



**All Party Parliamentary Group on Nursery Schools,
Nursery and Reception Classes**

Summary of the meeting on 16 January 2018

MPs in attendance:

<i>Lucy Powell (Chair)</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Manchester Central</i>
<i>Jack Dromey (Secretary)</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Erdington</i>
<i>Nadhim Zahawi (Minister)</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Stratford Upon Avon</i>
<i>Tracy Brabin (Shadow Minister)</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Batley & Spen</i>
<i>Steve Brine</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Winchester</i>
<i>Julie Cooper</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Burnley</i>
<i>Vicky Ford</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Chelmsford</i>
<i>James Frith</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Bury North</i>
<i>Chris Green</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Bolton West</i>
<i>Stephen Hepburn</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Jarrow</i>
<i>Eddie Hughes</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Walsall North</i>
<i>Ian Mearns</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Gateshead</i>
<i>Gavin Shuker</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Luton South</i>
<i>Stephen Timms</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>East Ham</i>
<i>Craig Tracey</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>North Warwickshire</i>
<i>Chris Matheson</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>City of Chester</i>
<i>Matt Western</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Warwick & Leamington</i>

APPG AGM

The Group's AGM was held and its officers were confirmed as:

<i>Lucy Powell (Chair)</i>	<i>Labour</i>
<i>William Wragg (Vice-Chair)</i>	<i>Conservative</i>
<i>Jack Dromey (Secretary)</i>	<i>Labour</i>
<i>Jess Phillips (Treasurer)</i>	<i>Labour</i>

It was agreed to change the name of the APPG to the APPG for Nursery Schools, Nursery and Reception Classes in order to cover all early years provision in schools.

Introductions

Lucy Powell welcomed the excellent turnout of parliamentarians, nursery headteachers, governors and others from the sector. She noted that once again the meeting had coincided with changes in ministerial portfolio, and welcomed the fact that the new minister would be attending the meeting although very new in post.

Interim report on SEND survey – Beatrice Merrick, Chief Executive of Early Education

Early Education were undertaking a survey on changes to the availability of funding for children with SEND in maintained nursery schools. The findings to date confirm the extensive expertise within maintained nursery schools for supporting children with SEND, and how this was being put at risk by pressures on the budgets of schools generally, and in relation to SEND in particular.

Initial analysis of responses to date from over 100 maintained nursery schools, indicated:

- There was little consistency across the country as to the amount of funding availability to support children with SEND, the eligibility criteria for obtaining it and ease or otherwise of obtaining it.
- A significant majority of maintained nursery schools are spending considerably more on SEND support than they receive in funding for it, having to find other sources of funding to ensure children's needs can be met, despite the fact that the EYNFF makes no allowance for SEND in the universal base rate and supplements – and research for the DfE had noted that this model of “notional funding” which operates in the school sector was not appropriate to the early years. Moreover, as MNS's budgets are cut the scope for cross-subsidy is reducing significantly.
- Only 4% identified an improvement in funding for SEND in the previous year. Just over half (55%) reported no change in the availability of funding for SEND over the past year, although in some cases this was under review and changes were expected to be announced soon, and in some cases funding had been progressively decreasing over time, therefore changes were not attributed to the EYNFF.
- 41% identified that less funding was available and/or that the administrative processes required to obtain it were more onerous since the introduction of the EYNFF. Comments in relation to how the current year's SEND funding had worsened compared to previous years included:
 - Children accessing 30 hours only receive funding for SEN support for equivalent to 15 hours
 - There is no longer any additional funding available for 2 year olds with SEND in our authority
 - We are finding that the panel are awarding SEN funding to fewer children (ie their needs have to be higher). Also, fewer hours are being funded - eg if a child attends for 15 hours, maybe 7.5 or 10 hours support will be provided.
 - We used to have a banded system from 1 to 6 for inclusion funding with band 6 providing full time 1 to 1 support depending on need. This has gone and now there is only mild, moderate or EHC funding available at a much lower rate.
 - The systems for applying for funding have changed and we now have different forms to complete which require more evidence of the cycles of

support already completed. Funding is allocated on a shorter term basis and requires reapplying for as a means of reviewing the child's progress.

- Proposal to remove funding directly to maintained schools to provide general EY SEN advice from the EY SEND team. Many of our team have more expertise and there is limited availability with staff shortages in the central team
- No increased outreach allocation for 30 hour children
- Some nursery schools which previously had funding to offer specialist provision, and to retain staff with specialist expertise and skills, are losing that funding
- Cases where SEND funding is no longer sufficient to pay the necessary rates for specialist staff
- no longer having the guaranteed funding from year to year which enabled nursery schools to retain specialist staff on long-term contracts to keep their expertise
- greater numbers of children with SEND transferring to maintained nursery schools from other providers which cannot meet their needs
- relatively few local authorities are making use of the staff expertise in maintained nursery schools to support the rest of the sector in meeting the needs of children with SEND.

These early findings suggested there was cause for concern and that more research was needed to assess the impact of the recent changes - the introduction of the Disability Access Fund and SEND Inclusion Funds – on the ability for children with SEND to access the 2-year-old provision, the universal early education entitlement for 3- to 4-year-olds and the full amount of the 30 hours.

Richard Watts, Local Government Association and London Borough of Islington

Richard spoke about the demographic mix in Islington with some of the most deprived areas in the country alongside areas of great affluence. The borough has made extensive use of its maintained provision (including three maintained nursery schools, nursery classes in primary schools and council-run nursery units) and as a result of its high quality has achieved one of the lowest gaps in the country between the outcomes of FSM and non-FSM children. The LA reserves 30% of places for the most disadvantaged and children with SEND. Places are subsidised by offering paid-for places to wealthier families.

However, the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) was creating difficulties as it had resulted in a shift of £1million funding from the maintained sector to PVI's, despite the fact that the most vulnerable children were in maintained nurseries. He queried the logic of having the same funding rate for a child whether they were with a childminder or in a school nursery class.

He also noted that local authorities were facing a triple whammy of cuts to Early Intervention Funds, cuts to their overall budgets (a 70% cut since 2010), and the impact of the EYNFF. As a result, there were cuts to support staff at local authority

level. There was an imminent tipping point where the short-term cuts to early intervention funding would have a long-term impact of pushing up costs for local authorities. He was also concerned that the progress over the last 20 years in raising staff qualifications and quality in the early years was now in danger of being lost. The outcomes of the most vulnerable children would be affected as decisions were being made on the basis of cost, not value.

In response to questions he noted that the 30 hours was a bold commitment to support parents, but there was not enough money in the pot, and there was a risk of reducing early years provision to the lowest common denominator.

Tracy Brabin MP, Shadow Minister for Early Years

Tracy endorsed the important work done by maintained nursery schools as the beating heart of communities. She had visited Midland Road Nursery School and Children's Centre in Bradford and seen the excellent work with parents. She commented on the positive experience of seeing men working in the early years there. The shadow education team wanted to see quality at the heart of education eg the importance of graduates in settings. Bridging the social mobility gap was the first priority. Raising staff pay was important, and raising the status of early education – not just childcare, but education and a vital public service. Insufficient funding for the PVI's was leading to an impact on pay and CPD, and PVI's having to turn away children with SEND. She was concerned about the lack of specialist support for these children. Labour want to expand the 30 hours to be universal to ensure the social mobility gap doesn't widen.

In response to questions she stressed the importance of holistic, integrated approaches, eg with health, and the success of integrating nursery schools with children's centres. The timing of SEND funding was a concern as well as the amount – it was no good for funding only to be in place at the point where a child was about to leave nursery. She also stressed the importance of quality of education, not just focusing on parental employment, and noted that some children were dropping out of school nurseries because a stretched offer wasn't available. She confirmed that she would support the campaign for a viable long-term funding solution for maintained nursery schools.

Discussions

Vicky Ford MP stressed the importance SEND funding being available in good time in the early years, noting that the lack of financial flexibility when children were in nurseries for a short time compared to schools, and advocated that a separate pot of money was needed for the early years.

James Frith MP noted the high cost later on of not addressing issues early, for example if children with SEND who don't qualify for an EHC don't get support funding, this will create more costs later.

Update on funding

The Chair gave an update on discussions with ministers and officials. All were aware that the transitional funding having been agreed until 2019-20, the deadline

was approaching to confirm the arrangements after that point. In order to build the case for this, DfE were undertaking a feasibility study with a view to a fuller study of the costs and value of maintained nursery schools, which would inform the case being made to the Treasury. The timing of the formal announcement of this research was uncertain because of the change of minister.

Nadhim Zahawi MP, Minister for Early Years

Nadhim Zahawi confirmed that he was the new minister for Early Years. He endorsed the amazing work done by maintained nursery schools, and called for it to be scaled up and spread to other parts of the sector. He noted that closing the gap was a key priority. He also confirmed that DfE were undertaking a feasibility study for a longer study on cost and value which would report back by the summer, and that he would wish to share the outcomes at a future meeting of the APPG. He was keen to understand how nursery schools were faring with the issue of delivering the 15 hours versus the 30 hours, and would welcome the chance to come and visit maintained nursery schools, which were a great success story, and whose work was much valued. He was interested to know more about how maintained nursery schools working together in groups, eg within a local authority, impacted on their effectiveness.

The meeting closed at 4pm.