

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

**From:** Free Entitlement Funding Queries <[FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk](mailto:FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** 16 December 2020 21:10

**Cc:** Free Entitlement Funding Queries <[FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk](mailto:FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** Urgent - Please Read - Covid-19 Update 16 December 2020

Dear All

As we approach the end of December, I just wanted to say a heartfelt thank you to you and your teams for all of your ongoing hard work and commitment to staying open and providing childcare to your families during the Autumn term from us all at Essex County Council.

We have heard from so many of you what a challenging and stressful time this has been, and your upset if you have needed to close in spite of your best attempts to keep children and staff safe and well. Please be assured that we know you will only have closed if there were not any other options open to you and that you were prioritising the health and safety of your children and staff.

A positive outcome of this pandemic has been the chance for us to get to know you all better. We really value this improved working relationship and hope we can continue to build on this in 2021.

Before I sign off for the year, I also wanted to share updates on the following areas: -

- A Spring 2021 term Covid19 Sustainability Grant for all Essex childcare settings
- A FEEE rate increase from April 2021
- Self isolation changing from 14 to 10 days
- Engaging with the NHS Test and Trace process during the Christmas Break.
- DfE Attendance Survey from January 2021
- Early Years Business Management training
- Hemsalls "Business Map" Webinar
- Competitions and Markets Authority Provider charging update
- Safeguarding Briefing

**A Spring 2021 term Covid19 Sustainability Grant for all Essex childcare settings** ECC will be issuing a one-off grant to all Essex childcare providers as a contribution to costs early in the Spring 2021 term. To make this equitable, the grant will be based on the size of each childcare provider. We are currently finalising the individual values, and these will be shared at the start of next term. There will also be an additional payment made to childcare providers that remained open throughout the lockdown period on top of this Covid19 Sustainability Grant.

**A FEEE rate increase from April 2021** ECC will be increasing the FEEE funding rate across the board by 3p per funded hour with effect from 1 April 2021.

Please note ECC will be covering this 3p increase **from within the 5% funding local authorities are allowed to retain** to provide support and administer the FEEE funding to the Early Years Sector

This will be on top of the additional national £44m funding allocation the Chancellor announced in the recent Spending Review. We are still waiting to hear what the Essex allocation will be from the this, and I will update as soon as we know.

**Self isolation changing from 14 to 10 days** the DfE has now updated [actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) to reflect the change to days of self-isolation from 14 to 10 days.

### **Engaging with the NHS Test and Trace process during the Christmas Break.**

As previously shared, the DfE has only issued guidance to schools and colleges on this however it would be best practice for childcare providers to adopt a similar process to support the NHS Test and Tracing activity, so please find below a recommended approach that providers can use to ensure they can be contacted by staff, parents, carers and NHS Test and Trace during the time that they are closed.

For the first 6 days after the setting closes, if a child or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in the setting, the setting may be asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as they may have been infectious whilst in the setting.

Where a child or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having **developed symptoms more** than 48 hours since being in the setting, the setting does not need to be contacted. In this situation, parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace

- Answerphone messages could be changed to include an alternative number, call forwarding could be set up or if you have a mobile for your setting, this could be monitored at home.
- You will also need to have access to registers and contact information, therefore please consider whether these records are accessible to you while closed.
- It is also important that staff members, parents and carers are aware that the setting may need to contact them and that their responsibility to isolate and book a test if needed, remains a requirement over this period.

Please see the following links for more information

<https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/media/2008/what-to-do-if-you-have-a-confirmed-case-of-covid19-flow-chart-for-essex-pvi.pdf>

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

**DfE Attendance Survey from January 2021** we will be resetting the survey from the new year from a weekly collection to be fortnightly. Please note we need **all providers who are open** to update your data for the first survey in 2021, but you will not need to update this again unless there are changes to this data

The new DfE Attendance survey will start week commencing 4<sup>th</sup> January and then every fortnight until further notice and can be found at the following link [DfE Attendance Survey 2021](#)  
The link will not open until 4th January 2021.

**Early Years Business Management training** please see the attached document outlining two training sessions available in 2021

**Hempsalls “Business Map” Webinar** – please see the attached flyer showing the details of a webinar being hosted by Hemsalls in January 2021

**Competitions and Markets Authority Provider charging update** please see the update below we have received from the DfE: -

The DfE has received a number of enquiries from LAs regarding the Competitions and Markets Authority’s (CMA) advice to the sector on charging earlier in the year within the current circumstances. The CMA published an [open letter to the early years sector](#) on the 28 July 2020 followed by [detailed advice](#) to the sector, with the purpose of helping providers understand how consumer protection law applies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CMA has also since [updated its broader advice](#) on cancellations and refunds for consumer contracts affected by COVID-19 health restrictions

The CMA has advised that, while the circumstances in which providers are operating have changed somewhat since the publication of the letter, the CMA's advice within this letter is still applicable. We ask that providers continue to be fair and balanced in dealings with parents, and they must continue to avoid unfair charging practices.

There will always be individual circumstances in each case, however the general principle is that providers should not charge parents for services that cannot be provided. If there is a barrier to accessing childcare, based on government guidance or the law, the provider should not charge the consumer for this period. For example, [from 28 September people in England are required by law to self-isolate](#) if they test positive for coronavirus or are contacted by NHS Test and Trace. Accordingly, if a child is self-isolating on the advice of NHS Test and Trace, the provider should not charge the consumer for this period.

The DfE is not currently aware of a rise in consumer complaints about provider behaviour, and will continue to work with the CMA to ensure the sector is offered appropriate advice.

**Safeguarding Briefing** – please see the attached briefing from Jo Barclay

Happy Christmas to you and all of your staff, and I hope you have a well-deserved rest and will be able to spend some time with family and friends.

Best wishes.  
Carolyn

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