



Western Cape Early Childhood Development Community of Practice

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS 7 May 2020

Virtual Meeting



SETTING THE SCENE

The COVID-19 Pandemic has had an adverse effect on the ECD sector. ECD practitioners, centre support staff, learners and their surrounding communities have been left in a vulnerable state. This has been exasperated by the absence of clarity on the reopening of centres by government. In response to this hard-hitting reality, the Western Cape ECD CoP convened via the online application, Zoom on 6 May with the intention to check-in on CoP members and to explore how the sector will navigate the re-opening of centres.

The CoP was attended by NGOs and ECD centre practitioners. The online format of the meeting welcomed attendees from both Western Cape and Gauteng. Carol van Rhee, Western Cape CoP Champion facilitated the discussion.

After a round of introductions members were asked to share how they have been coping during the COVID-19 national lockdown. Comments amongst members, echoed a dire concern on the well-being of ECD programme participants, practitioners and support staff who are left without an income and food. As well as anxiety on uncertainties surrounding the reopening of ECD centres.



MAPPING OF NEEDS, SUPPORT AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS EMERGING DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN TO DATE.

During the lockdown, food security and the mobilisation of educational resources has been the main focus of organisations working in the ECD sector. Carol called on members to look at possible areas of need and possible solutions.

1. Distribution of food and resources

There is a great need for a coordination of resources and services. The lack of coordination has led to challenges in the mapping of services related to ECD.

- Pam Picken (Do More Foundation) has been working in the Worcester area and mentioned the lack of coordination on the distribution of food parcels in the Western Cape. Pam further suggested the municipalities should be playing a coordinating role in the distribution of food right down to the ward level. Coordination has worked well in in St Francis bay area as an example where a leader is assigned per block in each area to coordinate the delivery of a food parcel.
- Khaathima Ebrahim (Mikulu Trust) mentioned C19 Peoples Coalition have produced a document that provides guidance on how communities should lean coordinate activities such as the distribution of food parcels. were fast in their coordination. The document has been shared along with these meeting highlights.
- Carol mentioned the Community Action Network (CAN) groups that have also been mapping and coordinating organisations. They have tools such as ‘airtables’ that help them capture geographical activities as an exmample. There is much to learn from their speed, efficiency and tools.
- An issue pertaining to expired parcels that had possibly gone bad has come up and it has been suggested that going forward, organisations coordination food parcels will have to get government approval. This could add unnecessary delays.
- The role of the Department of Social Development in the distribution of food parcels was an area of concern as many NGOs have been over looked in the distribution of food parcels by DSD.
- Bruce raised a question concerning entry of NGOs into schools once they were opened. It had been said that principals would have to issue a permit of the NGO was offering an essential service but there was no definite directive on this matter.
- Carol Van Rhede (ELRU) commented that there are many streams of food being distributed and that government has attempted to ‘Register’ food parcel distribution to allow for better coordination.

A survey has been produced to this effect so that CoP members and others in the sector can provide information of what they are busy with so we can map and share urgent needs, mitigation strategies and actions towards problem solving. You can access the to the survey link [here](#).

2. Reopening of Centres

- **DSD** has sent out a communique that ECD centres should not open under level 4 and it still remains unclear as to which level ECD centre can reopen.
- The DSD has allowed centres to reopen, strictly for the purpose of distributing food. Karen Bule confirmed that this has been the case in the Helderberg area.
- ECD practitioners and support staff are not receiving salaries during this time and this remains at the uppermost of concerns for the Western Cape CoP.
- Unregistered centres are struggling to get food parcels.
- There is a call for centres to reopen , as a support body for parents that have returned to work
- Around the discussion on safety measures and protocol on the reopening, members offered to share resources, on hygiene protocols for ECD.

Working Groups

Thandeka Rantsi (BRIDGE) shared news from the National ECD CoP and their aim to form a working group to come up with recommendations for government on the reopening of ECD centres and what needs to be considered when centres re-open. There is no plan at the moment from Department of Social Development and Department of Basic Education that pertains to ECD.

The working group has started drafting policies and protocols to keep everyone safe in centres. With the large number of people going back to work parents are requesting the reopening of ECD centres. The aim is to provide recommendations on areas such as unregistered centres, sanitisation, food, funding and supporting rural ECD centres that may not have resources to implement hygiene standards. To draw up these recommendations BRIDGE needs to have two or three people from the Western Cape CoP to form part of the sub-committee. It is an opportunity to hear the views of those in the Western Cape regarding these issues.

Karen Bufe from Masikhule volunteered to join the working group.

CoP members agreed that the absence of directive from government presents an opportunity for the ECD sector to provide recommendations on how to best navigate the re-opening of ECD centres. In addition, this can also be an opportunity for ECD centres to reframe their value, it can be seen as a valuable coordinating and communication entity between government and parents.

Future topic suggestion

Khathima Ebrahim- What would ECD look like in the future, given that COVID will be around for long time.

Way-forward

- CoP members suggested that a follow-up meeting should be held with a narrower agenda.
- A survey will be sent to CoP members to collate what is happening on the ground with regards to support and needs.
- WC ECD CoP meetings to be held every week every Thursday from 13h30
- Resources from CoP members will be collated and distributed by BRIDGE

Western Cape ECD CoP register 7 May 2020

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