

GENERAL ADMIN

Bryan Slater
Director of Education

SUBJECT: Norfolk Early Years Development and Childeare Plan

WORKING TITLE: Funding for 3 Year Olds

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DISTRIBUTION.	All providers included in the Early Years Development and Childeare Plan	FORMAT: Letter and attachment
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SUMMARY: The letter gives information on the number of funded 3 year olds for 200012001 and the action being taken to secure a better level of funding for Norfolk.

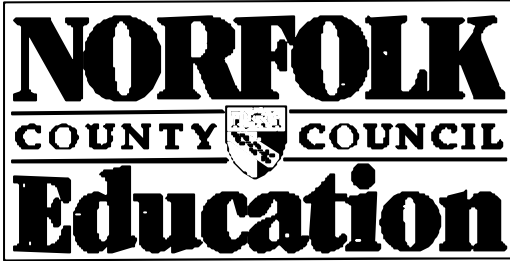
ACTION REQUIRED:
Providers may wish to consider what action they could take to support the letter sent by the Chair of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

DATE DOCUMENT OBSOLETE:

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS.

RELEVANT ASPECT OF EDUCATION DEVFLOPMENT PLAN OR OFSTED LEA ACTION PLAN:-

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Date: 29 October 1999

To: All Pre-School Providers

Dear Colleague

EARLY EDUCATION FUNDING FOR THREE YEAR OLDS

I am writing to inform you about the very low level of funding for Norfolk for the financial year 2000/2001. The Government has allocated Norfolk an additional £204,160. This amounts to funding for three terms for five sessions per week for 176 pupils. It will take the current participation rate for Three Year Olds up to 22.7% of the age group, i.e. to just under 2,000 pupils across the whole County.

I am hugely disappointed that the Government has not seen fit to provide more funding for Norfolk, particularly because we had proposed, together with the Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership, an imaginative scheme which would have helped pre-school providers secure their financial viability and thus their sustainability in communities across Norfolk. I know that many providers are struggling to make ends meet as a result of the recent introduction of the Minimum Wage Regulations and the holiday pay scheme in the European Working Time Directive. These two initiatives are welcome in regard to the extent to which they raise pay levels for Early Education and Childcare workers, but the implications for the finances of providers have been serious.

I think it is particularly damaging that this poor settlement arrives at a time when the Governments Committee of Inquiry into the future role of Playgroups has just reported. One of the major recommendations of the Committee was that base funding for providers is required in many areas of the country in order to secure the financial viability and the sustainability of groups so that children will have access to Early Education and Childcare at three and four.

I attach a copy of an open letter which has been prepared by Fran Harrold, Chair of Norfolk's Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership and which has been sent to Margaret Hodge, Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

I am sure you will join me in feeling angry that an opportunity to ensure adequate provision in Norfolk in the 21st century has been missed.

I suspect you may wish to make your own representations to support those made by Fran Harrold and perhaps also write to your M.P.

Yours sincerely

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Mrs Margaret Hodge
Secretary of State for Education and Employment
Department for Education and Employment
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Dear Mrs Hodge

ARRANGEMENTS FOR FUNDING EARLY EDUCATION PLACES
FOR THREE YEAR OLDS. 2000/2001

I refer to the recent letter from Alan Cranston, Early Years Division, concerning funding arrangements for Three Year Olds. We are deeply disappointed at the level of funding being provided by the Department for Education and Employment for the next financial year for Three Year Olds. This is particularly the case since the Three Year Old Annex to Norfolk's Early Years Development & Childcare Plan, which was fully approved by the Department, put forward an imaginative and, we believe, important proposal to help secure the viability and sustainability of Playgroups and other providers in Norfolk. We firmly believe that without some assured base funding for providers for 2000/2001, there will be a significant reduction in the number of Playgroups available and, as such, in the opportunities for Three and Four Year Olds to access early education and childcare provision.

Our disappointment is all the stronger because we are aware that the report of the Committee investigating the future role of Playgroups has made a similar recommendation to our proposal. The recent publicity by the Pre-School Learning Alliance on the number of closures of pre-schools over the last year, acknowledged by the DFEE as correct, is also telling.

Furthermore, we do believe that the current funding climate is a real impediment to Playgroups taking on a wider role and assisting us in expanding Childcare right across the County. We are very keen to meet the Government's objectives and to expand both Early Education and Childcare. This cannot be done without securing our existing provision.

I am also concerned at the amount of time which members of our Three Year Old Sub-Committee have put into drawing up their proposals, working out how any additional funds from the Government can be distributed and generally trying to promote an optimistic and positive atmosphere. I am sure you understand that members of the Sub-Committee are feeling that their efforts have been to no good purpose.

There are ways in which the Government could help to assist in this situation. Firstly, any move to bring together the existing separate funding streams for Three Year Olds, Four Year Olds, Childcare and sustainability would be helpful. Secondly, directing all these funds through the Local Authority and Early Years Development and

Childcare Partnership would help ensure that local knowledge and expertise is used to direct funds where they are most needed.

I must also raise our concern that Norfolk is about to miss out again. It is very unlikely that Norfolk will now achieve the national target level of 66% of Three Year Olds in funded provision. Some Authorities have well over 66% already and have been granted funding in 2000/2001 which takes them above this level.

The Government rightly promotes Equal Opportunities and Inclusion. This funding mechanism adversely prejudices the opportunities of Norfolk's Three Year Olds and their families. By April 2001 only 22% of our three year olds will have funding. I question the basis on which funding allocations have been calculated. The DETR Index of Deprivation is based on 1991 Census information, with some update in 1996. The Government's own report, Wealth of the Nation 2, published on Monday, puts Norfolk much higher up on the deprivation league table.

Finally, this is an open letter to you and I have copied it to M.P.s in Norfolk and to all providers of Early Education and Childcare. I strongly feel that it is important that providers across Norfolk realise that the messages I and colleagues have been shouting loud and clear have gone unheard. I do hope that it will be possible to arrange for a reconsideration of the funding available for Norfolk for 3 year olds in 2001/2002.

Yours sincerely

Fran Harrold
Chair of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership