

Portsmouth Early Years and Childcare Reference Group

Terms of Reference - September 2022

Purpose

The Early Years and Childcare Reference Group (the Group) will take place to support, challenge and guide the local authority's decision-making process with regards to our early years sufficiency and strategy. This will be achieved through reflective discussion and the provision of supportive training on a cross-sector basis for senior practitioners within the market who are working in or own early years and childcare establishments.

The Group should not operate in isolation and must make every effort to link with the Portsmouth's PEP groups/boards.

Outcomes expected from each meeting are:

- 1) Improved communication across the sector and the sharing of information or gaps in service provision, resulting in a proactive and joined up approach to early years and childcare to agree consistent approaches on key issues with a view to helping parents and the wider community understand the rationale for the way childcare will be operating.
- 2) To consider how far the problems in the sector provide an opportunity for more radical thinking around consistent expectations in supporting working parents and vulnerable children and to be able to support all working parents to access childcare.
- 3) To consider the financial implications and sufficiency of the childcare market during this time.
- 4) To provide a strong voice to Government on what is needed.
- 5) Key topics will be outlined for the following months meetings to allow preparation and debate.
- 6) The first part of the meeting (up to 15mins) will focus on updates and context setting by the council, followed by a group discussion and reflection.
- 7) Representatives will act as a conduit for information to and from the wider market.

Scope; potential issues to be addressed

The full scope of the working group will be determined at the first meeting of the working group but is likely to cover the following areas:

- 1) **Guidance for childcare providers and updates from Ofsted and the DfE, policies, risk assessments and regulations** + any training required to support this.
- 2) **Sufficiency of places** in early years settings and the sufficiency of providers and support to continue to keep their businesses solvent.
- 3) **Communications** - city wide messages for parents and carers.

- 4) **Recruitment issues and cost of living crisis** - discussions around resolving these problems, and ways of supporting the sector within Portsmouth to get through this.

Governance and Information Sharing arrangements

- Representation from the sector will be reviewed after six months.
- Those who attend the Group will report back to the sector through an agreed mechanism
- Those attending the meeting agree to:
 - a) Share information on a 'need to know' basis
 - b) Maintain respect for business confidentiality
 - c) Share information purposefully
- Members agree to respect the information and opinions discussed by representatives and to disclose information only with the agreement of the provider in question.

Role of the chair and membership

- The chair is responsible for ensuring there is a termly agenda and plan for the Group.
- This plan will be created to reflect the strategic and statutory priorities of both the council and providers in its response to aftermath the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on childcare providers as well as the cost of living and recruitment crisis.
- The chair will share council updates to inform the Group of key developments and priorities to provide clear communication across Portsmouth.
- The Network should be attended by local representatives from:
 - a) PCC - The Early Years & Childcare Service
 - b) At least 3 privately owned providers
 - c) At least 3 voluntary sector providers
 - d) At least 2 school led providers
 - e) At least 1 active childminder
- Providers from the sector must be operating with a 'good or better' judgement from Ofsted and offer to parents free early education funding places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds (including the extended entitlement)

Frequency of meetings

- These meetings will be held by Teams and a termly appointment is given in advance.
- Each representative commits to the meetings and will ensure that information is cascaded across their sector.
- The meetings are chaired by one of the Early Year's Leadership team.

Date for Review: September 2023