

Committee Network Meeting

Southampton Voluntary Services

Monday 18th November 2019

9.30 - 11.30am

Attendees

Sticky Fingers Pre-school

Harefield Pre-school

Kanes Hill Pre-school

Riverside Pre-school

Woolston Pre-school

Regents Park Pre-school

Bitterne Community Pre-school

Bitterne Manor Pre-school

Brambles Pre-school

Little Berries Pre-school

Belinda – SCC

Jo – SVS

Introduction

Attendees introduced themselves and were reminded that specific information about particular groups or situations outlined here today are confidential to those present although the general information can be shared with other committee members.

Belinda started with an update on Ofsted's expectations of the role of Committees in supporting quality delivery and their focus on Committees understanding of their roles and responsibilities. A recent Ofsted inspection following near miss incident of a child nearly 'escaping' which had not been reported had triggered an Ofsted inspection where one of the recommendations was that the committee need to be clear about their roles and responsibilities.

Previous network sessions have covered committee roles and responsibilities and there are copies of the notes on the Southampton Information Directory for those who weren't present. You can find all previous notes, power points etc here

<https://sid.southampton.gov.uk/kb5/southampton/directory/family.page?familychannel=9-14-8>

Jo and Belinda can offer free basic roles and responsibilities training for whole committees or repeat the session for all groups if there is sufficient demand for this. Please let Belinda know if your committee is interested in taking up this training.

Performance Management

Belinda introduced Clare from Riverside Pre-school, who undertakes some of the HR function for Riverside. Clare helped Belinda and Jo pull together the presentation and information pack which is being shared today. Belinda outlined the slides and the continuous approach to performance management of all staff and volunteers which ties into delivery of the pre-schools overall aims and objectives and the delivery of quality child care meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

Small group discussion on 3 questions identified a number of issues and practical ideas were shared to help integrate performance management within the operational activity of the settings.

Some of the key issues identified were –

- The weaknesses in some Committees arising from ‘churn’ with committee members (exacerbated by 30 hours provision which means more parents are working and less likely to be committee members) and their lack of effective management of staff or clarity about their role.
- The balance of power, control and information between managers and committees – clarifying mutual expectations. The balance in roles and mutual confidence/trust between both parts so that managers can deal with operational issues confidently and committees can manage the manager effectively and oversee governance/strategic direction without getting too involved in operational issues.
- The isolation sometimes felt by managers when caught between dealing with staff issues and not getting clear direction or support from committees including some lack of confidence in sharing their personal issues with committee members who they do not know.
- Lack of induction, lack of handover or clear information to new committee members, lack of knowledge about other committee members and their skills or time availability.
- Lack of clear processes/policies for conducting supervision and appraisal/joint progress reviews with staff.
- Lack of formal reporting processes of key themes or issues from staff supervision to committee to help inform their strategic overview and decision making.

Some ideas shared were –

- ✓ Supervisions to take place at least termly, preferably half termly, for all including the manager with a supervision agreement of framework adopted to clarify what is to be covered, how it is reported onwards for action on any issues and what remains confidential between supervisor and supervisee.
- ✓ The Chair or a designated committee member to provide supervision to the manager – including their own work life balance and mental wellbeing as well as personal and professional development.
- ✓ Use a supervision checklist to ensure broad areas covered for all staff and volunteers and keep bullet point actions so both have a record of what was covered and to be actioned.
- ✓ Supervision requires advance preparation by both parties if it is to be productive and needs to have time allocated and happen in an appropriate place – this needs to be planned into rotas and budgets if necessary, to enable it to happen.
- ✓ Managers and chairs need to agree an effective way of staying in touch on a regular basis which respects both managers and volunteer committee member's needs for a work/life balance – suggestions included a weekly meeting or a Friday update email

from manager to their chair with expectation Chair would respond in the following week.

- ✓ Doodle poll is a free tool to use for finding dates/times for getting committees together and some have closed group social media accounts to help discuss issues when they can meet together easily.
- ✓ Managers to involve other management/deputies in supervision with other staff to spread workload and also allow skill development. Where other staff are reluctant to take this on maybe shadowing manager in doing some will help and having a common framework will build in mutual understanding and acceptance over time. Needs mechanism to feedback on any key issues or actions needed to the manager and committee.
- ✓ If possible, committee members to sit in on supervisions or annual appraisal/joint progress reviews with the staff so they hear first-hand what is emerging – this can also be helpful when they are difficult conversations needed and there needs to be back up for the manager.
- ✓ Committees could send staff a staff survey similar to their parent's survey – possibly use Survey Monkey free package which is an online anonymous survey so staff feel confident they can't be identified.
- ✓ Acknowledge that reviewing performance and appraisal can be stressful for both parties – particularly where there are difficult conversations to be had about issues. Offering training or having practice runs using scenarios (or role plays though this often seems more daunting than discussing a case study or scenario) can help people prepare their approach before having to deal with real life situations.
- ✓ ACAS produce good guides on these issues, alongside the Early Years Alliance information and other bits provided in the pack which can be adapted to meet particular settings requirements.
- ✓ This can be a useful discussion between committees and managers to explore what works best for them.

Next Meeting

Spring term: date and time to be confirmed.