

# Supporting On-Campus Childcare (SOC) Meeting

3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022

## Attendees:

Janice Bindon (Deputy Childcare Services Manager)

Fiona Dickinson (Parent)

Tamsin Foxwell (Parent)

Chris Young (HR Deputy Director: Safety and Employee Wellbeing Services)

## Apologies:

Pauline Young (Childcare Services Manager)

Meg Crossman (SU Community Officer)

Gabriella Caruana (Parent)

## 1. Matters Arising (February SOC)

### Staffing and Recruitment:

The approved (by the university) employment agencies do not appear to be able to source any nursery agency / casual workers at the moment. JB has contacted other local providers/ agencies to see if they have any qualified Nursery workers on their books but so far has not been able to source any alternatives. In addition, JB advised that Nursery is in discussion with the Bath Spa University Nursery managers; their facility is apparently going to shut and it may be possible to attract some casuals through that route. **JB to report back at next meeting.**

CY has followed up with Workforce Development to discuss possibility of engaging some apprentices to build additional staffing capacity. CY advised that the Director of HR has included a bid for funding for this initiative in this year's funding round. CY advised that it is likely that the results of this bid will be known in July.

### Technology

Emergency contacts. CY has advised that he has now added a "deeplink" to the emergency contacts page to enable all parents, including non-University employees to contact Nursery management via the "Teams" chat function.

### Parents Interactions with Nursery

CY has arranged with AV for Nursery to borrow the 360° camera to film the rooms. However, this has been delayed due to sickness absence in the University's AV department. **CY to follow up.**

Parent reps to identify potential FAQs. For publication on the Nursery web pages.

**Outstanding - Parent reps to provide ideas for questions / topics to CY.**

## Terms of Reference

ToR's for SOC to be published on the Nursery website. CY has completed this action – ToR's available at: <https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/supporting-on-campus-childcare-soc-group-terms-of-reference/>.

## Feedback from Parents

Individual Invoices. Parents are keen that they have individual invoices provided. Following the meeting, CY followed up with finance and advised that these had been sent out in the last week. FD advised that some parents did not feel that the invoices were clear and that there was confusion over refunds and payment schedules. It was agreed that an annual statement would be sent out in advance of the next academic year so that parents were clear on fees. It was noted that current fees are published here: <https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/westwood-nursery-fees-and-admissions/>

## 2. Childcare Services Manager's Report

### a. Recruitment

Recruitment of casuals continues to be challenging. Three casuals have recently come off the list, one to take up a role in Nursery, but others have taken up permanent employment elsewhere.

There was one applicant for the part-time role in the Nursery (2 days per week) but the candidate withdrew before attending interview. JB advised that there was a former member of staff who had approached the Nursery about a possible return in the summer, but this person is unlikely to be available before August.

CY advised that he has had a meeting with SU and the possibility of student employment in the nursery was discussed. **JB to liaise with Meg Crossman to discuss how this might be progressed.**

Nabeeha will be taking retirement in June (Friday June 10<sup>th</sup>). Nabeeha has been employed at Westwood for 14 years. The group wished her well on her retirement.

### b. Food Hygiene

The Local Authority awarded the Nursery 4 out of 5 for food hygiene. This was principally due to a hole in the kitchen wall (caused by a door handle). There were also some issues with the standard of tiling within that area. **CY has arranged for Estates to carry out repair as required by the report.**

In addition, it was noted that the inspector had suggested that the Nursery updates its food safety documentation. **PY to liaise with Cheryl Herbert (ahs food safety manager) to address this issue.**

## 3. Food provision.

A trial is currently in progress with bath Spa to provide food and snacks to the Nursery. Feedback to date is that the trial is going well. The portion sizes appear generous, and the children appear to enjoy the meals. It was noted that there is very little waste. JB advised

that there were some initial tweaks needed -notably, that choice needed to be more limited than initially had been the case.

FB asked whether it would be possible, in line with the University's net zero strategy, to reduce the number of days when meat is served. **CY to provide this feedback to Bath Spa at follow up meeting to the trial.**

It was noted that the service requires the Nursery to clean the crockery that the food is delivered in, and that this can be quite time-consuming. It was suggested that the addition of a shower spray attachment to the kitchen sink might help. **CY to investigate with Estates.**

#### **4. Finances Update**

The University has adopted the "Voluntary Living Wage" and this will apply to all Nursery Nurers and Nursery assistants in Grades 2 and 3. There will also be some uplifts in pay for staff in Grade 4. Whilst this is seen as a welcome and progressive move, there will be a significant impact on the Nursery finances going forwards (as most employees will be receiving this raise and this will also be factored into casual pay rates) with the pay bill increasing by circa £56k.

In addition, on costs associated with energy supplies, food provision and general inflation for equipment are likely to increase.

A rise in fees (which have been held at current levels since 2019) is likely in the coming year. However, bids have been made for additional funding from the University to offset rises in operational costs. Initial feedback from Finance has been positive and the expectation is that costs associated with the VLW may be absorbed by the University for at least the coming financial year.

Costs are currently being worked through and any proposed rise in fees will be communicated to parents when this is available (but in any case, with the 2 months' notice of any rise as is required under the contract).

CY advised that parents making use of the Salary Sacrifice arrangement will make considerable savings compared to payments made net of tax. When new fees are calculated, fee schedules will advertise the level of saving available through this scheme to try to encourage as much uptake as possible.

#### **5. Feedback from parents**

Parents enjoyed the opportunity to help out with DIY and maintenance of the Forest School. It was noted that there were some concerns that the play area (and some of the associated play equipment) had been damaged, perhaps by people unaware that it is a children's play area. The possibility of getting some signs installed to advise people that this is the Nursery's "Forest School" was discussed. **CY to approach Estates to ask if signs can be installed.**

Parents have asked if there could be more opportunities to get involved. The forthcoming Easter Egg Hunt was identified as something parents could potentially provide support with. **JB to discuss with room leaders.**

Concerns were raised about the number of trees that have been cut back around Forest School. CY advised that there has been significant work around campus to address trees in poor condition including a number that had “Ash Dieback”. **CY to ask Estates if they could provide notice of trees around Forest School that require cutting back so that parents are aware.**

**Date of Next Meeting:**

**2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022 @ 10:30 a.m.**

**Location: TBC**