

Thank you chair, I am Peter Hindle, I was both the first and last Chair of the Early Years Block.

I want to say a few words about the consultation, which was not easy to understand, so I thought I would break it down into what the sector was hearing and the consequences that are evident in the feedback.

Timing

Officers had 10-16 weeks to consult representatives in a meaningful way.

No such consultation took place over despite agreeing to do so.

In fact, the EY block members were given a “fait accompli” at their meeting on 25th September, where they were told the consultation was going out to the sector that afternoon!

In the Forum documents today, the truth is hidden in 450 plus pages. The sector provided feedback on the proposal before the consultation was created.

No attempt was made to engage that feedback.

Rushed results came out yesterday.

The process has shown lack of respect to the EY Chair and representatives

Reality

The consultation hides the truth about the proposed removal of £6m of funding from front line services and its impact on children.

The confusion about where the money would go. At the full £6m, half would go improving services to the sector and half to the High Needs Block. Nowhere does it clearly state that £3m will go to High Needs.

The High Needs Model is broken everyone knows that. I am sure you all agree, it's a very sad situation, given the amazing work, the dedicated High Needs Staff do in such difficult circumstances.

EY did not cause High Needs to be broken. Quality early years intervention is part of the solution.

As for the improving services to the sector, has anyone even thought to ask the sector if they want what's on offer or were they just a random list of things to justify taking the money? Feedback suggests “padding out” the Quality Assurance Team is not wanted.

The consultation offers poorly referenced and misleading research which supports the case for not taking funds from EY.

The consultation suggests the sector has been enriched with the 5.5% increase funding from government.

The authors failed to note the 9.7% increase in staff costs due to NMW and NI changes. It fails to note the 3.5% inflation rate. Together settings will have increased costs of 8.5%. Or a net loss of 3%. Now LCC seeks to double that to 6%. This is far more than many settings make.

EY is an easy, soft target.

Not acknowledging “reality” shows lack of understanding of EY sector

Impact

1. This is not a one off £6m. It is £6m every year from now on, index linked
2. If you take £6m a year out of the sector, it must come from somewhere every year
3. That is 400,000 hours taken from front-line care - every year
4. 205 early years educators permanently removed from front-line care
5. Currently settings ensure they do not go over ratios. Now settings will have to prioritise not going under ratios. Meaning stopping or limiting the SEND children
6. There will be even less opportunity to attend training
7. Many settings would prefer to buy in their own quality training and indeed do so. Why are they being asked to pay twice?
8. Settings in deprived areas will suffer most as they tend to be closer to 100% funded by Government and have no chance of covering any losses.

Not acknowledging “impact” in the consultation shows disrespect for the children

Consequence

1. Front line care will be reduced, 205 EY educators removed
2. Quality standards will fall from 95% good or outstanding
3. OFSTED focus on the SEND children and will note that the one-to-one care is not being provided, down-grades will be more frequent
4. And still settings will not have time to attend this extra “term time only” training and support that is proposed.
5. Most settings do not make 3% or 6% surplus, they will go under
6. Maintained settings will have the same issue. So LCC will have to fund or close them.
7. Is it not time that we support and value the work of the Early Years providers and their workforce?"

This proposal shows a disrespect for the first 1,000 days of a child’s life

Kids

1. Did consultation consider all the children in EY settings in Lancashire?
2. Reduced contact time with staff
3. Reduced resources to play with
4. Reduced opening hours, so less access to great care and learning
5. Less trained staff, so lower quality engagement

6. Lower staff pay, higher churn, so less continuity
7. Reduced early identification and intervention
8. More challenging children heading for primary school.

This proposal shows disrespect and indifference to the children in our care

So What?

1. Lancashire has always argued that due to the diversity in the county, and the low level of funding received and the desire to ensure every child has the best start in life, it should pass through all the funding from the NFF
2. An open and honest discussion about what EY sector needs and how it could be funded would be a good start.
3. EY reps suggested solutions, but they were ignored
4. Find other ways to fund High Needs
5. The Schools Forum has always voted for what is best for the children not what is best for the accountants
6. EY representatives voted 100% against this proposal
7. Those that received the consultation and understood it, voted 78% against change
8. Vote for retention of front-line staff because that is good for the children
9. Vote for common sense

Time to show respect for the children, EY sector and its educators

Thank you.