

EARLY YEARS REVIEW

Consultation with Parent Participation Forum (PPF)

Location: 1st Place Children and Parents' Centre, Chumleigh Gardens, Burgess Park. SE5 ORN.

Visit date: Tuesday 23 February, 12 noon - 12.30pm

Members present: Cllr Barrie Hargrove, CSE scrutiny sub committee chair.

PPF contact: Kate Miranda
Parent Participation and PPEL Coordinator
Children's Services Department
Sure Start Children's Centres Development Team

Officer support: Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny project manager

Introduction to Parent Participation Forum (PPF)

The aim of the group is to build on the work of local forums and partnerships where parents play an active part in decision-making and consultation, to create a Southwark-wide early years forum for parents. The Forum is developed and supported to feed into and contribute to the planning and development of services for children, young people and families. The Forum particularly relates to and responds to the priorities and targets originally set by the 0 – 6 sub partnership, and Children's Centres Development programme. Delegates from the PPF feed information to and from the Early Years Strategic Partnership. Members are trained as Parent Mentors and Advocates, Project Evaluators, and contribute to the development of information and materials for Southwark parents. The group meets monthly, chaired by Kate Miranda, Parent Participation and Parents as Partners in Early Learning Coordinator. Membership currently runs at 45 parent members, of who 90% are bi-lingual.

Questions asked:

1. How easy do you as parents & carers find it to take up the early education offer?
Are there any problems?
2. Can you find the right days and times at the moment and what times and days would work best for you?
3. Who do you think should get priority for full time / part-time day-care places?

Comments in response to the questions:

How easy do you as parents & carers find it to take up the early education offer? Are there any problems?

A number of parents commented that it is not very easy to get a place. One parent applied to 5 or 6 nurseries and only got one place.

Another parent who lives in Bermondsey applied a year ago and was not offered a place and there was no communication.

A parent from Peckham applied but nobody kept her updated and complained that she had to keep chasing and then found out only a week before.

Another parent said that they applied but received no communication and then received a call on the same day the place became available. There was concern that this was not enough notice but worry from parents that they might lose the place if they did not take it up immediately.

If a child is still in nappies it can be hard to find a place.

There was a conversation about waiting list information; however your number can go up as well as down so this can be confusing.

There was some confusion and difficulty about providing proof of identity. A parent had a relative not claiming benefits and with no tenancy who struggled to get a place for their child. It was unclear what their status was and other parents/outreach workers advised that a letter from the home office would secure a place.

Several parents were struggling using two or more providers and with traveling time between a nursery and a school. This can be stressful and also make it difficult to get to school on time.

One father used two nurseries; near the home and near the place of work.

Another parent was refused a place because they had taken their older child out of the nursery.

A parent had their child in full time under 3 daycare but when their child turned 3 the full time place ended

Other parents commented that nurseries don't seem to know themselves if you can go from part time to full time or if they can continue with their place.

A few parents welcomed home visits for 30 minutes to 1 hour and felt this was much better than trying to talk about a child's needs in 15 slots at school.

The move to primary school was worrying a lot of parents considerably. The single point of transfer was generally welcomed but there was concern that children would get less schooling and also there was some confusion about it.

A parent commented that her child was tri lingual and wanted setting to value this and feel confident that children could master several languages. Children's heritage language is as important as English.

Can you find the right days and times at the moment and what times and days would work best for you?

Parents commented that Schools had fixed times: 9 - 12 or 1 - 3 and that these times do not really help much; there is hardly enough time to get home before you have to turn around and come back.

More flexibility is wanted.

A parent commented that they find the times difficult. She worked full time for two long days on Monday and Tuesday.

Provision should fit in with part time working patterns.

5, 6 or even 9 hour slots were preferred.

However 15 hours is not enough time for many parents.

Parents understood that there were plans to deliver the FEE through child minder networks and welcomed this for both increasing flexibility and increasing the amount of provision.

Who do you think should get priority for full time / part-time day-care places?

Everybody should get this as good to start early.

Those on a low disposable income who are working or studying. This should be flexibly considered and not just for those people whose incomes are so low that they qualify for income support.

People who are looking for work should also get access.

Summary

The main concerns for parents are:

- Increasing flexibility to longer days (5,6 & 9 hours) so this can fit in with part time work and family life
- 15 hours is not enough time for some families
- Reducing the number of providers an individual family has to use
- Assistance with transitions and admission
- Day care should be prioritized for working and studying families with low disposable income and those looking for work
- More availability of Nursery provision
- Concerns about continuity of full time and part-time places when a child turns 3
- More and earlier communication about availability and allocation of both FEE places and full time and part time daycare places
- Early years provision should be available for all