

Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP)

Early Years and Childcare Reference Group

Terms of Reference (November 2020)

1. Introduction

The Portsmouth Early Years and Childcare Reference Group will support the implementation of the Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020-2023, contributing to the vision and overall themes of the strategy, and leading on priorities of the strategy.

Our vision as outlined in the Portsmouth Education Strategy is that through working together we can ensure that: *All children and young people make good progress through education which sets high expectations for them, is infused with restorative high support and high challenge and which is supported through leading edge use of digital technology, empowering them to drive their own learning anywhere.*

A central theme of the PEP strategy is inclusion - *creating an educational environment that is welcoming to all children and young people and not giving up on any child whatever their circumstances.*

The strategy will also have running through it a commitment to engage with schools and partners to develop and share anti-racism training and resources in response to Black Lives Matter.

2. Key purpose

The key purpose of the Group is to support, challenge and guide the locality authority's decision making process with regards to our early years COVID-19 response. 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.

3. Key responsibilities

The key responsibilities of the Group are to:

- a) Ensure 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.

- b) To consider how far the crisis provides an opportunity for, and requires, more radical thinking around consistent expectations of continuing support for critical workers, working parents and vulnerable children and to be able to support all working parents to access childcare.
- c) To consider the financial implications and sufficiency of the childcare market during this crisis.
- d) To provide a strong voice to Government on what is needed.
- e) Key topics will be outlined for the following month's meetings to allow preparation and debate.
- f) 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.
- g) Representatives will act as a conduit for information to and from the wider market.

4. **Scope; potential issues to be addressed**

The issues that may be addressed could be reactive to current events but are likely to cover the following areas:

1. **Supporting parents and providers to be able to access and provide childcare during the pandemic and to offer home learning if settings are forced to close to isolate or due to COVID reasons.**
 - a) **Models for achieving a return to normal** - It is essential that all critical worker children and vulnerable children are able to access childcare, and that parents understand it is business as usual and all children can attend as normal.
 - b) **Communications to parents and staff** - providing clarification about the rationale/aim of keeping childcare running as normal (education, safeguarding & wellbeing, re-starting the economy), expectations of parents & staff and assurances about health and safety.
 - c) **Infection control / social distancing / PPE / regular cleaning regimes** in settings - what this means, how will this be managed e.g. rotas, staggered starts and finishes, different break times, children staying in one room and staff moving between them, huddle groups, regular cleaning; issuing of PPE, etc.
 - d) **Staffing** - staff: child ratios, minimum complement of staff needed to run the provision.
2. **Guidance for childcare providers on policies, risk assessments and regulations** + any training required to support this.
3. **Sufficiency of places** in early year's settings.
4. **Communications** - city wide messages for parents and carers.

5. **New ways of working** that can be built on in the future - managing pick up and drop off times safely, how to socially distance in a childcare provision - is it possible - how do we minimise the risks.

5. Membership

Membership of the Group is as follows:

- PCC - The Early Years and Childcare Service
- At least 3 privately owned providers
- At least 3 voluntary sector providers
- At least 2 school led providers
- At least 1 active childminder

Providers from the sector must be operating with a 'good or better' judgement from Ofsted and offer to parent's free early education funding places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds (including the extended entitlement).

6. Chairing, frequency of meetings and administration

The chair is responsible for ensuring there is a weekly 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 the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on childcare providers. The chair will share council updates to inform the Group of key developments and priorities to provide clear communication across Portsmouth.

Initially the group met every two weeks, this has now changed to monthly meetings. These meetings will be held by Teams and an appointment is given in advance. Each representative commits to the meetings and will ensure that information is cascaded across their sector. The meetings will be chaired by one of the Early Year's Leadership team.

7. Accountability, governance and sharing arrangements

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