

Committee Network Meeting

at Southampton Voluntary Services

Mon 26th March 2018

10 - 11.30am and

7- 8.30 pm

MORNING SESSION

Issues identified as being of interest or concern currently to groups present from small group discussions and some info/ offers to help with these. Belinda Cone (SCC EY team) and Jo Ash (SVS) will use these topics as basis for planning future termly network meetings and one off trainings. The ticks under the bullets are resources or helpful suggestions identified during discussions with updates where information could not be given during the meeting.

Policies

- Missing ones to be developed eg Behaviour and exclusions
 - Updating existing ones
 - 'Snow days' – how to respond at short notice to closure decision, notify Ofsted, deal with funding implications etc
- ✓ PLA produce a suite of policies which you can download adapt or adopt

Fundraising

- ideas
 - how to involve parents
- ✓ SVS website has info on ideas for fundraising:
<https://www.southamptonvs.org.uk/group-support/policies-procedures-good-practice-factsheets/>

New committee members

- notifications to Ofsted -EY2/3 requirements
 - DBS checks
 - Induction
- ✓ Belinda Cone offered to check the process for EY2/3 and update as there appear to be different guidance being given. It was suggested that any telephone notifications are followed up with an email to confirm and ensure groups have a record trail.

Response from Ofsted: We do still use EY3s however the contact centre also accept the information via call or email. I would say EY3s are the preferred option but it is not a mandatory form (just mandatory that Ofsted gets the information).

Budgeting and financial forecasting

- Predicting income and dealing with difficult decisions
- 30 hours rules and can deposits or start up fees be charged

- Problems with coding for unique numbers and uncertainty for parents and groups about what is covered or not
- Capping numbers
- ✓ Group reported courses provided by SVS on basic accounts and budgeting had been very useful – SVS indicated they could be rearranged if there is sufficient take up for places
- ✓ Belinda will seek clarification from Andy EY finance support about 30 hours funding rules

There is a new Department of Education publication: Early Education and Childcare: statutory guidance for local authorities March 2018 which outlines the criteria and good practice for the free entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 year olds (15 hours and 30 hours). You can download the publication here

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/692348/Early_education_and_childcare_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

GDPR

- Rules and implementation

Role of Chair and Committees

- Management responsibilities and how to exercise these especially if new to the role
- Provide a welcome pack and checklist of key documents you need to see and be familiar with
- Need roles and responsibilities training
- ✓ SVS can provide roles and responsibilities training either for several groups or to whole committees if that is more helpful.
- ✓ Groups offered to share their induction packs and checklists, *if you would like a copy please email Belinda: Belinda.cone@southampton.gov.uk*

HR and staffing

- Recruiting staff – *Workforce Development offer Safer Recruitment training, the next one 19th June 2018, you can find further information here*
<http://sid.southampton.gov.uk/kb5/southampton/directory/advice.page?id=qCG0yLDfLyg>
- Team building and managing performance

License agreements for use of premises

- Schools and academies
- Other community buildings
- Where transfers to academies or new organisations taking over premises (WICT) there is concern about standard license agreements, who has ultimate responsibility and also whether charges are going to be raised so the groups become unsustainable. There needs to be a consistent approach from SCC over this where possible.

If you have any concerns regarding this please contact Darrin Hunter in the Early Years Childcare Team Darrin.hunter@southampton.gov.uk and copy Belinda in.

SVS membership is open to all voluntary groups free of charge and will give access to regular information about training, governance issues and events for the voluntary sector. Members can access support on any matters about running voluntary organisations and advertise volunteering opportunities and events via SVS. See SVS website www.southamptonvs.org.uk or email Jo on j.ash@southamptonvs.org.uk

EVENING SESSION

As this was a smaller group than the morning session the whole group shared together issues, challenges and activities undertaken during the past term which prompted an array of ideas and suggestions based on shared experiences. Some were similar to those raised in the morning session whilst other were specific to the discussion in the evening session and covered the following topics –

Recruitment / staffing

- Employee handbooks updates
 - Contracts of employment updates to meet changed requirements
 - Safe recruitment practices – including follow up of references for at least 5 years
 - Qualifications – portability and equivalence for certificates obtained overseas
 - Team dynamics can be difficult and staff can become hard to manage / direct unless very clear about roles and expectations. Role of committee and lead practitioner is key in getting this right
- ✓ Follow Department of Education list of which qualifications count <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder> If the qualification is from another country then you will need to check with NARIC <https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/individuals/compare%20qualifications/default.aspx>
 - ✓ Check eligibility to work in UK status too <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/acceptable-right-to-work-documents-an-employers-guide>
 - ✓ PLA Model staff handbook is very comprehensive and updates are coming for GDPR compliance shortly

Safeguarding

- Safe recruitment
- Reporting concerns

Policies

- PLA updatable models very useful and they now highlight changes in red to help track changes – committee members should be aware as well as lead practitioners

Finance, budgets and financial planning

- Discussed the role and responsibilities of the Committee Treasurer alongside that of any paid bookkeeper/ administrator role – and need for treasurer to be kept fully informed by the bookkeeper and to have access to all records on a shared basis.
- Induction / records hand over needs to be in place when treasurer takes on role and training made available when possible. SVS has previously offered this but cancelled recent session due to lack of take up – can re-arrange if there is enough demand
- Finance systems – online versus paper based. An experienced bookkeeper in the group felt that use of spreadsheets was essential for accurate and timely record

keeping, with robust system for reporting and authorising expenditure giving proper protection for her and the committee in terms of accountability and forward planning / budgeting without which decisions can't be taken properly. Different options for financial recording were discussed including Excel spreadsheets, SAGE and SAGE 50 for payroll, QUIKBOOKS , HCC preschool spread sheets and use of payroll bureau or auditors to do wages

- Use of multiple bank accounts versus consolidated accounts and single current / deposit accounts with sperate account lines in the spreadsheets
- Different fundraising ideas and having separate account for parents fundraising activities which are clearly reported on so parents can see what the money is being used for
- Holding returnable deposits to secure paid places – should these be in a separate account?

Deposits and registration fees: In line with the new guidance for Local Authorities regarding funding it clearly states that a registration fee should not be used. However a deposit to secure a funded place can be used although the deposit needs to be refunded within a reasonable time after the child has started. This information should be available to parents through pre-school policy or induction pack. You can find the new guidance here https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/692348/Early_education_and_childcare_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

- Hours required for paid book keeping function in groups – partly depends on efficiency and on line basis of admin and finance system in place and experience of the bookkeeper but examples were given of between 7hrs up to 20 hours per week. The 7 hrs covered monthly payroll preparation with weekly timesheet checking, general finance and record keeping and some admin.
- Good practice suggestions included
 - ✓ having a finance protocol and set of written guidelines to the finance systems and overall financial position with always having at least 2 people who understand the recording and reporting in order to cover in the event of sickness or other absence, if possible best to do when things run well rather than when problems occur. SVS can provide some resources to follow to help with this and PLA info also good
 - ✓ always having two signatories for authorisation and signing cheques / on line banking,
 - ✓ two people counting and receipting cash handling
 - ✓ keeping finance records on site – will need to link with GDPR compliance soon
 - ✓ bank statement go to Chair (or treasurers) home first and are reviewed, signed and dated before being passed to the bookkeeper
 - ✓ preparing a finance report for every Committee meeting with review of 1/4ly spend and budget projections
 - ✓ reserves – holding 3 months running costs in reserves and being absolutely clear about restricted / designated funds
 - ✓ having weekly time sheets for staff which are checked to pick up discrepancies or variations quickly before processing monthly payroll
 - ✓ SVS has info on fundraising ideas on its website and can arrange specific finance training as well as general trustee roles and responsibilities training either for several groups or for a particular committee

Parental involvement

- On Committees – often pressured to join without understanding role / responsibility when closure is threatened if no one takes it on
- Need to be clear what the Constitution says about who can be on the Committee for how long, what proportion must be current parents?
- Often hard to involve parents especially when they work FT or have English as a 2nd language – need to find friendly ways to draw them in
- In fundraising – need to be clear links to committee but can help share the load and increase involvement if a parent fundraising group deals with the organisation of specific activities

Constitutions

- All committee members should be familiar with the constitution as the governing document for the organisation and it should be reviewed periodically to ensure it is fit for purpose and covers current activities.
- The old PLA 2011 version is used by many which is an unincorporated association model.
- The new CIO incorporated version is now the PLA model - organisations can shift across by following the Charity Commission guidelines. SVS can help explain the different structures and the pros and cons as well as trustee liabilities linked to each
- Key is to get all Committee members to complete and return all the necessary paperwork / on line logins

Committees

- Handbook – PLA version seems now to be based on the CIO structure (Charitable Incorporated Organisation which is a new legal structure for charities)
- Educare courses – can be accessed by Committees through log in – PLA based online and useful
- Handover to new members is needed as is an induction by outgoing Committee and with the lead practitioner / key finance and admin staff
- Rotation of retirement of Committee members on thirds basis was discussed to avoid all standing down at the same time – check what the constitution allows you to do.
- Could look to advertise for external volunteers from the local community to join in order to bring skills or stability given there is an inevitable degree of churn with parents moving on as their children grow up. SVS can help write role descriptions and advertise opportunities on its website or perhaps there are grandparents or wider family member who might help alongside groups ex parents. Check what the constitution permits you to do
- Committee role as manager of staff and lead practitioner can be tricky as can performance management – need to have clear boundaries, roles and expectations
- Committee roles in relation to Ofsted responsibilities and inspections were discussed. It was suggested using the Quality Audit work book to understand Ofsted requirements and review what needs to be done in order to maintain and improve standards. Lead practitioners / staff team could present their self-assessment and suggestions for improvements to the committee so that an agree action plan can be developed towards improving ratings and this can be used by the Committee to both enthuse / motivate staff as well as to monitor and measure individual staff and group performance over time which give the Committee a management and oversight tool that is mutual understood by them and their staff