a knock-on impact.</p> <p>Decision – Leave the funding formula alone for another year, however when modelling the formula for next year also model an increase in SENIF.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>Webpage There had been some queries about what the reference group does and its role from provider. Suggested to put together a webpage on the learn together site which would include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role • Minutes • TOR • Membership <p>All agreed to the above.</p> <p>Contact details will be the chair's email address.</p> <p>SEND inspection</p> <p>Was Published yesterday, summary and full report on PowerPoint.</p> <p>When looking at the inspection handbook it was very primary and secondary focussed. Therefore, Early Years did not make it into the final report.</p> <p>Cambridgeshire received the middle outcome, the partnership arrangements lead to inconsistent experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, need to work jointly as a partnership with colleagues in the NHS, and Social Care to make improvements for children. There are clear recommendations that are already underway.</p> <p>Discussion had on the new funded form for parents, Some settings finding parts of it tricky, as needs to be a weekly charge, which they don't do. The LA did take out quite a few boxes from the DfE model to try and make it simpler. Some feedback has been format looks better.</p>
<p>Next meeting date</p> <p>Will be held in September – Date TBC</p>	