

MPUMALANGA ECD COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MEETING: OVERVIEW

Date: 24-06-2021

1. PRESENTATIONS

1	Title	Mpumalanga Child Attendance Survey
	Presenter	Thandeka Rantsi
	Organisation	BRIDGE
	Key Theme	A survey where ECD Managers/practitioners could respond to inform us about what they are observing on the ground when it comes to children attending ECD programmes. The survey garnered 67 responses.
2	Title	Function Shift
	Presenter	Dr Pat Moodley
	Organisation	Mpumalanga Department of Education
	Key Theme	Update on the Function Shift

All presentations can be accessed through the links given in the Meeting Highlights.

2. MAIN DISCUSSION POINTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Number of participants: 39

Presentations:

- People reported that ECD centres are re-opening but the child attendance was low – children are coming back but very slowly. There were discussions about why this could possibly be happening and as a CoP resolved to run a survey. The results of this survey were presented and discussed with participants.
- An update on the function shift providing information on the proposed changes, progress and recommendations.

Issues/Concerns:

- Participants mostly experienced the same issues found in the survey regarding poor child attendance. The main issues reported include:
 - the bi-weekly schedule for attending school-parents do not send the younger ones to ECD programmes if the older children are not attending school-
 - the general fear of Covid-19 and social distancing requirements making it so that less children can attend
 - financial constraints
- Participants faced various technical challenges as well as a general lack of communication when trying to access the ECD stimulus package which is desperately needed during this time
- The Function Shift process also requires that people are provided with more information and communication going forward pertaining to issues of registration, vaccination and so forth

CoP Activities/ Reflections

- A way forward expressed at the intersectoral forum meeting is that the department has applied for a roll-over of the unused funds and is still waiting for approval from National Treasury. Payment will be done as soon as approval is granted.



EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT

- There needs to be a FAQ on how the registration process will take place and what documentation is going to be used amongst other things. We need to indicate that all the centres that are registered with DSD will automatically be registered with DBE. There will be a migration of the system from DSD to DBE EMIS system.

Mpumalanga Early Childhood Development Community of Practice Meeting Highlights 24 June 2021

Virtual meeting

WELCOME AND CHECK-IN

Thulile Makofane, ECD Programme Director at Penreach welcomed municipal officials, civil society, government representatives and ECD practitioners and thanked members for their time.

This CoP meeting discussed:

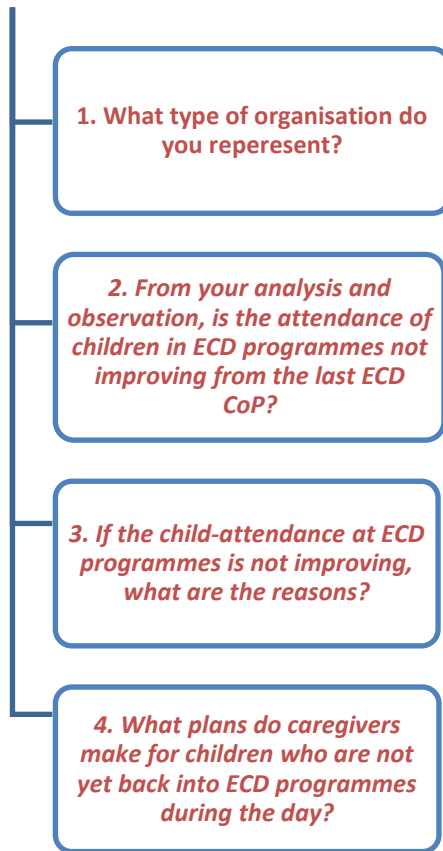
- Results of a Child Attendance survey that aimed to understand if children are coming back to ECD programmes or not
- Discussions on the results of the survey to understand the implications for us as the MP ECD CoP
- Group discussions on financial constraints in the context of the ECD stimulus package-what are the challenges and opportunities?
- An update on the Function Shift

The CoP is reminded of BRIDGE's knowledge management role. All meetings, presentations and discussions are captured and shared on BRIDGE's Knowledge Hub, as are any other specific knowledge products relevant to ECD. [Here](#) is the link to this.

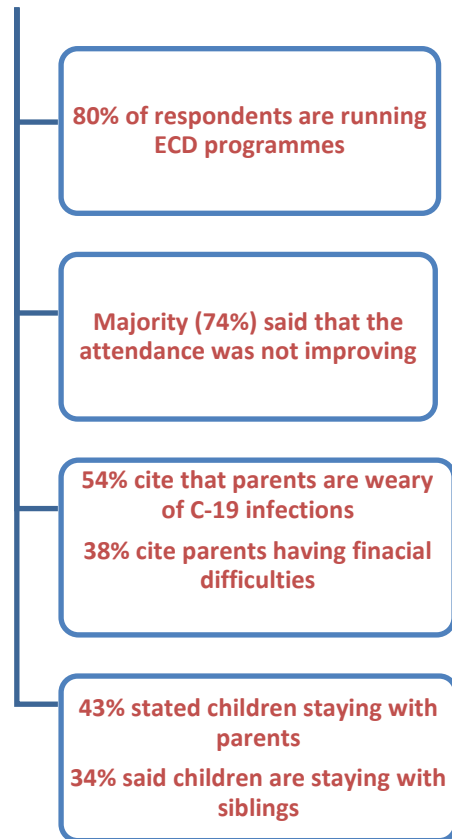
MPUMALANGA CHILD ATTENDANCE SURVEY

In the last Mpumalanga ECD CoP, people reported that ECD centres are re-opening but the child attendance was very low – children are coming back but very slowly. There were discussions about why this could possibly be happening and as a CoP decided that we needed to look into it more. We resolved to run a survey where ECD Managers/practitioners could respond to inform us about what they are observing on the ground when it comes to children attending ECD programmes. The survey garnered 67 responses. Thandeka took us through the questions and responses:

Survey Questions



Survey responses



Question 5 “What support do the ECD sites need to increase child attendance to the programmes?” generated responses indicating that ECD programmes are in dire need of **financial and nutritional support**.

Support mentioned	No of times support mentioned
Close fly-by-nights	1
Develop ECD sites	2
Financial support	11
Kitchen (Infrastructure support)	1
Nutritional support	19
Parents meeting	3
PPEs	8
Practitioner training	3
Recruitment of children	5
Staff	2
Subsidy	2
Toys and equipment	4
Transport	1

- 65 respondents:
- Financial and nutritional support are key
- PPEs still appear to be a need for support

The full presentation of the findings can be found [here](#).

Comments on experiences of CoP members in relation to survey

Thandeka asked CoP members if they could attest to the results from the presentations-were they experiencing these or not? - Participant responses were as follows:

Grace: C-19 has worsened condition of ECD programmes as we now have to source more PPEs, food is scarce and caregivers are not comfortable to send children to the ECD centres

Bususiwe: the other reason children do not come is the timetable the schools use, if siblings stay home due to the bi-weekly schedule, the small children are not sent to ECD programmes

Solly: most of the parents still struggle to see the importance of ECD and that is why parents do not bring children to ECD programmes

Msesi: challenges of children not attending ECD programmes have been there prior to C-19 however, the decrease worsened by C-19 is also due to social distancing which limits the number of children

Sinah: at times, practitioners do not handle children with care and parents do not send the children back-there was disagreement to this statement as it was felt that this would mean that children were being treated differently before C-19



GROUP SESSIONS:

CoP members were sent into breakout rooms and discussed the following:

- *Which programmes/what kind of programmes are children being transferred to?*
- *What other avenues are there to provide children with nutrition?*
- *What support is available to children who are not coming back to ECD programmes and how do we reach these children?*
- *What can we do to draw children back into ECD programmes?*

Feedback from Groups

Group 1: If children are not at ECD centres, there is no other place where they can be monitored. Nutrition projects should be established in order to maintain the budget in terms of nutrition. It was suggested that local entrepreneurs in their community are approached to donate so that the young ones are not left behind. Some children do attend after-care centres as these centres can look after them and are registered as an NPOs and therefore no fees are expected. They report back to the local councillors and the local chief. There are home-visits for children where toys are brought along and books are read to them so that they are stimulated. There is also a radio slot that informs parents and centre managers about what can be done to stimulate children.

Group 2: Some of the challenges they are faced with due to less children attending the ECD centres are that they are unable to pay the staff because parents cannot afford to pay school fees and with that comes the challenge of buying food. Some staff members are also not paid at all. Because of Covid-19, parents have a fear of sending their children to the ECD centres however; children are much safer at ECD centres because the Covid-19 regulations are followed more strictly than when they are at home as they are not properly supervised at home. Some people indicated that there are home visits that are being done and these should be encouraged more because through these visits they are able to quell parents' fears about sending their children back to ECD centres. Other programmes include toy libraries, home visits and the radio slot mentioned above.

Group 3: Regarding nutrition, there is a lot of conflicting realities as reported by the group. Firstly, parents have to contribute but they can hardly pay fees consistently. Participants made a strong assertion that without DSD helping ECD programmes with the nutrition aspect, it becomes a very compromising situation for ECD practitioners – “we want to address DSD to inform them of the sacrifices that practitioners make and how they could assist practitioners in a sustainable way.” Perhaps businesses should be approached to assist as well.



ECD STIMULUS PACKAGE

The provincial intersectoral committee discussed the status of the ECD Stimulus Package. DSD sited challenges such as the applications being done online hence the province finds it difficult to access information. There was also an inability to assist districts with information with regards to who has been approved and also difficulties in processing payments for unfunded and unregistered ECD programmes. They couldn't reach the centres with the registered contact information. **CoP members were asked if they have received the package, their challenges with accessing this stimulus package and to identify opportunities to tackle this issue.**

Responses:

Thandi “My centre didn't receive communication about their approval status and whether they would receive the money or not.”

Abina “We didn't get any information about the stimulus package. We applied but there has been no feedback.”

Florence “My worry is that they don't even indicate to us what the issue is or where we have gone wrong on the application and we have received no money while some centres have.”

Wanda “We did receive the stimulus package at the end of March. We applied online.”

Busisiwe “We received a link to apply but the link did not work. DSD said that there was nothing they could do. There was no one to assist with problems and this made it very difficult to apply.”

Ntombi “I experienced challenges with the bank verification. It failed four times and CSD contacted me and assisted until I was told that I was successful, since then I have not received any more communication.”

A way forward expressed at the intersectoral committee meeting is that the department has applied for a roll-over of the unused funds and is still waiting for approval from National Treasury. Payment will be done as soon as approval is granted.

FUNCTION SHIFT -Update by the MP DoE

ECD PROPOSED CHANGES AND FUNCTIONAL SHIFT PROGRESS

Dr Moodley's presentation focussed on the purpose of the ECD proposed changes, the functional shift processes, the planning processes and the recommendations.

Research findings from the ECD Practitioners

ECD Practitioners viewed the functional shift as a change of their status from practitioners to educators and for better working conditions. Some views were expressed as follows:

"I want to be like a Grade R educator."

"I want a better salary for my family."

"Before I make a difference to others, I need to make a difference to my life and family life."

Research findings from parents

Parents want their children to be school ready be facilitated by qualified educators who will give their best to their children by being confident and fluent in Literacy and Numeracy. Some views were expressed as follows:

"I want my children's ECD centre to be registered and staffed with qualified educators."

"My children need to be fed and receive the best education."

Research findings from ECD centre managers

ECD centre managers want their ECD centres to be fully registered, have less paper work and have more funding and support. Some views were expressed as follows:

"I want my ECD centre to be fully registered."

"Paper work is taking too much time. It needs to be reduced so that we can focus on children more."

"My ECD centre requires more funding and support in terms of practitioner training and resources for children."

Proposed ECD changes

Two years of compulsory ECD prior to Grade 1 will be implemented:

1. Grade R attendance by children turning six will be compulsory
2. Grade RR attendance by children turning five years of age will be compulsory

Function Shift Progress

- **The function shift is anticipated to take effect as of 1st April 2022**
- **The Office of the Chief State Law Advisor provided a pre-certification opinion on the transfer of Chapter 6 of the Children's Act, 2005 (Act No. 38 of 2005) (Children's Act) to the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The reference number of the opinion is 8/7Education/2019/20/120A&B.**
- **DBE has identified sections from Chapter 5 of the Children's Act for transfer.**
- **Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) further advised that the reference to Chapter 5 should be phrased in the same way as Chapter 6**



Function Shift Roadmap

- Provincial Macro Organising (PMOG) of the state are used for ring fencing of resources and the documents seeking approval with regards to the transfer of staff and budget is going to be signed by the two MECs.
- List of children funded by the department both for equitable share and conditional grant is provided.
- Final figures and updated list to be provided after budget adjustment in November 2021.
- The assets to follow the function have been identified and will be transferred at the end of the financial year. Assets from DSD will be transferred to DBE.

Click [here](#) to view Dr Moodley's full presentation.

Compulsory Grade RR Attendance- Planning

- Full Registration of ECD centres needs to be accelerated to conditionally registered and unregistered ECD centres.
- Professionalisation of Pre-Grade R workforce by planning how to register practitioners on Level 5 and 6.
- Creation of educator posts in the Pre-Grade R sector. There are 1001 Grade R educators and 55% of the workforce is fully qualified
- Provision of play-based resources
- Pre-Grade R infrastructure will need to be prioritised
- Parental Advocacy Campaigns on ECD access and quality
- In-Service training of Pre-Grade R practitioners
- Capacitation of Site Management Committees on Pre- Grade R programmes

ECD Transitional Arrangements

From now until the Functional Shift takes place on April 1st 2022:

- **Registration of ECDs will be done jointly by DSD and DOE to facilitate skills transfer**
- **In order to mitigate risk of delayed funding at the beginning of the 2022/23 financial year, DSD will continue with the Call for Business plans proposals.**
- **Assessment for funding will be done jointly by DSD and DOE to facilitate skills transfer.**



Recommendations

- ✓ Dr Moodley emphasised the need for maximum input from all stakeholders in order for it to fall in the 2022/23 budget for the financial year.
- ✓ Work Streams' Reports need to be finalised within the 2022/23 Government Budgetary Cycle
- ✓ ECD Transitional Arrangements should be communicated to stakeholders. All stakeholder views will be valued and considered

Questions and Comments

Thulile: In terms of vaccination of teachers in ECD and because it is expected that they will move to DBE soon, what is the plan there? We are talking about creation of teacher posts in the pre-Grade R sector and there is currently no communication about the vaccination of ECD practitioners, what will be happening?

Jabu: In an ECD intersectoral meeting, the urgent need to fully register ECD centres was discussed. We need more detail on how this will happen because as stakeholders, we need to know how to support government to ensure that it happens timeously in order for the ECD centres to be ready when the function shift happens?

Modupi: There is a lot of anxiety among ECD centre workers about what the migration will mean in terms of the amendments that need to be considered by the portfolio committee of Social Development. The current bill on the Children's Act doesn't speak about the migration of ECD. What can be done so that there can be more mobilisation of ECD centres to understand the implications of the migration?

Thandeka: Being discussed a lot in the sector is that at times there's no communication and a misunderstanding regarding what this means in terms of working conditions as the DBE is not going to start paying ECD practitioners now that the Function Shift is taking place.

Something that could help the sector is a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) as there are many burning issues and things that are unclear for practitioners. This is quite a technical and complex process in that two chapters now have to find room from the Children's Act to another Act. We need to find a way to make it understandable for everyone.

Dr Moodley's response:

Registration issue: The work from the various work streams is still in progress, which is why there is no communication into the ECD centres at this stage. The work is going to be completed by the 30th of June 2021. There was a briefing with the MECs of Education and the MEC for Social Development with regard to the process. Once the work streams have completed the process and once the issue of registration is finalised, there needs to be official correspondence to the ECD centres on the exact processes and procedures and protocols that are going to be followed.

Funding issue: The Department of Social Development has given DBE the list of children and the centres – the final list will be given in November 2021 which will be factored into the budget cycle for the 2022/23 financial year.

Communication issues: There needs to be a FAQ on how the registration process will take place and what documentation is going to be used etc. We need to indicate that all the centres that are registered with DSD will automatically be registered with DBE. There will be a migration of the system from DSD to DBE EMIS system.

Resourcing issues: Once the pre-Grade R sector is fully incorporated into the Grade R sector, then the creation of those posts becomes more urgent because if there will now be two years of compulsory ECD prior to Grade 1 you will have a Grade R educator and a pre-Grade R practitioner who is preparing the children for Grade R. We need to submit a motivation to treasury asking:

- 1) that the salary/stipends of pre-Grade R practitioners be on par with Grade R practitioners (R7 500) in order to acknowledge practitioners' professional work
- 2) we need to look at how we are going to improve qualifications from level 4 to level 6 so that they can be considered for employment. Gr R and RR educators will be enrolled at level 6

National processes: DSD and DBE have already signed a MOU – documents are now waiting for the premier and the president to sign on the final proclamation.

Further questions:

Busisiwe: If my ECD is not yet registered, is it possible to register it with DBE or do I need to start with DSD?

Dr Moodley: For now, Busisiwe should wait because a simpler process is being finalised. So don't send a registration form as a new one is being worked on. Communication will be made regarding this.

CHECK OUT QUOTES

“I am happy with the conversations today because it shows that you care for us by wanting to know what is happening on our side. Thank you for including us in this conversation” – Florence

“Thank you, the topic was very important and addresses our issues and concerns.”- Busisiwe

“Thank you for the whole meeting, you guys are building us.”- Ntombi

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Abinah Nkobane	Tfutfuka Mhaule Pre-creche
Busisiwe Mkhonho	Cebelihle drop in centre
Daniel Mduli	Penreach
Dorothy Masuku	Luvolwethu pre school
Elsie Molobela	Luvolwethu pre school
Esther	Penreach
Florence Nkuna	
Fortunate Radebe	Cotlands
Grace Ganancio	S'tfokokile Educare
Jabu Mthembu	Do More Foundation
Leah Legau	Vuyelwa Primary School
Lindokuhle Skhosana	Penreach
Lwane Johanna	Eliezer edu care centre
Martha Moyane	Mtfunyelwa EDC
Maureen Mathe	Cotlands
Modupi Mazibuko	Penreach
Msesi Simelane	Penreach
Name	Organisation
Nkululeko Nkosi	
Nompilo	
Nompilo Gama	Elohim pre school
Nomvula Sambo	Grace edu care
Nontebeko Ngomane	God is Good Pre School
Nontokozi Lekhuleni	Sisitasive Day Care
Ntombi Siboza	New Hope Educare
Pat Moodley	DoE
Rejoice Makhubele	Sinethemba educare centre
Rose Ngwane	Cotlands
Shaun Mosia	JAM
Shirley Nkuna	Ntataise
Sinah Mbando	Sinayo train Pre school
Siphosetfu Masilela	Respect Centre
Stephina Magakwe	Cotlands
Thandi	Cotlands
Thobile Maminze	Sikhulile educare
Thulile Makofane	Penreach
Tintswalo Novela	Penreach

Tracy Wakapila	The stars preschool
Wonder Khoza	Wisani Day Care
Zodwa Mashaba	Penreach