

## **Kent County Council**

### **Early Years and Childcare Funding Guidance**

**26 March 2020**

This guidance follows on from and builds upon the letters from Matt Dunkley (Kent County Council, Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education) dated 18 and 19 March 2020. Please read this in the context of those two letters.

Kent County Council (KCC) working with The Education People) wishes to continue to support the Kent Early Years and Childcare Sector in relation to business continuity for Free Entitlement places for two, three and four year olds. This guidance will be updated as appropriate and necessary as the Coronavirus situation develops, and also to reflect any guidance received from the DfE at any point.

In line with Government advice, KCC's funding policy aims to ensure that early years providers will receive at least a level of funding they would have done in the Summer Term if the Coronavirus had not occurred. The normal funding process will continue for children who would have otherwise attended a setting or childminder in the Summer Term. Where a provider has agreed to care for additional children who would routinely have attended another provider, an exceptional payment will be made as part of the adjustment process, to compensate the covering provider where the total number of hours of Free Entitlement paid to this provider is less than the total number of hours actually provided.

#### Free Early Education for Three and Four Year Olds

##### *Summer Term 2020 Payment*

The normal funding payment process will be applied for the Summer Term 2020 with a termly payment being made for week commencing 16 April based on the estimate submitted by the provider. The funding for the Summer Term will be adjusted in the balancing payment at the end of term (week commencing 1 June) to reflect the actual hours recorded on the Summer Term headcount (week commencing 27 April 2020). The Summer term headcount should be completed based on the children the setting was expecting to care for prior to the outbreak of the Coronavirus. Providers should record a child's attendance on the headcount based on the Parental Declaration (PD) form.

The arrangements above will ensure a provider receives the expected level of funding if there had not been an outbreak of the Coronavirus. This means a provider will receive their funding regardless of whether a child is in attendance or not.

##### *Completion of the Summer 2020 Headcount*

If, as a result of the Coronavirus, it is not possible for a provider to complete the Summer Term headcount within the required timescale due to the absence of staff who would normally do this, an extension to the headcount period may be agreed. This is on an individual and exceptional basis and will only be granted if the provider has contacted Management Information (MI) before the headcount submission period has ended. If agreed, the administration fee normally associated with a missed headcount appeal will be waived. If a provider is forced to close during headcount week the administration fee will also be waived, but you must have contacted MI to inform them of the closure.

If providers have been unable to obtain a signed PD from parents due to Coronavirus, an email from parents confirming the number of hours they wish to access during the Summer Term is sufficient evidence for the purpose of entering a child on headcount. Providers should keep this evidence on record for compliance purposes and will be expected to obtain signed PD forms retrospectively once the situation returns to normal.

#### *Free Entitlement Additional Payments for both the Spring and Summer Term*

Where a child is temporarily placed with another provider, as result of their usual setting/childminder being closed or unable to provide their usual place, the new provider should ensure the child receives their full Free Entitlement offer. KCC will reimburse this when the total number of hours of Free Entitlement actually provided by the setting/childminder exceeds the number of hours they have been paid for either in the Spring or Summer Term. This means, in the first instance, providers should use the Free Entitlement funding for those children who are absent as a result of the Coronavirus to fund the Free Entitlement offered to any temporary child placed with them.

In some cases, a provider may offer more care during this period than recorded on their headcount. This could be due to either accepting more children than they would have done otherwise or making more Free Entitlement hours available than usual, due to the parents/carers needing to work longer hours than before the outbreak of the Coronavirus. In these instances, where the total number of hours actually provided is greater than the number of hours funded, providers should complete an adjustment via the Synergy Provider Portal. Providers should add an additional comment in the reason box, identifying the child as “a child receiving temporary/ additional hours not covered by children who are absent as a result of the Coronavirus” (this option will be available from 6 May onwards). To ensure prompt payment KCC would like providers to submit their adjustments by 15 May where possible. Additional adjustments will still be accepted after this point, but payment may be delayed.

Providers will initially be funded from the start of the placement to the end of term. If the child reverts to the original placement during the Summer Term then the provider will need to identify this as negative adjustment, and KCC will recover the unused weeks as part of the Autumn estimate payment.

Childminders who have not made a claim in the spring term or who have not submitted an estimate payment for next term will also need to follow this process.

Providers **should not** attempt to try and recover the Free Entitlement funding from the original provider.

#### Free Early Education for Two Year Olds

The normal funding payment process will be applied as stated above, for children absent due to the Coronavirus.

#### Early Years Pupil Premium, Disability Access Fund (DAF) and Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF)

Early Years Pupil Premium and DAF will be paid to the provider who is caring for the child in accordance with eligibility.

Please refer to the separate guidance on SENIF: <https://www.kelsi.org.uk/news-and-events/news/primary/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions>

We will be keeping our processes under review and will seek to make any improvements in line with available resources

If you have any questions, please email:

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Childminders – [childminding@theeducationpeople.org](mailto:childminding@theeducationpeople.org)