

Email from Carolyn Terry to Essex early years and childcare and childcare providers

From: Free Entitlement Funding Queries <FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk>

Sent: 11 August 2020 18:35

Cc: Free Entitlement Funding Queries <FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk>

Subject: Urgent - Please Read - Covid-19 Update 11 August 2020

Dear Provider

I hope you are managing to get some rest and relaxation, even if you have remained open through the summer holiday period.

This communication focuses on the topics below: -

- **Interim headcount payments for the Autumn 2020 term**
- **Parents requesting to defer school places**
- **DfE Update on support for working families**
- **Continuing to support children with SEND**
- **The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) open letter to the early years sector**
- **Guidance from the EYCC Business Management Consultants**
- **Support your child to start reception campaign**
- **Back to school with confidence campaign**
- **Recent updated DfE guidance**

Interim headcount payments for the Autumn 2020 term – if you haven't already received, you will be getting notification shortly of the interim headcount payment for the Autumn 2020 term. We have been able to process these payments early for providers for the coming term.

We are in the process of contacting any providers who have a lower return interim headcount return for the Autumn 2020 term than the Autumn 2019 term to clarify that this has not been caused by providers limiting hours or places available; unless this has been caused directly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. If you are one of the providers affected by this, please respond to the email and request for information as soon as possible after you receive it so we can process any valid additional payments. We are aiming to have these completed by the end of August (subject to getting the necessary information back from providers)

Parents requesting to defer school places - we are aware that there are still some parents querying whether they can either defer their child taking up their reception class place and/or keeping them on in their Early Years setting for longer due to a longer than usual settling in period. If you receive a contact of this nature can you please let us know by completing the attached form and emailing it to the Free Entitlement Funding Queries mailbox at FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk which we will then review and confirm whether this is possible with you.

In the meantime, please do not either: -

- confirm with parents that they will be able to access their FEEE funding with you until this has been reviewed or
- ask the parents to contact us directly

DfE update support for working families – the DfE have released a [press release](#) describing the government funded childcare support available for working families. It states that Working parents or carers who are eligible for Tax-Free Childcare or 30 hours free childcare but have temporarily fallen below the minimum income requirement as a result of the pandemic will continue to receive financial support until 31 October 2020.

Continuing to support children with SEND. When planning groupings that meet the Covid-19 DfE guidance, it is very important that consideration is given to how support for children with SEND is organised and delivered. Please see the following link for more information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>

This guidance states that

Settings will need to ensure they have the staffing needed to support children with SEND at safe ratios and that they have a member of staff designated as a SENCO, interim SENCO or a named individual with oversight of special educational needs provision for children with SEND

The EYFS, SEND Code of Practice and Equality Act responsibilities to provide equality of opportunity and not to treat a person with SEND less favourably continue to be in place.

Inclusion funding continues to be available for a setting to apply for towards the additional cost of enhanced levels of support. More information and how to apply can be found at the following link: -

<https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/funding/inclusion-funding/>

You may have seen in the news that **the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)** have said it will not be taking any action against the early years sector, following an investigation into providers' response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The investigation was triggered by reports of "unfair practices" by some providers, mainly referring to payments during periods of closure as a result of lockdown restrictions.

[In an open letter to the sector](#), the CMA said that it had found that while most providers were making fair arrangements with consumers, there were some that had treated parents unfairly.

The CMA said that it would not be taking any enforcement action against the early years sector "at this stage". However, it said that it would continue to monitor the sector. However you may wish to view the letter and check that your current policies and processes are in line with what the CMA set out in their letter

Guidance from the EYCC Business Management Consultants (BMCs) – the BMCs have produced two new guidance documents, to guide any childcare business that is looking for resources and support whilst reviewing their business please see attached documents. These

both signpost to sources of information and support aimed specifically at childcare providers, as a business and employer. These documents will sit alongside a range of other resources on the 'running your business' section of the Essex Early Years website
<https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/running-your-business/early-years-business-sustainability/>

The Business Management Consultants are available to provide one to one support and advice, by telephone, video and email to support any childcare provider who is currently reviewing their business or experiencing any difficulties in these unprecedented times and can be contacted as follows

Alan Haylock – alan.haylock@essex.gov.uk for any settings in North (Colchester and Tendring) and Mid Essex (Chelmsford, Maldon and Braintree)

Gemma Eva – gemma.eva@essex.gov.uk for any settings in South Essex (Basildon, Brentwood, Castlepoint and Rochford)

Rosemary Newell – rosemary.newell@essex.gov.uk for any settings in West Essex (Harlow, Epping Forest and Uttlesford)

Support your child to start reception campaign - This campaign started in July 2020 and is to help parents support their children to become "school ready" come the start of school in September. The campaign is being run (primarily) on the Talk, Listen and Cuddle Facebook page and website as it has strong links to this already engaged and relevant audience, but will be supplemented by posts on ECC Social media. ECC colleagues have collected lots of video content, advice and tips from teachers, head teachers, parents and early years specialists on things parents and carers can do with their child to help support them emotionally to start school, to give them the resilience and independence to take this next step. They have also spoken to colleagues at the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing service in the Family Hubs as well as from the Library Service. Please see the attached flyer for more information on where this will be promoted and do please share this with your parents.

Back to School with Confidence 'Back to School With Confidence' resources are being launched as part of the Council's Every Family Matters campaign today. The aim is to support parents, carers, children and young people to be confident returning to school by signposting to relevant guidance and local organisations in Essex that can help via the council's social media channels and here on the [website](#). Please do share these locally with your parents too.

Recent updated DfE guidance

[Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)
Updated to reflect changes in legislation to the 30 hours free entitlement and information on the validity of Paediatric First-Aid certificates.

[Early years foundation stage statutory framework \(EYFS\)](#) - Updated to reflect the extension of the validity of current PFA certificates.

Best wishes

Carolyn

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