

Provider Forum

Early Years Invitation 2026-27

Join our Early Years Provider Forum

- Have a passion for Early Education and Childcare?
- Enjoy sharing ideas and helping shape positive change?
- Want to work in partnership with West Sussex County Council to influence support for providers, children and families?



If so, we'd love to hear from you. We are inviting applications to join our Provider Forum.

About the forum

The forum was established in 2023 as the Childcare Expansion Provider Forum, supporting the expansion of funded childcare entitlements. As its role developed, the forum expanded to cover a wider range of Early Years priorities and is now known as the **Provider Forum**.

The Provider Forum is more than a consultation group. It is a genuine partnership between providers and the Local Authority.

Over the past year, forum members have:

- Influenced the development of new digital systems, including the Online Parent Declaration.
- Helped shape workforce development priorities and support initiatives.
- Informed discussions around SEND provision and school transitions.
- Contributed to Best Start in Life projects and family engagement initiatives.
- Provided valuable feedback that has helped improve guidance, communications and operational processes.

Through collaboration, challenge and shared expertise, forum members ensure the voice of the sector is represented in decision-making across West Sussex.

We are now looking to welcome additional members who are passionate about making a difference and helping shape the future of Early Education and Childcare provision across the county.

What you'll do

As a forum member, you will:

- Share your experiences, challenges and ideas from the Early Years sector.
- Contribute to discussions and help identify practical solutions to key issues.
- Attend forum meetings (details below).
- Review proposals, resources and developments, providing constructive feedback.
- Share examples of effective practice.
- Help represent the views and experiences of providers across West Sussex.
- Work collaboratively with the Local Authority to co-produce information, guidance and support.

What you'll gain

- **£150 per meeting** to support your participation. This contribution covers meeting attendance, travel expenses, pre-meeting preparation and any agreed follow-up actions.
- The opportunity to influence decisions in line with relevant statutory guidance where provider insight is essential. Help shape publications, guidance and support for both settings and families as well as helping to increase awareness of Early Years and Childcare support in West Sussex.
- Access to a supportive network of Early Education and Childcare professionals with the opportunity for peer support, to share and learn from best practice and to build relationships with colleagues who are equally passionate about improving outcomes for children and families.

Meeting dates and venues

The Provider forum meetings will take place face to face, once a term on a Friday from approximately 10:00am to 2:30pm. It is likely that the venue will be in Horsham.

Dates for the year ahead are:

- **Friday 6 November 2026**, 10:00am to 2:30pm, Horsham Nursery School, Harwood Road, Horsham RH13 5UT
- **Friday 19 March 2027**, 10:00am to 2:30pm, Horsham Nursery School, Harwood Road, Horsham RH13 5UT
- **Friday 18 June 2027**, 10:00am to 2:30pm, Horsham Nursery School, Harwood Road, Horsham RH13 5UT

How to apply

1. Complete the attached Expression of Interest including a brief statement (maximum one side of A4) outlining:
 - Why you would like to join the Provider Forum.
 - The skills, experience and perspectives you would bring to the group.
 - How you feel you could contribute to representing the wider Early Years sector in West Sussex.
2. Send by email to family.info.service@westsussex.gov.uk
 - please include 'Provider Forum' in the subject line
3. Submit by the **deadline – Wednesday 30th September 2026**.

Please be aware the first meeting will take place on Friday 6th November 2026, as detailed above. All applicants **must** ensure they will be available to attend the meeting on this date.

We are looking to increase membership of the Provider Forum from 8 to 12 representatives. New members will join an established group, some of whom have been involved since the forum was first created in 2023.

To ensure the forum reflects the diversity of the Early Years sector across West Sussex, we welcome applications from a wide range of providers and particularly encourage applications from childminders.



As far as possible, we aim for a balanced representation across:

- Childminders
- Pre-schools and day nurseries from across the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector
- Maintained nursery schools and nursery classes
- Providers operating in both rural and urban communities

This approach helps ensure that a broad range of perspectives, experiences and challenges are represented in forum discussions and future developments.

Applicants must be from settings that are currently rated by Ofsted as meeting or exceeding the expected standard. For group settings, applicants should hold a leadership or management role.

As part of the selection process, we will review Expressions of Interest alongside relevant Local Authority records, including EYFE audit outcomes and parental complaint records.

We very much look forward to receiving your application.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome by 5.00pm on Friday 9 October 2026.



Expression of Interest:

Name	
Role	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	
Setting Name	
Setting Address	
Ofsted URN	
Date of last inspection	
Outcome of last inspection	

Please evidence below, through a brief statement, no longer than one side of A4, why you would like to take part and what skills you would bring to the group:

Please return to family.info.service@westsussex.gov.uk by Wednesday 30th September 2026.

