18 March 2020

Dear Provider

**Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) Funding – Coronavirus**

The Chancellor has now confirmed that the Government will continue to pay for free early years entitlement places even if settings are closed on the advice of Public Health England or children are not able to attend due to coronavirus. Therefore, Essex County Council (ECC) will continue to pay FEEE funding to early years and childcare providers if they need to close due to the coronavirus.

The full statement from the Chancellor can be found here:

[*https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-childcare-offers-to-continue-during-coronavirus-closures*](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-childcare-offers-to-continue-during-coronavirus-closures)

ECC’s guidance will be updated as the situation evolves to reflect any guidance received from the Department for Education (DfE). As previously shared with you, please continue to regularly view the Essex Provider website News pages where we will continue to provide updates as we receive them – these can be found at <https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/news/>

ECC wishes to support the early years sector in relation to business continuation and sufficiency of provision. In this respect, the following measures will be implemented for FEEE funded provision:

* **Spring 2020 Term**
	+ There will be **no clawback** of funding related to the Spring 2020 term for any providers who have to temporarily close\* or have children absent due to coronavirus before the end of the Spring 2020 term.
* **Summer 2020 Term**
	+ The normal interim and actual Headcount and funding payment processes will be applied for the Summer 2020 term.
	+ Settings will be able to claim FEEE funding for any child they are genuinely expecting to be attending their setting for the Summer 2020 term, even if they are not actually in attendance during the Headcount period either due to the setting being closed or the child not being in attendance. Settings should still seek to have a completed parent declaration signed by the parents, or if either the setting is not open and / or parents are not attending the setting, an email confirmation from the parent confirming hours of attendance will be acceptable in this instance.
	+ In the event of a provider having to temporarily close\* during the Summer 2020 term as a result of coronavirus there will be no clawback of funding from the provider in respect of the Summer 2020 term.
	+ In the event of children being temporarily absent from a provision as a result of coronavirus there will be no clawback of funding from the provider in respect of the Summer 2020 term.

*Exceptionally for the Summer 2020 term, any provider who is able to offer temporary funded provision for any children where their normal provider has had to temporarily close due to coronavirus will be funded for the period that the children are temporarily attending the setting. This funding will be subject to review at the end of the initial two week period, and every two weeks after that point.*

If your setting has to close due to coronavirus, **you must immediately inform Essex County Council** by email to the Free Entitlement Funding Queries Mailbox at Free.EntitlementFundingQueries@essex.gov.uk

You must state:

* the closure date
* the anticipated re-open date
* the reason for closing
* and of any extension of closure if necessary.

\*Please note this process for coronavirus supersedes the Temporary Closure expectations set out in section 5.8 of the 2020 / 2021 Essex FEEE Contract and Handbook, and the above reporting expectations **must** be followed.

You must also notify ECC when you re-open via the Free Entitlement Funding Queries Mailbox.

Providers are also advised to consider the following in relation to their contingency planning for coronavirus:

* Enter and submit your Summer 2020 headcount data as soon as the headcount opens (please note we are planning to open the interim headcount early from 19March 2020).
* Ensure that your parental agreements / declarations are up to date.
* Ensure your attendance registers are kept up to date and that any coronavirus related child absence is separately identifiable.
* Check whether your business insurance contains business interruption cover which could be claimed in the event of the provision having to close as a result of coronavirus.
* Check the contents of your charging policies and parental agreements in respect of the clauses related to temporary closure of provision, child absence etc.
* Check the Government’s schemes which have been provided through the recent Budget to support businesses during the coronavirus crisis. These include: the temporary coronavirus interruption loan scheme and Government meeting the costs of providing statutory sick pay for staff absent from work because of coronavirus for businesses with fewer than 250 employees. More details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>

Please ensure that you continue to monitor coronavirus related updates being provided on the ECC Provider website news page which can be found at [https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/news/](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Feycp.essex.gov.uk%2Fnews%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C134233a064ee4520801a08d7c8cd18e1%7Ca8b4324f155c4215a0f17ed8cc9a992f%7C0%7C0%7C637198655513092717&sdata=obJ5ffvaGJDctYZz6oVKBIRm%2FRSM7I2vjyS8Sl6r%2FqY%3D&reserved=0) at [www.essex.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.essex.gov.uk%2Fcoronavirus&data=02%7C01%7C%7C888f6c36d5194778b97d08d7ca79cb0a%7Ca8b4324f155c4215a0f17ed8cc9a992f%7C0%7C0%7C637200496748636541&sdata=T9PEC74Gk%2FXAt3OrN77upZPupCG5RyTnlIWSPOKhIcE%3D&reserved=0) and on the DfE and Public Health England websites.

* Please continue to communicate and reassure parents by sharing up-to-date information and advice from reliable sources.
* Please check your health and safety policies and ensure you have effective hygiene processes in place to limit the spread of viruses.
* It has been well documented in the media coverage and through Government announcements but, as a reminder, personal hygiene is the most effective way to tackle COVID-19, especially washing hands more; and the catch it, bin it, kill it strategy for those with coughs and sneezes.

Please make arrangements to ensure your individual provider email address is monitored, even if your provision is closed.

The advice from Public Health England continues to be that all educational settings, including nurseries, preschools and childminders, should remain open unless advised otherwise. The DfE is providing daily updates to local authorities and the early years sector.

**This guidance is subject to change and will be updated as further guidance is received from the DfE.**

Please contact the Essex Early Years Funding Team via the Free Entitlement Funding Queries Mailbox at Free.EntitlementFundingQueries@essex.gov.ukif you have any queries with regard to the content of this email.

Yours sincerely

Clare Kershaw

Director for Education

Essex County Council