

15th October 2020

I am a childminder, and I must self-isolate for 14 days. Do I need to pay back the FEEE funding for the weeks I am not able to work?

If the FEEE funded children attend another provider in this time, do I need to transfer the funding to the other provider?

Essex are following DfE guidance which states Early Years providers do not have to pay back FEEE funding for any period that they are closed following advice from Public Health due to COVID-19. This includes self-isolation and a positive test result.

As detailed in the FEEE contract, providers are under no obligation to transfer FEEE funding to an alternative provider if a child attends an alternative provider after headcount as parents will have signed a parent declaration that states FEEE funding is not transferable. It should be noted however, that ECC does encourage, where practically possible, the funding should follow the child, subject to any notice period. This still applies if a provider is closed due to COVID-19 as detailed above. However, if a setting is closed due to Covid-19 and not able to transfer the FEEE funding, ECC will fund any children who need to attend an alternative setting as a result as follows: -

- *Any providers who have children attend from a provider who is closed due to COVID-19 as detailed above will be able to claim FEEE funding for:*
 - *The hours the child would **normally** attend the closed provider.*
 - *Funding will **only be paid for the period** the original provider is closed.*
 - *If a parent decides to remain at the alternative provider then hours/weeks outside of those detailed above will **need to be paid for by the parents** unless the original provider is willing to transfer the funding. Any transfer of funding is a private arrangement between providers and parent.*

Please email FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk to request a form.

Please note, before payment is agreed, we will need confirmation from the closed setting of closure and the reason why.

Example:

Provider A closed for 14 days due to self-isolation.

Claims funding for 2 children; 1 child 15 hours FEEE per week but attends 20 hours, 1 child 12 hours FEEE per week but attends for 25 hours.

Provider A can retain the FEEE funding. Privately paid fees need to be discussed with parent and provider A as to whether they are refunded or not.

Provider B can claim for:

1 child for 15 hours for 2 weeks = 30 hours

1 child for 12 hours for 2 weeks = 24 hours

Total hours FEEE claimed = 54 hours

*Payment for hours **outside of FEEE hours** to be paid for by parents for 2-week closure period
Payment for **all** hours if childcare exceeds 2-week closure period to be paid for by parents unless transfer of funding is agreed.*

What should providers do if they are asked to release a child to a parent / carer of an alternative family if by doing so means that the DfE COVID guidance of 6 to a bubble will be exceeded? Are we able to query this with parents/carer?
Does this become a safeguarding concern, or should it be reported to the police?

Current guidance states the following:

“Family and friends can continue to provide informal childcare as long as groups from different households don’t exceed 6 people. You should, wherever possible, keep your distance from people you do not live with (unless you have formed a support bubble with them).”

As at 12th October 2020 This is subject to change as and when local authorities are moved to one of the 3 tier Covid categories

The two links below will take you straight to the latest gov guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/childcare-to-be-exempt-from-interhousehold-mixing-restrictions-in-local-areas-of-intervention>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>

You should consider speaking to the families about your concerns and signpost them to the guidance above. It could be that they are unaware of how the restrictions can impact on childcare – and the difficult position that this situation is putting the setting in.

At this point present we do not feel it will be a safeguarding matter and the police may not follow up due to capacity, however this might change if we do enter either high or very high tier of restrictions.

*If having spoken to the parents and they are still not willing to follow guidance, make sure that you write this into your risk assessment, detailing the actions you are going to take and **share with your families**. It might be worth sending out a blanket reminder to all your families as a ‘COVID-19’ update to your Ts&Cs.*

If it is clear that government guidance for a ‘support bubble’ is not being followed and you have stated in your risk assessment that you will not be willing to hand a child over, please ensure you have alternative contact details on record and follow your non-collection of child policy/procedure if required.