

Minutes
Early Years Providers Forum
18th September 2025,
10.00am-12.00 noon, Chalford Room, Shire Hall

	Agenda Item	Comments / Notes	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies:	<p>Attendees: Lynne Adamson, Look After Me; Sam Fisher Tithe Barn Pre-School; Sally Woodhouse, Woody's Childminding; Vicki Richardson, Kings Stanley Playgroup; Sarah Penston, NHS Foundation Trust; Lisa Taylor, St Roses School; Heidi Berry, Newent Early Years; Jade Craswell, PATA (UK); Megan Harper, Dingley's Promise; Sarah Hylton, Head of Early Years and Childcare Service (GCC); Jane Shotbolt, Early Years Manager (GCC); Anita McKelvey, Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency and Business Manager (GCC); Sue Bodenham, Finance Support Manager (GCC); Cath Davenport; EYFS Quality and Improvement Officer (GCC).</p> <p>Apologies: Carole Mercier, Duke of Gloucester Playgroup; Margaret Hewis, Early Birds, Kayleigh Hoskins, Coalway Playgroup; Amy Stevens, The Secret Garden Tuffley;</p> <p>Minutes: Denise Webb, Business Administrator – Early Years (GCC)</p>	
2.	Minutes of Last Meeting: Conflicts of Interest:	All agreed. None	
3.	Matters Arising from Previous Minutes:		
4.	Updates from Chair:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynne welcomed 2 new members, Heidi Berry from Newent Early Years and Jade Craswell from Pata (UK). • Emma Motherwell from the NSPCC postponed her presentation due to the NSPCC having a reorganisation and new campaigns on hold. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynne attended Ofsted Webinar on new inspection framework, first to be done for settings. <p>It was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For childminders, initial call will be before 10am and on that call a date for a planning call will be arranged - inspection within 5 days. • For settings, planning will happen the same day as the initial call and the inspection will take place the next day. • It was noted this feels like more collaborative working. • It was commented that when working in ratio it is difficult to find the time to get all the information together. • It was felt a learning walk was good as you would come across things naturally. • Questions can be asked at the webinar or emailed beforehand. • Inspectors will want to know a lot about inclusion and how embedded it is in everyday practice. The Early Years inclusion offer will be good evidence. • Their own inspectors have been trained and contracted inspectors are being trained ready for April. • Cycle will be reduced from 6 to 4 years. 	
5.	Presentation from Sally Woodhouse, Woody's Childminding:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sally gave a presentation about her setting which was well received. • She has been trading for 12 years, initially training as a school teacher. • Works from home and her setup is similar to a bigger setting with lots of assistants of different age ranges, all working part time and happy to cover for each other. • Free play encouraged and less curriculum focused. • They include lots of activities throughout the year ie going to toddler groups, library, Long Table, soft play (which is discounted for them), walking - where they learn about safety. They also run a Gym club, have a big garden and take learning outside. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They subscribe to Pot Gang and receive a box of seeds every month to plant and grow different things, and harvest the food which is used to make dinners and snacks. They are always full and have never had to advertise. Everyone thought it looked wonderful. 	
6.	Becky Lewis to talk about Families First Reforms (10.30am)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emma Trigwell went through her colleague, Becky's presentation (attached). Emma is Head of Service Early Help and Targeted Support team and is on the Programme Board of the Families First Partnership Programme. November 2024 government released paper about helping families thrive. Looks at entire children's sector and how services are provided to families. The DfE launched in March 2025 to deliver on these recommendations. 4 key elements encompass the Families First Partnership Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More effective, proportionate and consistent Child Protection response when children are experiencing significant harm – New Multi-agency Child Protection Teams. 2. Reducing re-assessment and changes of Lead Professional that families have. Increasing access to services which meet parental need – an integrated Family Help service. 3. Family supported to find solutions within their own networks – an increased Family Group Decision Making offer at an earlier stage. 4. Strengthen Safeguarding Partnerships with increased collaboration and joined up – single view of the child, data sharing and new ways of navigating services. An online platform will be set up to provide a single view of the child (not launched yet) which will have information from Police, Education, Health, Social Care so it can be seen what's going on in real time. Information sharing issues being resolved at the moment. Bristol and Somerset are ahead on this – SH to contact and see what they have done. 	SH

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim is to have single assessment pathway. <p>Implementation timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2025 Preparation and Scoping • 2025-2026 Co-Design and Engagement • 2026 Pilot and Evaluation • 2026-2027 Full implementation • Aim is to be up and running by March 2027 • The team is interested in working together so if you are interested in contributing please email: familiesfirstpartnershipprogramme@gloucestershire.gov.uk 	ALL
7.	Best Start in Life strategy/Gloucestershire EYFS targets and Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Best Start in Life government strategy was published in July and the Local Authority is looking at how they will implement this and apply it to children in Gloucestershire. • Gloucestershire is targeting EYFS assessment again as data set not hugely helpful. Statutory measure to work to. • In August the government outlined all targets for Local Authorities to achieve by 2028. For Gloucestershire GLD target is 77.2%, nearly 10% increase from 66.8%. Ideally, by next year would want to be at 71% and year after at 75%. • For children eligible for free school meals we are at 51%, target is 60% again almost a 10% increase. • Gloucestershire hasn't been given targets around ethnicity gaps and there are significant gaps. • Action Plan will be developed on how to reach targets and submit by January. No template available so SH putting it together herself. • There is already a lot of work around transition being done ie Family Hubs, improving EY provision, quality of teaching in Reception, health quality and reviews. • Also looking at EYFS data for children way behind and will focus a lot of energy on those groups. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SH wants to make sure these marginalised groups are not disadvantaged and that they are being offered some quality of services that these children need. • Gloucestershire should be above national average with all our data and we perform well for most children. • If anyone has any strategy ideas please forward any suggestions to SH. • We are sharing EYFS data by ward and ELG . • It is important for schools and Early Years to be aware that if children arriving in Reception are falling behind they need to change what they are doing for that journey. • It was queried whether it was because ethnic groups are not accessing funding. The government are doing a review next year around early years funding. Quality is good in Gloucestershire. • It was noted that there are very few children in the system with ethnicity recorded. Ethnicity has been added from Health's data and can start looking at certain ethnic groups not taking their entitlement. Ethnicity pulls through on Capita. • Data team looking at correlation between Free School Meals and ethnicity. • Ethnicity can be looked at to see who is entitled to have early years premium and look at their profile outcomes. Unsure whether had information from schools. • Early Years are entitled to information from schools - they don't usually offer it but it can be asked for as an overview. Every setting should be able to do that, or Early Years can give overview for your setting. • Training for schools - they need to look at data themselves and reflect on it but not entirely sure that all EYFS assessments are accurate. A lot of schools erred on the side of caution and now they have stopped that, it is making a big difference. • There's a whole load of actions that start with tactfully saying to schools please be more accurate in assessments and don't score children down just to look good later on – they did previously and it quite significantly widened the gaps. 	ALL
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CD stated that teachers are saying they are predictive of children that have struggled and don't want to assume that when they get to Y1 that they still need some support. It was noted that generally some of the children haven't gone to early years settings and not accessed everything. It's not that they are hard to reach, it's that we are not reaching them. Also, there may be some implicit bias. SH would like any ideas. It isn't early years's fault, and it's not schools fault especially if children haven't had access to services from birth. Quality Team will look at that when supporting settings - what does quality and delivery of EYFS look like for their cohort. We all need to do something and it isn't just a tick box exercise, need reflection on children being let down. Children without inclusion cannot attain a good level. It was asked what happens to Local Authorities that don't reach that target. There is no more money available, by June we have to have created the Best Start in Life Family Hub. 17 children's centres - do we pick one of these and put all services into it? Only money from government available and must be used very specifically for parenting programmes or home learning support. Idea is for staff to work with parents to get them to support childrens' development. We are being given £200k this year for the whole county but don't know whether more money will be available next year. Government putting a little bit of pressure on schools. If schools are under-performing there will be different levels of support/different platforms for them. Lynne Adamson to feedback about information she has obtained from schools - will help build relationships with schools. Could also feed information into childrens centres. It was noted a lot of progress is lost in the school holidays, that there is nothing free for early years children to do, and for children with a disability there is nowhere for under 5's. There is the HAF programme but it isn't for under 5s. Childrens centres are looking at gaps in communities and what families want. There is a need for activities for under 5s but the childrens centres need to know what's missing. 	LA
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8.	Updates from Early Years Service:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the last meeting JS shared information about SENIF offer for early years which was also added to weekly Providers email. • Trying to increase number of children with SEND to access setting and full entitlement. • With regards to claims for 15 hours funding where the child has additional needs but only attends for 5 hours, and the setting wants to use the funding flexibly. It was explained that it is really difficult for the Local Authority to work out how much children are not accessing their entitlement. All head counts different for claiming funding flexibly for this whole term. It was asked that everyone start thinking and planning what to do from January. SB has updated the provider agreement. It was requested not to claim for 15 hours if a child is only accessing 5 hours. If the reason for accessing 5 is parental request or the setting cannot support their needs please contact the Advice Line. There is funding available so requests will be triaged – please provide evidence of what else has been tried. • The process will be firmed up to make it as streamlined as possible so need to think about for January. • SENIF Requests to Assess for EHCNA are being received with many for children not known to our services at all. Please note the EYMDT panel is a good way to get access to EPs, and lots of different agencies sit on the panel. When considering EHCNA look at what support is available through Early Years Services and SENCO. • Staff at Dingley's Promise have a lot of experience of pushing back to schools. They will make a short webinar to give people good ideas of what to say and do. • EHCNA investigation from June – SH has been looking at who made decisions etc and looked at decisions made at TAC meeting where schools attended but there was not much input from our team. Will be asking, if there were high needs 	

	<p>why were we not involved. Have heard that schools were asking early years providers to make requests but not clear if that is the case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SB stated that to support data on funding claims, that everybody adds actual hours child has attended and what they are claiming. If have 20 hours and only claiming 5 put that information on the task. It will also be looked at from an ethnicity perspective ie not attended school until 6 years old. It was asked whether it was worth taking 'information not obtained' off the Portal. SB confirmed something does have to go in there and it should be gathered from registration forms. Re ethnicity some settings say they don't like to ask. It was pointed out that 'information not obtained' over-rides information on Capita. Maybe have a reminder on Capita funding loop. Capita is an online system and feeds into the Portal. It was noted ethnicity information can be withheld. It was felt it was a frustrating system – drop downs are in alphabetical order but can mean that most commonly used terms are at the bottom. Add 'good practice for registering forms and changes to funding practice' to the next Provider email. Website nearly ready and will be a better platform for regular reminders. Best Start in Life - DfE want any Services that LA sets up to use the BSIL logo. So any settings that accept funding should be using the logo. SH to send logo around to everyone. Settings should also show the logo so families will see settings are part of a network. EY Settings, Child Minders and Family Hubs are all part of the Family Hubs network. <p>Early Years Expansion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported 44 settings to expand early years provision, 590 places for 2025 - 2's and under, and also 3-4 year olds. According to DfE Gloucestershire are 500 places short of what is needed. We are not receiving any feedback to say parents cannot find a place for their child, but everyone should let us know if that is happening. We are aware of a problem around Bishops Cleeve but not as bad as DfE saying it is. Parents who genuinely can't find places need to let us know. 	SH
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	<p>DfE make automatic assumption that if a setting is on the Early Years register that settings will take all ages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wraparound funded 56 schools/PVI giving 1,170 new places. Currently talking to settings offering wraparound and asking them to expand programme to early years. School based nursery programme criteria has changed and can have PVI part of school setting off-site and not have to use capacity within school. Government encouraging school based places from 2 years old and extended hours to 8am-6pm provision and agree to carry on during the holidays. Don't know what that means for under 2s and haven't got enough schools to cater for all children in early years. Schools only approved where it won't impact local providers. It was commented that a school with an on-site playgroup, governor-run used to accept 2 year olds but from this academic year will only take 3 year olds. Some have had funding for 2 year olds and then changed to 3 year olds. Need to let AM know if you are aware of this happening. Anita McKelvey has replaced Sarah Spencer. Parents have reported that there has been an increase in the number of pre-school settings where children with SEND, from age 3 (when ratio jumps) no longer have places available. Add question to SEN survey, whether children can stay until Reception. Direct any queries to the Advice line. SB total payment £31.5m this term, late Autumn was £14.5m. Families eligible for Working Parents and for 2 year olds funding (new term FRAS, previously A2YO). Parents do need to be able to have both sources of funding. DWP looking at crossover. Uptake is really low for FRAS, and it is massively impacting on our take up data, making it go down. This has been raised with DfE. With new GLD targets it was thought it would be better to make it 30 hours for everybody, not just working parents, and parents would just claim 1 code instead of 2. Hoping DfE will look at this when they start review for funding. All Local Authorities advising working parents to claim 30 hours. Information is sent by 	ALL/AM AM
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		<p>text and email, 3 reminders in total but parents still not taking it up. Have validated on Portal, please remind parents if you can.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we support parents, how can we do that? – discuss next meeting. • Next deadline for data is 31st December. 	ALL ALL
9.	Forum members:	Nothing to add.	
10.	Update from Schools Forum:	Nothing to add.	
11.	Items to take to Schools Forum:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was asked whether schools still get free fruit as it seems unfair that early years don't get the same. It was agreed to take this to the Schools Forum. 	SF
12.	Any Other Business:	<p>The following schedule was made for people to give a presentation about their settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vicki Richardson, Kings Stanley Playgroup • Sara Penston, NHS Foundation Trust • Lisa Taylor, St Roses School • Heidi Berry, Newent Early Years • Jade Craswell, PATA (UK) • Megan Harper, Dingley's Promise 	
13.	Date of Next Meetings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12th February 2026, 10.00am-12.00 noon, face-to-face, Chalford Room, Shire Hall – booked. • 14th May 2026, 10.00am – 12.00 noon, face-to-face, Chalford Room, Shire Hall – booked. 	

EY PROVIDER FORUM: Members			
List – 3/9/25			
Name	Locality	Setting	Email Address
Kayleigh Hoskins	Forest	Coalway Playgroup	bcplaygroup@btinternet.com
Margaret Hewis	Forest	Earlybirds Playgroup	margarethewhis@hotmail.co.uk
Heidi Berry	Forest	Newent Early Years	heidiberry.newentearlyyears@gmail.com
	Chelt		
	Chelt		
Carole Mercier	Cots	Duke of Gloucester Playgroup	financedukeofgloucesterplaygroup@hotmail.com
Vicki Richardson	Stroud	Kings Stanley Play Group	kingsstanleypg@gmail.com
Sam Fisher (Vice Chair)	Tewks	Tithe Barn Pre-School	tithebarnpreschool@gmail.com
Sarah Penston	Glos Nth	NHS Foundation Trust	sarah.penston@icloud.com
Amy Stevens	Glos Sth	The Secret Garden, Tuffley	amyford82@hotmail.com
Jade Craswell	Gloucester	PATA (UK)	Jade.Craswell@pataglos.org.uk
Childminder Rep (at least 1)			
Lynne Adamson (Chair)	Tewks	Look After Me	lookafterme@live.co.uk
Sally Woodhouse	Cots	Woody's Childminding	sallywoodhouse@btinternet.com
Special Schools Rep			
Independent Schools Rep			
Lisa Taylor	Stroud	St Roses School	lisa.taylor@stroses.org.uk
Glos Assessment Centre			
Megan Harper	Glos	Dingley's Promise	megan.harper@dingley.org.uk
Attendees from GCC:			
Sarah Hylton	Head of Early Years and Childcare Service (GCC)		sarah.hylton@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Jane Shotbolt	Early Years Manager (GCC)	jane.shotbolt@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Anita McKelvey	Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency and Business	Anita.mckelvey@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Sue Bodenham	Finance Support Manager	Sue.bodenham@gloucestershire.gov.uk
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Denise Webb	Administrator (GCC)	denise.webb@gloucestershire.gov.uk