

Essex County Council

**Funded Early Education Entitlement (FEEE)
for Nine months up to Four-Year Olds**

**Provider Handbook
Schedule A of the Essex Early Education Funding
Contract**

April 2026

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Disclaimer: Whilst every care has been taken to ensure that the information contained within this Provider Handbook is correct at the time of publication, Essex County Council cannot be held liable for any loss, damage or expense incurred because of information contained in this Provider Handbook

1. Introduction

This Provider Handbook is Schedule A of the Essex Early Education Funding Contract.

This Provider Handbook is a working document that specifies how the Council funds early education for all eligible nine month to four-year-olds for Providers in the maintained, private, voluntary, and independent (PVI includes Childminders) sectors.

This Provider Handbook builds on the Department for Education (DfE) 'Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities April 2026 and 'Early Years Entitlements: operational guidance for local authorities and providers 2026-2027. Copies of both documents are currently available to download from the Related Pages section on the Provider website [Funded early education entitlement for three to four-year-olds](#)

The Essex Early Education Funding Contract forms a legally binding contract between Providers and the Council. The Contract states that Providers delivering funded early education and childcare must abide by the conditions and requirements of the Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and the 'Essex County Council Early Education Funding Contract'. By signing and dating the Contract Declaration Form, the Provider acknowledges that they understand the above-mentioned documents and will meet the requirements therein.

FEEE is at the heart of the Government's vision, under the Department for Education (DfE) [Best Start in Life](#) strategy, for all children to have access to high quality early years education. Evidence shows that regular good quality early education has long lasting benefits for all children.

The FEEE for three- and four-year-olds (FEEE3&4) is a universal funded provision for every child from the term following their third birthday up until they reach statutory school age, or they are registered in a maintained school or academy reception class. An additional 15 hours a week of FEEE is available for eligible working parents of three- and four-year-olds.

Children of eligible Working Parents will also be able to receive up to 30 hours funded childcare per week term time (or up to a maximum of 1140 hours if accessing a stretched funding offer) from:

- The term after they turn 9-months-old (FEEE1W)
- The term after they turn 2-years-old (FEEE2W)

However, only children that are eligible under certain criteria can access the Early Learning for 2-year-olds (FEEE2).

Families applying for FEEE2 are eligible for 15 hours of funded early years provision under economic and non-economic criteria. For more information and eligibility criteria visit [Free education and childcare for 2 year olds if you get extra support](#)

This Provider Handbook explains:

- when children become eligible for the FEEE (nine month- to four-year-olds).
- the process for claiming the two-year-old funding for families receiving additional support.
- the process for claiming the universal FEEE funding for three- and four-year-olds.
- the process for claiming the Working Parent funding for nine month- to four-year-olds.
- what may happen if Providers receive certain inspection judgements and specified grades.
- for children with low level or emerging SEND, please see the process to access SENIF that is set out on the Essex Provider webpages:

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

The Council is committed to working in close partnership with Providers across all sectors to achieve flexible, high-quality provision which meets the needs of children and promotes parental choice, but balances this with supporting Provider sustainability and a thriving Childcare market. The Council is committed to enabling Parents to be able to access their maximum FEEE funding.

Where Parents are eligible for both FEEE2W and FEEE2, the latter will always be the default funding type applied. This is because families do not need to renew FEEE2 and cannot fall out of eligibility. The Council must fund the first 15 hours as FEEE2 before they fund any Working Parent hours (FEEE2W). Where a Provider submits a FEEE2W claim for a child that is later found to also be eligible for FEEE2, the DfE state the Council must amend the first 15 hours claimed to FEEE2.

1.1 The DfE Statutory Guidance

The statutory guidance, from the Department for Education, is for English Local Authorities (LA) on discharging their duties pursuant to section 1 and 2 of the Childcare Act 2016 and sections 6, 7, 7A, 9A, 12 and 13 of the Childcare Act 2006. Local authorities must have regard to this guidance when seeking to discharge those duties. They should not depart from it unless they have good reason to do so. Where this guide uses the word 'must', this refers to a local authority's legal obligations set out in legislation or DSG conditions of grant, which a local authority is required to comply with.

2. Eligibility

Outcome: all Eligible Children who have met the eligibility criteria are able to take up a funded place if their Parent wants one. Evidence shows that attending high quality early education has a lasting impact on social and behavioural outcomes. The entitlements make Childcare more affordable for Parents and enables Parents to work or increase their working hours if they wish to do so.

Providers should request and check the child's birth certificate to confirm their eligibility for the FEEE. The Council may ask to see evidence that the Provider has checked birth certificates therefore it is recommended that Providers make a note of the number or retain a copy on file.

2.1 Eligibility for Early Learning for 2-year-olds (FEEE2)

The FEEE2 is not a universal offer, only Eligible Children may access this funding via an application process. Families can apply for funding online, or an Assisted Application can be submitted through a Provider, Family Hub practitioners including health visitors, or social worker.

To apply online the Parent/carer should go to [Essex Education Portal - Logon](#) and register. They then need to Log in and click on 'Funded Early Education for Two Year Olds' to complete an application. Once the application is submitted, eligibility will be checked and if eligible the applicant will be given a unique reference Code and funding start date which they take to a

Provider to access the funded place. Parents can forward the email confirmation as proof of eligibility.

The unique reference Code from the Council will always begin with TYF881. If a Parent provides an application Code which differs from this they may have applied for the funding from another LA, in which case the Parent will need to reapply on the Essex Education Portal.

When completing a non-economic application, relevant evidence must be submitted for the application to be approved. If evidence is not submitted a reminder will be sent after seven (7) days. If evidence is still not received after fourteen (14) days, the Council will make contact by telephone where possible. Applications will be rejected after twenty-eight (28) days if appropriate evidence has not been received.

Whether the Parent/Carer apply directly or via an Assisted Application, all Providers need to submit a Placement Notification for every approved two-year-old funding application before offering a place.

A Placement Notification is submitted in the EYCC Provider Portal and does the following:

- Confirms that the reference code supplied by the Parent is correct and approved.
- Confirms that the reference code does relate to the child in question.
- If the setting has an inspection rating of Requires Improvement or below for overall effectiveness, less than good in the early years provision judgement, needs attention or below in leadership and governance or safeguarding is not met, it allows the relevant Council Early Years Officers the opportunity to review the placement.
- Assigns the child to the setting, which means the child will appear on the Headcount list for that term automatically.
- Allows a Provider to claim the funded hours. If you add a FEEE2 child to the Headcount manually, they will not be matched to their application, and you will be unable to claim the funded hours for them.

Helpful tips. When submitting a Placement Notification, you may receive an error message to advise:

- surname or date of birth does not match the application. If you are certain the details are correct, try removing the forename and adding a space after the surname.
- date of birth is not a recognised date. This is usually due to incompatibility with the browser you are using. Try Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge to resolve the fault.

Applying for FEEE2 if the family are non-UK citizen who cannot claim benefits

The Council use the DfE applications form for Parents to complete along with support workers from Family Hubs or Providers. Email 2yearold@essex.gov.uk for an application form. Once the application form has been completed, Parents/carers are able to submit the application via the Essex Education Portal for review and approval. The “non-economic claim” type should be selected, then the option for “Submit Evidence/ Manual Economic check”.

If required, the completed application form can also be submitted by the Provider and /Family Hub via the Assisted Application option in the Provider Portal.

Once the Council have approved the FEEE2 online application the unique reference number will be generated, and the Parents can take this to a Provider to access the funded place.

The Council must ensure that two-year-olds who have met any of the eligibility criteria for FEEE2, set out above, continue to receive a place once they have taken it up even if the child ceases to meet these criteria later.

Eligible Children may access a FEEE funded place in the term following their second birthday, see table below.

A child turns 2-years-old between	Will become eligible for a funded place
1 April to 31 August	1 September following a child's second birthday
1 September to 31 December	1 January following a child's second birthday
1 January to 31 March	1 April following a child's second birthday

2.2 Eligibility for three- and four-year-old universal entitlement

All children are eligible from the term following their third birthday up until they reach statutory school age the term after their 5th birthday, or they are registered in a maintained school or academy nursery class, see table below

A child turns 3-years-old between	Will become eligible for a funded place
1 April to 31 August	1 September following a child's third birthday
1 September to 31 December	1 January following a child's third birthday
1 January to 31 March	1 April following a child's third birthday

2.3 Eligibility for the Working Parents entitlements:

Eligible Working Parents will be able to apply for the Working Parent Entitlement and receive funded childcare from the term after their child turns 9-months-old up until they begin school or become of statutory school age the term after they turn 5.

Parents/carer can find a straightforward explanation of all government Childcare support and eligibility criteria and application process on the website [Best Start in Life](#).

Once approved, they will receive an 11-digit eligibility Code to take to their Provider. The Providers will then check the Code in the EYCC Provider Portal. Once the Code has been confirmed as eligible and in date, parents can book and secure their childcare placement.

There is also information for parents on the [Essex County Council Family Information Service \(FIS\)](#) webpage.

The following table will confirm the entitlement for each age group:

Age	Funding begins:	Entitlement
9-months-old (FEEE1W)	Term after the child turns 9-months-old	30 hours x 38 weeks
2-years-old (FEEE2W)	Term after the child turns 2-years-old	30 hours x 38 weeks
3-4-year-olds (EFE)	Term after the child turns 3-years-old	15 hours x 38 weeks*

* This in in addition to the 15 hours Universal Funding, a total of 30 hours per week.

Once a family is approved for the Working Parent Entitlement, the Code will remain the same for the child until they begin school. Parents/carer will be required to continue renewing the Code every 3 months (or by the date given to them at the point of application) to ensure they remain eligible.

Working Parent Entitlement Codes must be eligible before the start of the term as follows:

Cut-off Date	Term funding will be paid from
31 August	Autumn Term beginning on or after 1 st September
31 December	Spring Term beginning on or after 1 st January
31 March	Summer Term beginning on or after 1 st April

If a Parent/carer misses this deadline, they will not be able to claim their Working Parent Funding Entitlement until the next term at the earliest and may have to pay childcare fees if their child starts before this. Please note the Council is unable to override the start date of any applications made after the cut-off date for the term, except in Exceptional Circumstances. Email earlyyearsdata@essex.gov.uk for advice.

Providers should advise Parents to apply for the Working Parent Code the term before their child is eligible to claim.

Eligibility for the Working Parent entitlements is determined by the HMRC. Parents undertake their own eligibility check twice per term via their Childcare Account. The Parent is assigned a reference number/eligibility Code, which is then validated by the LA through the Provider Portal.

Providers can validate the eligibility Codes in the Working Parent Funded Childcare section of the EYCC Provider Portal. It is the Parents responsibility to re-validate any claim by the date given to them by HMRC. Please ensure you make Parents aware that the review and appeals process, in instances where they disagree with the eligibility outcome, is managed by HMRC and that the Council cannot override any decisions. Foster Parents, who are unhappy about decisions made by the LA, should seek resolution through their social worker, see Section 2.4.

Grace Period - What happens if a Parent loses eligibility?

- They will receive a “grace period” – this means they will be able to keep their Childcare for a short period with their existing Provider.
- Once the “grace period” has lapsed for EFE, the Parent will still be entitled to the universal 15-hour entitlement for 3- & 4-year-olds.
- Once the “grace period” has lapsed for FEEE2W the Parent may be eligible for FEEE2 for families receiving additional support or will need to pay for Childcare until eligible again.
- Once the “grace period” has lapsed for FEEE1W, the Parent will not be entitled to any further funding until eligible again so will need to pay for Childcare.
- A claim for the Working Parent Entitlement cannot be made by a new Provider whilst the Parent is in the Grace Period except in exceptional circumstances, contact EY data for more information.

If a Parent falls into their grace period before the child has started at the setting, they will not be entitled to the Working Parent funding.

2.4 Extending the Working Parent Entitlements to children in foster care

Children in foster care are also eligible for the Working Parent entitlements, providing the child has attained the relevant age and they meet the following additional criteria:

- That accessing the hours is consistent with the child's care plan, placing the child at the centre of the process and decision making.
- That, in single Parent foster families, the foster Parent engages in paid work outside of their role as a foster Parent but does not need to meet the minimum income requirement.
- And in two Parent foster families, both partners engage in paid work outside of their role as a foster Parent but does not need to meet the minimum income requirement. If one partner is not a foster Parent, then they must be in qualifying paid work and earn a minimum of the equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum/national living wage.

The process for foster carers claiming is different as they do not apply for their code through HMRC, see the 6-step process set out below:

1. The child's social worker sends the Essex information pack, which includes an application form, to the foster carer.
2. The foster carer completes application form and sends back to the child's social worker.
3. The child's social worker endorses application by confirming that it is in best interest of the child and sends it to the LA designated person at earlyyearsdata@essex.gov.uk.
4. Early Years Data generates a code on ECS and send it to the child's foster carer and social worker.
5. Foster Carer gives the code to their Provider who will validate the code and claim for the Working Family entitlement on the EYCC Provider Portal.
6. Early Years Data will use the ECS report to help identify which of the codes they issued for children in foster care are approaching reconfirmation. At least 4 weeks before the end-date, Early Years Data should initiate the reconfirmation process. Once they have received confirmation from the social worker that the foster Parents are still eligible, they will update the child's ECS record.

2.5 School Deferral

Careful consideration should be given when discussing deferring a child's school place. A child can only continue to attend their early years Provider until they become of compulsory school age – this date cannot be overridden in any circumstance. Once a child reaches statutory school age i.e., the term after they turn 5, they cannot continue to attend their early years Provider / childminder or receive FEEE funding. A school deferral form should be completed and submitted so that funding can be confirmed. A link to the school deferral form can be found here: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/eycc-sufficiency-and-sustainability/0c266b9b/>

2.6 Provider Eligibility

The Council and the DfE stipulate that to offer the Funded Entitlement all Providers (including childminders registered with a Childminder Agency) must:

- be registered as a Provider of the Early Years Foundation Stage on either the Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate Early Years Register, or the Childminder Agency's register.
- have an Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate judgement of 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires Improvement', 'Exceptional', 'Strong Standard', 'Expected Standard' or 'Needs Attention' to offer the FEEE to three- and four-year-olds and Working Parent entitlements.
- have an Ofsted or Independent School judgement of Outstanding, 'Good', 'Exceptional', 'Strong Standard' or 'Expected Standard' to offer the Early Learning for 2-year-olds entitlement (FEEE2).
- have an Ofsted judgement of effective (Childminder Agency only).
- have a current bank account that they use for their business.
- have a funding Contract with the Council.
- have access to the internet and a business email account.
- meet the independent school standard in relation to the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of pupils.
- actively promote fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- not promote as fact views or theories which are contrary to established scientific or historical evidence and explanations.

In addition, newly registered Providers are eligible to offer the FEEE before their first Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate inspection. However, the outcome of their inspection will determine whether they can continue offering the FEEE and whether they can offer FEEE2 placements.

Childminders

Early years provision is defined in section 20 of the 2006 Act as the provision of childcare. "Childcare", as defined in section 18 of the 2006 Act, specifically excludes care provided for a child by a Parent, stepparent, foster Parent (or other relative) or by a person who fosters the child privately or has parental responsibility for the child. Early years provision by a childminder, either independently registered with Ofsted or registered with a childminder agency, for a related child does not count as childcare in legal terms. Government funding cannot be claimed by, or spent on, childminders providing childcare for their own child or a related child including stepchildren and step grandchildren etc, even if they are claiming for other children. See Section 3.6 for further information on the definition of childcare in relation to childminders claiming FEEE funding.

Nannies

Nannies cannot claim FEEE if they are registered on the Ofsted Voluntary Register. To apply for a FEEE contract a nanny would need to register as a childminder/childcare on domestic premises with Ofsted on the Early Years Register. This does not cover childminders joining the voluntary register.

3. Funded place for nine-months to four-year-olds

Outcome: Eligible Children can take up their full FEEE at times that best support their learning and development, and at times which fit with the needs of the Parents to enable them to work or increase their hours of work should they wish to do so. Eligible Children must be able to access the maximum number of their FEEE funding hours in continuous blocks with no artificial breaks when the funded hours are being taken.

	Entitlement offer
FEEE3&4 - Universal entitlement	up to 15 hours a week (if the offer is stretched over more than 38 weeks the hours per week are reduced) for all 3- and 4-year-olds
FEEE3&4 - Extended entitlement EFE	up to 15 hours a week in addition to the universal entitlement (if the offer is stretched over more than 38 weeks the hours per week are reduced) for eligible 3- and 4-year-olds
FEEE2	up to 15 hours a week (if the offer is stretched over more than 38 weeks the hours per week are reduced) for eligible 2-year-olds
FEEE1W & FEEE2W	up to 30 hours a week, (if the offer is stretched over more than 38 weeks the hours per week are reduced) for eligible 2-year-olds
Length of offer	38 weeks or up to 52 weeks for a stretched offer
Maximum hours per day	10 hours
Number of Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for FEEE3&4, FEEE2W and FEEE1W, Parents can use their funded entitlement over a maximum of two sites or Providers in a single day the FEEE for eligible two-year-olds (FEEE2) may be accessed at one Provider only
Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not before 6.00am or after 8.00pm can be delivered at weekends can be delivered outside of maintained school term times

3.1 The Parent/Carer Agreement Form

It is the responsibility of the Provider to explain to Parents about the Funded Early Education Entitlement and to inform Parents that a claim has been made on their behalf.

All Providers must complete the annual Parent/Carer Agreement Form (PAF) each term with all Parents/carers. This termly requirement remains in place even where a Provider is offering a stretched FEEE offer. The PAF can be returned electronically or completed by hand and can be pre-populated with information, if it is made clear to the Parent that they should read and understand the pre-populated information prior to signing the form. If the PAF cannot be signed immediately on completion, due to Exceptional Circumstances then the form can be completed and sent by email to confirm details, and the Provider must ensure this is signed as soon as is practically possible. The PAF is retained by the Provider and must be made available to officers from the Council to view if requested. Parents must complete and sign the relevant section of the PAF each term or when amendments are made to the PAF for the following reasons:

- Completing and signing the PAF confirms the contractual agreement between the Provider and the Parent for the duration of the term.
- The PAF records the number hours/weeks of FEEE for the duration of the term.
- It informs the Parent that if they decide to move their child after Headcount, they may be liable to pay full fees at the new Provider*.
- For the FEEE3&4, FEE2W and FEEE1W it records whether Parents are accessing funding over one or two Providers to prevent double claims being made.
- It informs Parents of how hours can be taken.
- It informs Parents that additional voluntary charges can be applied for consumables, meals & snacks and optional activities with the Parent's agreement to pay.
- It informs Parents about the restrictions of amending hours in a term.
- It informs Parents what happens if their child starts school.

*except in the circumstance that the Parent has given a notice period during the preceding term that continues past the Headcount Date, in which case the Provider should: -

- not make a claim on the Forecast Headcount
- only add the child to the Actual Headcount with the correct end date
- not claim funding for the whole term

If a Parent gives notice at or before actual Headcount, Providers **must** only claim the relevant number of weeks the child will be attending for the term (this can include your usual notice period. A maximum of 6 weeks funding can be included if your usual notice period is more than 6 weeks). A child should be attending at actual Headcount to submit a claim for the term.

For further details about funding claims when notice has been given by a Parent, please see page 28.

Where Providers are stretching the funding, we have produced a [stretched funding calculator](#) which can be completed with the PAF.

The PAF should be signed by a person who has the authority on behalf of the setting to sign financial documentation.

3.2 Flexibility for all entitlements

Flexibility is not about just offering longer hours, but also about offering different patterns or models of flexibility at the provision. A flexible offer should be meaningful and useful for Parents, promote child development to improve the wellbeing of young children and be workable for Providers.

Providers delivering the FEEE flexibly must ensure that the entitlement is offered to Parents in a way which meets their needs and gives them real choices about how they access a funded place. It is important to offer enough flexibility to meet the requirements of Parents who work, particularly those that work part time.

If it meets their needs, Parents accessing the FEEE3&4, FEEE2W and FEEE1W can split their entitlement between two Providers. If they decide to split their funding, they must complete a PAF for each provision on a termly basis.

Providers do have the option to operate a 'sole provision policy', provided they are offering a minimum of 15 hours entitlement to a child. If a Provider does decide to implement a 'sole provision policy' they must inform Parents that this is their policy, at the time they complete the PAF.

A Provider who wishes to offer a 'stretched' FEEE place (taking fewer hours per week over more weeks of the year) should discuss this option with an EYCC Business Management Consultant to ensure this is implemented correctly. Please see point 5.7 on page 29 for more information on how to stretch FEEE and how to claim the correct FEEE hours for a stretched place on the EYCC Provider Portal.

Providers may choose to deliver the FEEE places in line with the maintained schools term times but there is no requirement to do this.

3.3 Delivery and Additional charges

Government funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of funded, high quality, flexible childcare. The 15 or 30 hours must be able to be accessed free of charge to Parents. Government funding is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional hours or additional services.

An early years Provider **must not** charge parents for the following in connection with the entitlement hours:

- apply any mandatory charges for Parents in relation to the entitlement funded hours.
- charge for any part of the funded hours or 'top up fees' (the difference between what a Provider would normally charge and what the Provider receives from the Council).
- the supply or use of any materials, including but not limited to, craft materials, crayons, paper, books, instruments, toys or other equipment or learning resources that are necessary for the effective delivery of childcare
- business running costs, including but not limited to, rent, staff wages, cleaning materials, insurance or utility bills such as energy, gas or water
- registration fees as a condition of taking up a child's entitlement place
- non-refundable deposits as a condition of taking up a child's entitlement place. The Provider may retain the deposit if the parent does not take up their place. The Provider should make it clear in their written agreements that if a child does not take their place up the deposit will not be refunded
- non-refundable retainer fees in relation to entitlement places.
- general charges, including but not limited to, non-itemised enrichment charges, sustainability charges, business continuity charges, enhanced ratios, hourly rates or any other supplementary charges on top of the funded hours.

Providers can charge Parents for each of the following extras in connection with the free hours, but each charge **must be voluntary** for the Parent:

- consumables to be used by the child, such as nappies or sun cream
- meals and snacks consumed by the child
- extra optional activities such as events, celebrations, specialist tuition (for example music classes or foreign languages) or other activities that are not directly related or necessary for the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.
- charge Parents for any additional, private paid hours according to their usual terms and conditions provided taking up private paid hours is not a condition of accessing a free place.

To ensure Parents can make informed decisions on their choice of Childcare, Providers should publish the cost of each voluntary chargeable extra, the pattern of hours that the entitlement can be taken up and admissions criteria for each of their settings on their website. If they do not have a website, they can publish this information on the local authority Family

Information Services website. These should be clear, up to date and easily accessible to Parents. Childminders and settings with up to 10 children are exempt from publishing this on a website but must have this information available for parents. There is an Essex template of how to set out these costs that Providers can use if they wish to.

Providers must ensure that children can take up their entitlement hours in continuous blocks, and there should be no artificial breaks in the entitlement hours. For example, a Provider should not offer 10am to midday and 1pm to 3pm as entitlement hours and offer only private paid only between midday and 1pm.

It is the responsibility of the Provider to ensure a Parent fully understands the offer and any financial commitments prior to their child taking up their place.

The Council recommend Providers have a FEEE policy for Parents which includes all of this information to enable Parents to make an informed decision on whether the funded hours meet their needs prior to them signing up to access a funded place.

Lunch

- The lunch time can be included as part of the funded hours.
- Any charge for the lunch must be agreed with Parents in advance.
- Parents may be given the option of providing a packed lunch if this is more affordable for them, and in line with the Providers own policy.

Fees and charges

- Information must be given to a Parent that clearly shows that they have received their child's full funded place with no charge, there should be no monetary value attached to the hours that are FEEE funded via the Council.
- Each charge for meals & snacks, consumables and additional activities **must** be voluntary for the Parent. Where Parents are unable or unwilling to pay for one or more of the voluntary charges, Providers are responsible for setting their own policy on how to respond. Providers must offer reasonable alternatives to each of the voluntary charges that allows a parent to access the entitlement hours for free. This could include options to waive the cost of meals & snacks, consumables and additional activities or allowing Parents to supply their own meals & snacks for their child.
- Where the Parent agrees to pay any of the separate voluntary charges, these charges must be agreed in writing with the Parent prior to placement start date and / or the costs being incurred. This should be reconfirmed/reviewed each term.
- Where the Parent does not agree to pay for any of the separate voluntary charges, the offer of funded hours must not be altered. For example, if a Provider's offer for FEEE is 8.00am – 6.00pm, a Provider must not restrict the offer to 1.00pm-6.00pm if a Parent chooses to not pay any of the voluntary charges
- Whilst the rates which a Provider charges for additional hours outside of a child's FEEE place are a private matter between the Provider and the Parent, these must, however, be in line with any discounted rates which are applied to non-funded weekly, sessional, or hourly charges and Parents should not be charged a higher hourly rate than would usually be charged for any additional hours accessed over and above the funded hours.
- If a child is accessing funded hours, any agreed additional service costs must not be more than the cost of an equivalent paid for place.
- Where a child is only accessing funded hours, it is not necessary to provide an invoice. However, Providers must inform Parents that an application for funding has been made on their behalf and ensure they complete a PAF.

	Child accessing FEEE2 hours only	Child accessing FEEE2 hours and paying for private hours	Child accessing FEEE3&4, FEEE2W and FEEE1W hours only	Child accessing FEEE3&4, FEEE2W and FEEE1W hours and paying for private hours
**Registration / Admin / Retainer Fee	Must not charge	*Could be charged for private hours only	Must not charge	Could be charged for private hours only
Deposit – refundable	Must not charge - (Essex requirement, FEEE2 based on financial criteria. Deposit could be a barrier to Parents accessing funding.	*Could be charged up to a maximum of one week’s charges	Could be charged up to a maximum of one week’s charges	Could be charged up to a maximum of one week’s charges
***Consumable - daily charge	Must be voluntary	Must be voluntary	Must be voluntary	Must be voluntary
***Meals & Snacks -daily charge	Must be voluntary	Must be voluntary	Must be voluntary	Must be voluntary
***Additional Activities – daily charge or per activity	Must be voluntary	Must be voluntary	Must be voluntary	Must be voluntary

*The Council would encourage Providers to take the Parents financial circumstances into account and refrain from charging Registration/Admin fees and deposit for FEEE2 children when paying for private hours, where doing so causes a financial pressure and / or means the Parent cannot afford to access the place.

**If a child attends an early years Provider before being eligible for the funded hours a Registration/Admin fee can be charged.

***Voluntary charges can include sun cream, nappies, snacks, meals, trips, specialist tuition, uniform, and extra curricula activities. Charges must be relevant to the age and development stage of a child; therefore, consideration must be given to items included in the consumable charge as to whether a child would be accessing or using the item, Providers must **not** include general business operating costs to deliver the EYFS e.g., paper, paint, photocopying. cleaning and utilities.

Invoicing - See Appendix A & C

All invoices to Parents must be clear and transparent so they can clearly understand what has been charged for. They should include the Providers full details and be clearly itemised and broken down as follows:

- number of funded entitlement hours showing as zero cost and that all hours have been passed onto the Parent
- additional private paid hours and cost per hour/session/day
- food charges, cost per day and how many
- non-food consumable charge, cost per day and how many
- activities charges, cost per day/activity and how many

If you choose to issue equal monthly invoices, be aware this may have a financial impact on the setting and must be fully explained to the Parent.

3.4 Providers not delivering the full FEEE

Some Providers are not able to open for 15 hours a week or the full 38 weeks of the year. In a situation where a child attends two Providers; for example, one Provider offered 33 weeks and the other 38 weeks, the Council will not fund the five weeks' difference. Parents are asked to confirm that they are aware of this on the PAF.

Bank holidays

If a Parent has requested to access their funded entitlement place where a bank holiday falls, then the Provider should inform the Parent before they sign the PAF that they will not be able to access their entitlement on bank holidays. Therefore, they will not receive their full entitlement where there are bank holidays within the funded weeks as these days cannot be taken with another Provider. Providers should not apply any of the voluntary charges for bank holidays if they are not open.

The Council do not require Providers to offer alternative days but would expect them to do so if they have the capacity. If Providers do not have capacity to offer an alternative day, they will still be able to claim the funded entitlement for children who would normally be attending had it not been a bank holiday as they will still incur costs, such as staff wages, even though they are not open. Where a Provider is open and offering funded sessions on a bank holiday, they must ensure they do not apply additional charges to cover any additional costs of opening on a bank holiday.

Training days

Providers can claim FEEE for up 1 day per term when they are open to carry out staff training. Where possible these days should be taken outside of the funded sessions, or alternative hours offered if a setting has availability. Some settings cannot accommodate this as they are not open longer than the funded weeks or do not have availability. If this is the case the Provider should make Parents aware before they sign the PAF that they will lose a day of FEEE per term and will not receive any refund for this day as there is no cash value to the FEEE funding. Providers should not charge for consumables on for training days if they are not open. Providers should also give a minimum of a half term's notice to Parents of any planned closures.

3.5 Providers delivering the funding for Early Learning 2-year-olds (FEEE2)

Where a child is accessing the FEEE2, they may only attend one Provider. The access and delivery of Early Learning 2-year-old entitlement should be offered in the same way as the other entitlements with the exception to split hours between two Providers.

There is still an expectation that FEEE2 children stay at one setting for the duration of the funding. If a child does move Providers, the new Provider is required to submit a Placement Notification to add the child to their setting. The old Provider must add an end date at the next available headcount task. The Council are unable to insist a child remains at a setting if a Parent wants to move their child, however funding can be transferred at the discretion of the first Provider.

3.6 Childminders offering FEEE to related children

The definition of 'childcare' in the Childcare Act 2006 excludes care provided for a child by Parents or any other relatives. In England, the Government has interpreted this to mean that childminders cannot offer a FEEE funded place to any related children, whom they may

already be looking after. This is for all of the funded entitlements; FEEE3&4 universal & EFE, FEEE2, FEEE2W and FEEE1W.

The Childcare Act 2006 Section 18 definition of childcare says the following: -

“Childcare” does not include care provided for a child by—

- (a) a Parent or stepparent of the child.
- (b) a person with parental responsibility for the child.
- (c) a relative* of the child.
- (d) a person who is a local authority foster Parent in relation to the child.
- (e) a person who is a foster Parent with whom the child has been placed by a voluntary organisation.
- (f) a person who fosters the child privately.

*in relation to a child, means a grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother or sister, whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership.

Childminders should use this definition to inform them whether they are able to offer a FEEE funded place to a child from within their extended Family.

3.7 Cross Border Funding

The DfE’s Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance April 2026 states that LAs should fund all Eligible Children attending Providers within their borders including children who live in neighbouring authorities. Essentially the Council will fund all Eligible Children that a Provider claims for regardless of which LA the child resides in.

For children in receipt of the Early Learning 2-year-old entitlement (FEEE2), whose families choose to access their entitlement outside the boundaries of the ‘host’ authority or move between LA areas during their period of entitlement, the following will apply:

- Looked after two-year-olds - The (host) local authority responsible for the care of a two-year-old (under section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989) will pay for the early education entitlement.

3.8 Partnership Working

Providers should work closely in partnership with Parents and other EYCC Providers to improve provision and outcomes for children in their setting. Providers should discuss and agree with Parents how a child’s overall care will work in practice when their funded entitlement is split across different EYCC Providers to ensure a smooth transition for the child.

4. Quality

Outcome: All Eligible Children can take up their entitlement to funded early education in a high-quality setting. Evidence shows that higher quality provision has greater developmental benefits for children, particularly for the most disadvantaged children leading to better outcomes.

It is the Government’s intention that, as far as possible, funded places for FEEE2 children are delivered by Providers who have achieved an overall rating of ‘Outstanding’, ‘Good’, ‘Exceptional’, ‘Strong Standard’ or ‘Expected Standard’ in their most recent Ofsted or

Independent School Inspectorate inspection report.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework is mandatory for all early years Providers in England. The EYFS sets the standards that all early years Providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. Ofsted and Independent School Inspectorate have regard to the EYFS in carrying out inspections and report on the quality and standards of provision.

The Council recognises that the provision of care and education for the youngest children is offered in a wide range of schools/provisions across the maintained, private, voluntary, independent sectors including childminders. The Council welcomes this diversity and will work in partnership with all Providers to ensure that high quality inclusive provision is maintained and offered to all children and their families whichever provision they attend.

4.1 Securing and improving quality

All early years Providers who deliver the FEEE must:

- deliver the full Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- be registered with Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate as an early years Provider or are a school taking children aged three and over and therefore exempt from registration with Ofsted as early years Providers, or a childminder registered with a childminder agency which is itself registered with Ofsted on the early years register.
- submit to an inspection by Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate.
- maintain records about children receiving the FEEE and make that information available to the local authority, Ofsted and Independent School Inspectorate on request.
- actively promote fundamental British values and not promote views or theories as fact which are contrary to established scientific or historical evidence and explanations.
- meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- keep children safe.

The Council will:

- fund places for all of the entitlements at any Provider judged 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Met', 'Exceptional', 'Strong Standard' or 'Expected Standard' on the Early Years Register, or at any childminder registered with a childminder agency judged 'effective' by Ofsted if a Parent wants their child to take up their early education place at that Provider and the Provider is willing to accept the LA funding.
- fund places for nine months to two-year-olds of Working Parents and three- & four-year-old children at any Provider judged 'Requires Improvement' or 'Needs attention' or at any childminder registered with a childminder agency judged 'effective' by Ofsted if a Parent wants their child to take up their early education place at that Provider and the Provider is willing to accept the LA funding.
- not undertake a local authority assessment of the quality of the Provider but rely solely on the Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate inspection judgement of the Provider as the benchmark of quality.

- fund places for all of the entitlements at new Providers registered with Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate until the Provider's first full inspection judgement is published or until the Childminder agency's first full Ofsted inspection judgement is published, if a Parent wants their child to take up their early education place at that Provider and the Provider is willing to accept the LA funding.
- fund Providers with exemptions from the EYFS if a Parent wants their child to take up their early education place at an exempt Provider and the Provider is willing to accept the LA funding.
- consider funding places at Providers who do not meet the quality standards set out above to ensure sufficiency of early education places.
- not fund Providers if they do not actively promote fundamental British values or if they promote as evidence-based views or theories as fact which are contrary to established scientific or historical evidence and explanations.
- only fund places for two-year-old children, in receipt of FEEE2, in 'Inadequate', 'Requires Improvement', Safeguarding standards are "not met", or Leadership and governance is graded either "urgent improvement" or "needs attention" 'Providers where there is not enough accessible 'Outstanding' 'Good', Exceptional, Strong standard or Expected standard provision or where a placement with the Provider has been approved.
- reserve the right to secure alternative provision and withdraw funding from a Provider (other than a local authority-maintained school), as soon as is practicable, when Ofsted publish an inspection judgement of the Provider of 'Inadequate', Safeguarding standards are "not met", or Leadership and governance is graded "urgent improvement" or second ineffective judgement for a childminder agency.
- consider funding childminders who are part of a childminder agency following a second ineffective judgement if the agency has assessed them as being of acceptable quality and Ofsted has not identified any concerns about the childminder agency's assessment arrangements.
- not withdraw funding from Providers or from childminders registered with an agency until the Provider's or childminder agency's inspection judgement is published.
- not fund childminders registered with a childminder agency where the agency has indicated to the LA that the childminder is not of the appropriate quality unless it is necessary to do so to ensure sufficiency of accessible places or support parental choice.
- consider any information published by Ofsted or Independent Schools Inspectorate about a Provider or childminder agency including the recent history about childcare provision by a particular Provider or agency or childcare provision at a particular address. For example, where the Council has concerns that a Provider judged 'Inadequate', or 'Urgent improvement' may have re-registered their setting with to avoid making the quality improvements identified by Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate.
- take appropriate action to improve the quality of provision at a local authority-maintained school which has been judged by Ofsted to require significant improvement or has been placed in special measures.
- review FEEE funding if a Provider is suspended during the term. FEEE funding will be considered on a case-by-case basis for the weeks the Provider is closed. If a child

attends an alternative Provider, funding must be transferred to the new Provider for the relevant number of weeks/hours the child attends the new Provider.

4.2 Exemption from the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is mandatory for all early years Providers, maintained, non-maintained and independent schools and all early years Providers on the Early Years Register.

- The EYFS exemptions arrangements introduces a route for good quality independent schools, as well as maintaining a more streamlined 'established principles' route.
- The Childcare Act 2006 does not allow for any exemptions from the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS.

The Council will:

- fund Providers who have exemptions from the EYFS Learning and Development requirements if a Parent wants their child to attend that Provider.
- fund Providers for children who have exemptions from the EYFS Learning and Development requirements.

The exemptions from the Learning and Development requirements can be downloaded from [Early years foundation stage - GOV.UK](#)

4.3 Inspection judgements and specified grades

Following an 'Inadequate', 'Requires Improvement', Safeguarding standards are "not met", or Leadership and governance is graded either "urgent improvement" or "needs attention", the Council will allocate someone from the local Early Years team. to:

- work in collaboration with the Provider to compile an intervention plan.
- ensure key actions are clearly identified to raise the quality of provision.
- establish clearly defined timescales for improvements to be made by the Provider.
- maintain regular liaison with the Provider to ensure progress remains on track.
- monitor the impact and effectiveness of improvements made to the provision within a clearly defined timescale.
- co-ordinate any further support required such as in-house training, signpost to CPD opportunities.
- report back to the Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency & Sustainability Manager on the progress made at the end of intervention period.

The Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities April 2026 outlines the circumstances in which local authorities are not required to make arrangements with providers for the delivery of the free entitlements following receipt of 'specified grade' after an inspection by Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate. Therefore:

- following an Inadequate, Requires Improvement, Safeguarding standards are "not met", Leadership and governance is graded either "urgent improvement" or "needs attention" or ineffective judgement, any further places for FEEE2 children will be subject to approval by the Council's Early Years & Childcare Sufficiency & Sustainability Manager.

- decisions about the next steps for each individual early years Provider, including withdrawal of funding will be made on a case-by-case scenario by the Council's Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency & Sustainability Manager.
- the Council will issue a letter to the setting outlining any decision made about suspension of funding and any subsequent interventions/actions to be taken, including relevant timescales.

4.4 Integrated Reviews for FEEE2 children

Providers should make all reasonable efforts to ensure an integrated review is undertaken for all FEEE2 children attending their setting in liaison with the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (Family Hubs). Support can be accessed from the Early Years and Childcare team by emailing FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk

5. Funding FEEE places

Outcome: Fair and transparent funding which supports a diverse range of Providers to deliver funded places on a sustainable basis and encourages existing Providers to expand and new Providers to enter the childcare market. This diversity enables Parents to choose a Provider that best meets the needs of their child and Family and enables them to access their child's maximum entitlement.

5.1 FEEE funding for nine months-, two-, three- and four-year-olds:

The entitlement is divided into three terms ranging from eleven to fourteen weeks which mirror the school terms, 38 weeks in total.

Entitlement	FEEE hours over a financial year
FEEE3&4 universal (all children) – 15 hours per week	570 hours
FEEE3&4 EFE (if eligible) – 15 hours per week	Additional 570 hours = a total of 1140 hours
FEEE2 (if eligible) – 15 hours per week	570 hours
FEEE2W (if eligible) – 30 hours per week	1140 hours
FEEE1W (if eligible)– 30 hours per week	1140 hours

The Council will fund Providers to offer a minimum of 33 weeks per financial year up to a maximum of 52 (stretched offer). Please see section 5.7 for more information on how to stretch FEEE and claim on the EYCC Provider Portal.

Please note: Providers must only claim hours that children are attending their provision. For example, Providers must not claim 15 hours per week when children are only attending 14 hours. If a Parent has signed the PAF that states their child will receive 15 hours per week this must be honoured. Claiming for more hours than a child attends is a breach of Contract.

However, this is not the case if you are stretching FEEE over more than 38 weeks. For example, if you are stretching FEEE over 50 weeks the entitlement is reduced to an average of 11.4 hours per week over a financial year, but you will need to claim the maximum FEEE hours available for the relevant term, e.g., in summer term 2026 15 hours per week for 13 weeks. You will not be claiming more hours than the child attends as you will be claiming for the number of hours that the child is accessing over a longer period than the funded weeks

during the relevant term. This approach is required due to the EYCC Provider Portal only allowing for termly submissions please see point 5.7 for more information.

See the table below for a breakdown of the maximum number of hours that can be claimed in the 2026/27 contractual year:

Term	Inclusive term dates	Duration of FEEE	Equivalent in hours
Summer 2026	13/04/2025 - 17/07/2026	13 weeks	13 weeks x 15 hours = 195 hours 13 weeks x 30 hours = 390 hours
Autumn 2026	01/09/2026 - 11/12/2026 or 07/09/2026 - 18/12/2026	14 weeks	14 weeks x 15 hours = 210 hours 14 weeks x 30 hours = 420 hours
Spring 2027	04/01/2027 - 26/03/2027	11 weeks	11 weeks x 15 hours = 165 hours 11 weeks x 30 hours = 330 hours

NB: If the offer is fewer than 38 weeks the Provider must make it clear to Parents in writing before they accept a place as to how many weeks are offered and that if the Parent requires more weeks or hours then they should seek an alternative place.

5.2 FEEE Funding Rates

The table below outlines the hourly rates that the Council pays Providers for FEEE entitlements.

Provider classification	FEEE3&4 (15 hours & EFE)	FEEE2	FEEE2W	FEEE1W
Maintained nursery school	£5.92	£8.42	£8.42	£11.42
*Maintained nursery school supplement	£5.47	n/a	n/a	n/a
Maintained school and academy nursery class	£5.92	£8.42	£8.42	£11.42
Childminder/CMA	£5.92	£8.42	£8.42	£11.42
Day nurseries & independent schools	£5.92	£8.42	£8.42	£11.42
Pre-schools	£5.92	£8.42	£8.42	£11.42

* Separate supplement paid only to Maintained Nursery Schools - in Essex this is Tanglewood and Woodcroft Maintained Nursery Schools

FEEE 3&4 Deprivation supplement - paid at 10p / 20p / 30p per funded hour for each Eligible Child whose postcode is within the 30% / 20% / 10% IDACI wards. This funding is added automatically to the Actual Headcount payments where children you are claiming FEEE3&4 for live in an eligible postcode.

Teachers Pay and Pensions Grant (TPPG) - paid to eligible schools per funded hour. This funding is calculated based on the number of 3- and 4-year-olds accessing their universal and EFE entitlement in eligible schools.

Early Years NICS and Teachers Pay Grant (EYNTPG) – paid to eligible schools per funded hour. This funding is calculated based on the number of FEEE hours claimed for all entitlements in eligible schools.

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is additional funding for early years settings to improve the provision for Eligible Children. This means that for low-income families, Providers are entitled to receive additional funding of £1.15 per hour for up to 15 funded hours per week, for all funding entitlements.

Where a child attends a single setting, the EYPP will be applied as follows:

Age	Working Parent Funding
FEEE1W	Maximum of 15 hours EYPP against the Expanded/Extended Hours
FEEE2W only	Maximum of 15 hours EYPP against the Expanded/Extended Hours
FEEE2 only	Maximum of 15 hours EYPP against the Universal/Funded Hours
FEEE2W & FEEE2	Maximum of 15 hours EYPP against the Universal/Funded Hours
FEEE3-4 (Incl. EFE)	Maximum of 15 hours EYPP against the Universal/Funded Hours

Where a child attends 2 settings, the EYPP will be applied as follows:

FEEE1W	If both settings are claiming more than 7.5 hours, EYPP will be applied against 7.5 hours at both. If one setting is claiming less than 7.5 hours, the other setting will receive the full EYPP up to the maximum 15 hours.
FEEE2W only	If both settings are claiming more than 7.5 hours, EYPP will be applied against 7.5 at both. If one setting is claiming less than 7.5 hours, the other setting will receive the full EYPP up to the maximum 15 hours.
FEEE2 only	N/A – FEEE2 should only be claimed at one setting.
FEEE2W & FEEE2	The EYPP will be applied to the Universal/Funded (FEEE2) Hours only, up to 15 hours, even if Expanded/Extended Hours are claimed.
FEEE3-4 (incl. EFE)	The EYPP will be applied to the Universal/Funded Hours only, up to 15 hours, even if Expanded/Extended Hours are claimed.

To benefit from this additional funding, we would encourage Providers to check with Parents accessing the FEEE whether they meet the criteria for EYPP: [Get extra funding for your early years provider - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk). It is important to stress to Parents that no other Parents will know they have been assessed, and it will not affect any other benefits they may be claiming as this is purely additional funding for Providers to support children receiving the FEEE.

If a Parent confirms they are eligible for EYPP, they will need to enter their details on the PAF. These details will then be entered on the 'Parent/Guardian Details' tab of the child record on the EYCC Provider Portal at Headcount.

Further information about the EYPP and how to claim it can be accessed here: [Early years pupil premium](#)

5.3 FEEE Funding paid via Childminding Agencies:

All the funding paid to Childminders registered with an agency to deliver funded places must be paid to the Childminders or Providers. The Council should ensure that none of the funding from the FEEE, EYPP, SENIF and DAF paid to childminders or Providers is retained by the agency.

5.4 Funding children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) –

If a child with SEND is not accessing their full FEEE, the Council will not provide funding equivalent to the child taking up a full place (up to the maximum hours), enabling 'surplus' funding to be used to support the child.

Providers will only be able to claim FEEE for the hours the child attends, if they need additional support to include the child in all FEEE activities they may apply for Special Education Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF). Where SENIF is paid for FEEE hours attended, only FEEE hours claimed through either the actual headcount or the amendment headcount tasks will be eligible. For more information, please email EY.resourcepanel@essex.gov.uk Please refer to Schedule B for more information on SENIF.

5.5 Disability Access Fund

The Council will fund all early years settings providing a place for each child eligible for the Disability Access Fund (DAF) in Essex Local Authority at the fixed annual rate of £975 per eligible child.

The DAF is payable as a lump sum once a year per eligible child for all of the entitlements. If a child eligible for the DAF is splitting their funded entitlement across two or more Providers, Parents should nominate the main setting which will receive the DAF for the child, the DAF is paid to one setting only.

If a child receiving DAF moves from one setting to another within a financial year, the new setting is not eligible to receive DAF funding for this child within the same financial year. DAF funding received by the original setting will not be recouped.

In cases where a child who lives in one LA area attends a Provider in a different LA, the Provider's LA is responsible for funding the DAF for the child and eligibility checking.

All early years Providers who are eligible to receive FEEE funding are also eligible to receive the DAF.

The process for Providers to claim is as follows:

- Parents of children qualifying for Disability Living Allowance will be required to provide the setting with evidence of the entitlement. Providers will need to take a copy of any documentation that evidences eligibility.
- Provider is required to supply a copy of the evidence and details of the child qualifying. Please follow the instructions available here [Disability access fund](#)
- The payment will then be made to that Provider.
- The Parent will be required to provide evidence on an annual basis – payment in any further financial years will not be automatic. The process will need to be followed every financial year that the child qualifies for DAF.

5.6 Headcount (Term dates & Payment dates)

The Headcount Date is set on specific dates in the school term to ensure that all Providers are open.

The funding is offered on a term-time only basis, in line with the published Essex School term dates. Childcare accessed outside of this grant funded period can be charged at any pre-agreed fees/rates unless the Provider is stretching the FEEE. If this is the case, then Providers can only charge for hours accessed beyond the universal entitlement 570 or extended entitlement 1140 yearly maximum set out on a termly basis.

All Headcount Data must be submitted in hours by the Headcount submission dates each term as follows:

Term	Funding Dates	Funded Weeks	Headcount Day	DfE Census Day	DfE Census Deadline
Summer 2026	13/04/2025 - 17/07/2026	13	23/04/2026	21/05/2026	17/07/2026
Autumn 2026	01/09/2026 - 11/12/2026 Or 07/09/2026 - 18/12/2026	14	10/09/2026	01/10/2026	04/12/2026
Spring 2027	04/01/2027 - 26/03/2027	11	21/01/2027	21/01/2027	02/04/2027

Headcount task and payment dates are as follows for: Preschools, Maintained Nursery Schools & Maintained/Academy Nursery classes.

Term	Headcount Task	Headcount collection dates	Payment date
Summer 2026	Forecast	16/03/2026 - 20/03/2026	First 2 Weeks of Term
Summer 2026	Actual	20/04/2026 - 24/04/2026	11/06/2026
Summer 2026	DfE Census	18/05/2026 – 22/05/2026	End of Term
Summer 2026	Amendment	15/06/2026 - 24/06/2026	End of Term
Autumn 2026	Forecast	06/07/2026 - 10/07/2026	First 2 Weeks of Term
Autumn 2026	Actual	07/09/2026 - 11/09/2026	29/10/2026
Autumn 2026	DfE Census	05/10/2026 – 09/10/2026	End of Term
Autumn 2026	Amendment	16/11/2026 - 25/11/2026	End of Term
Spring 2026/27	Forecast	07/12/2026 - 11/12/2026	First 2 Weeks of Term
Spring 2026/27	Actual	18/01/2027 - 27/01/2027	11/03/2027
Spring 2026/27	Amendment	01/03/2027 - 05/03/2027	End of Term

For Preschools, Maintained Nursery Schools & Maintained/Academy Nursery classes the interim payment of 50% is made at the beginning of each term, based on the Forecast

Headcount that is completed towards the end of the previous term. The payment of the remaining balance after the Actual Headcount submission will be made within 6 weeks of the Actual Headcount task deadline date by BACS or Journal transfer. The Council endeavour to make payments as quickly as possible after Headcount Day, but Providers should not rely on receiving these sooner than 7 weeks after the Headcount Day as this is the contracted payment timescale the Council commits too.

Business Management Consultant will be notified of any requests for early payment of FEEE funding and will contact the Provider to offer support and guidance with cashflow and business models. Acceptance of this offer of support will be mandatory for Preschools, Maintained Nursery Schools & Maintained/Academy Nursery classes requesting early FEEE payments.

Headcount task and payment dates are as follows for: Childminders, Childminder Agencies and Day Nurseries.

Term	Headcount Task	Headcount Collection Dates	Payment Month	Payment Breakdown	Payment By Date
Summer 2026	Forecast	16/03/2026 - 20/03/2026	April	25% of Forecast Hours	13 th April
			May	25% of Forecast Hours	13 th May
	Actual	20/04/2026 - 24/04/2026	June	33% of remaining balance after Forecast payments	12 th June
			July	33% of remaining balance after Forecast payments	13 th July
			August	33% of remaining balance after Forecast payments	13 th August
	DfE Census & Amendment	18/05/2026 - 22/05/2026 & 15/06/2026 - 24/06/2026	-	Any additional hours added after Actual	31 st August
Autumn 2026	Forecast	06/07/2026 – 10/07/2026	September	25% of Forecast Hours	11 th September
			October	25% of Forecast Hours	13 th October
	Actual	07/09/2026 - 11/09/2026	November	25% of remaining balance after Forecast payments	13 th November
			December	25% of remaining balance after	12 th December

				Forecast payments	
	DfE Census & Amendment	05/10/2026 - 09/10/2026 & 16/11/2026 - 25/11/2026	-	Any additional hours added after Actual	31 st December
Spring 2026/27	Forecast	07/12/2026 - 11/12/2026	January	25% of Forecast Hours	13 th January
			February	25% of Forecast Hours	12 th February
	Actual	18/01/2027 - 27/01/2027	March	100% of remaining balance after Forecast payments	12 th March
	Amendment	01/03/2027 - 05/03/2027	-	Any additional hours added after Actual	31 st March

For Childminders, Childminder Agencies and Day Nurseries payments are made monthly as detailed above. Please note there is no availability to request early payment of FEEE funding with monthly payments.

IMPORTANT: For any Childminders, Childminder Agencies and Day Nurseries who do not submit a Forecast Headcount task the first payment made will be in the 3rd month of that term.

The dates above are subject to change as there may be a cause to delay the Headcount tasks subject to any issues with the previous payment process. Data will only be accepted electronically via the EYCC Provider Portal. Details of how this must be completed will be advised prior to each Headcount. Please note that to run the forecast headcount before the end of term, late claims now finish 3 weeks before the end of the funding term. Providers will not be able to make a late claim for children that start in the last 3 weeks of term.

NB: Completion of Headcount Data and the Early Years Termly Census (or School Census in the case of Maintained Primary Schools with Designated Nursery Classes and Maintained Nursery Schools) is a statutory requirement that all Providers must complete. It is essential to submit accurate data in the correct format to avoid delays in payment.

For all purposes the Council will fund children from the first week (where there are three or more days in that week) following the start of the Essex maintained school term.

Four-year-olds starting school and registered in a maintained school or academy reception class children are not eligible for FEEE funding.

FEEE funding will be payable to a Provider if the following conditions are met:

- The children included in the Headcount are registered and attending the provision on the day of the Headcount.
- Any children included in the Headcount who are ill or otherwise absent during that week, must be genuinely expected to take their place during that term.
- If a child joins after Headcount Date a late claim can be submitted provided the conditions in the Contract are applied and they have not claimed FEEE at any other provision within Essex for that term. The Late Claim should be submitted on the

Amendment Headcount task, ensuring the child's Start Date and the weeks claimed are submitted correctly.

- Where children access their place intermittently e.g., transient families such as traveller children or refugee children, it is the local authority's policy to fund for the duration of the term.
- Parents cannot amend the number of funded hours they wish their child to take after Headcount Day. The PAF that was signed at the beginning of the term between the Provider and the Parent clearly indicates this. Increased hours can only be made on a termly basis.
- Providers are required to add, amend, and delete data to their Provider record on the EYCC Provider Portal
- Providers are required to update EYCC Provider Portal each term to ensure accuracy. This includes prompt notification of changes to the funding contact at the provision or any change to bank account details. This also provides up-to-date childcare sufficiency information which is a requirement of the FEEE funding contract.
- Providers registered to deliver FEEE with the Council must agree to admit, at any reasonable time, authorised officers of the Council or their agents. Failure to admit staff or regularly cancelling pre-agreed appointments may also lead to the withdrawal of the FEEE Contract.

If a child moves part way through a term, it is at the discretion of the Provider where the child is attending on Headcount Day whether funding can be transferred. In these instances, the Council expects the funding to be paid forward by **BACS transfer between the two Providers** and adjustments **should not** be made via the amendment Headcount.

Where notice has been given, please use the following as guidance for what can/cannot be claimed on the Headcount:

Notice Given before/after Headcount Day	Child in attendance on Headcount Day	Child attending another setting on Headcount Day	Claim
Before	Yes	No	Add leave date to Actual Headcount. Only claim notice period, not full term
Before	No	No	Unable to claim funding. Invoice Parent for notice period
Before	No	Yes	Unable to claim funding. Invoice Parent for notice period, or speak with parent/other setting to determine if funding can be released for notice
Before - in previous term	Yes	No	Add leave date to Actual Headcount. Only claim notice period, not full term
After	Yes	No	Able to claim funding for full term

After	No	Yes	Unable to claim funding. Invoice Parent for notice period, or speak with Parent/other setting to determine if funding can be released for notice
After	No	No	Unable to claim funding. Invoice Parent for notice period, or if Parent re-joins later, add child to the Amendment Headcount.

Where a Parent gives notice to amend their funded hours (either increase or decrease), this cannot be done after Headcount Day as documented on the PAF. If Parents give notice to amend their hours before Headcount Day, Providers should only claim the agreed funded hours as at Headcount Day. Parents should be made aware that this may result in additional charges for any extra hours taken prior to Headcount Day if decreasing their claim.

If a Provider does not apply the correct end date for a child after an agreed notice period, the Council reserves the right to override the end date on the EYCC Provider Portal

If a child moves to Essex part way through a term from another LA, the previous Provider should be contacted to see if the funding can be transferred. If this is not possible, funding can be applied for at amendment Headcount.

A Headcount Demonstration will be held via Microsoft Teams twice a term. The dates scheduled for the next year are as follows:

Term	Date / Time	Link to Join Teams Meeting
Summer 26	Thursday, 16 th April 18:00 – 20:00	Click here to join the meeting
Summer 26	Tuesday, 21 st April 10:00 – 12:00	Click here to join the meeting
Autumn 26	Tuesday, 8th September 10:00 - 12:00	Click here to join the meeting
Autumn 26	Thursday, 10th September 18:00 - 20:00	Click here to join the meeting
Spring 27	Thursday, 14th January 10:00 - 12:00	Click here to join the meeting
Spring 27	Tuesday, 19th January 18:00 - 20:00	Click here to join the meeting

5.7 Stretching the FEEE

Stretching the FEEE means that the weekly entitlement is reduced to allow for hours to be taken over more weeks, but the entitlement for the whole financial year remains the same, either 570 or 1140 depending on the child's entitlement. Therefore, if Providers are open for 50 weeks the entitlement would be reduced to an average of 11.4 hours per week, or a total of up to 22.8 hours per week averaged out over the financial year.

Funding is offered on a term-time only basis (38 weeks per year), however you can agree to stretch the funding, giving fewer hours per week over more weeks per year.

You will still only claim the funded weeks on each Headcount task and apply the stretch at your end in agreement with the parent. This means you will need to calculate how many funded hours you need to claim to cover the stretch. You can use the Stretched Funding Calculator or use the following calculation:

Attendance Weeks Per Term x Attendance Hours Per Week = Total Attendance Per Term
Total Attendance Per Term / Funded Weeks for Term = Headcount Hours per Week

You can also stretch the funding annually, giving the Parent the same number of funded hours each week for all 3 terms, however you must ensure you keep a running total of funded hours claimed vs attendance hours in case the child leaves after 1 or 2 terms, leaving an outstanding balance. If stretching annually you can use the following calculation:

Attendance Weeks per Year x Attendance Hours per Week / 38 Funded weeks = Headcount Hours Per Week

The headcount hours per week should be added to the PAF to ensure the Parent is clear how many funded hours you are claiming and how many hours are remaining to claim elsewhere if they wish.

Examples

Termly stretch based on 12 hours per week, all year:

Attendance Weeks Per Term x Attendance Hours Per Week = Total Attendance Per Term

Total Attendance Per Term / Funded Weeks for Term = Headcount Hours per Week

Summer: 22 weeks x 12 hours = 264 total hours. 264 hours / 13 funded weeks = 20.31 headcount hours

Autumn: 18 weeks x 12 hours = 216 total hours. 216 hours / 14 weeks = 15.42 headcount hours

Spring: 12 weeks x 12 hours = 144 total hours. 144 hours / 11 weeks = 13.09 headcount hours

Annual stretch based on 12 hours per week, all year:

Attendance Weeks per Year x Attendance Hours per Week / 38 Funded weeks = Headcount Hours Per Week

52 weeks x 12 hours = 624 total hours. 624 hours / 38 funded weeks = 16.42 headcount hours.

Claim maximum funded weeks (Summer 13, Autumn 14, Spring 11) x 16.42 each term.

Where you are stretching the offer, and the Parent is accessing their maximum entitlement you need to ensure you claim for the maximum hours per week allowed for the funded weeks even though the child may be attending fewer hours per week. You will not be claiming more hours than the child attends because you are stretching the offer and will be claiming for the number of hours that the child is accessing over a longer period than the funded weeks.

To ensure Providers and Parents are both clear on the funded hours needed per week to stretch the funding, a Stretched Funding Calculator can be found here

<https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/funding/funded-early-education-entitlement/parent-carer-agreement-forms/>

5.8 Changes in situation

Temporary closures

If a provision closes during a term the Provider should inform the Council within 72 hours to let them know the reason for the closure. In an emergency or Exceptional Circumstances such as bad weather, temporary premises, national pandemic or health and safety issues where closure may be short term, such situations will be looked upon sympathetically and case by case. The Council will decide whether any funding will be required to be repaid. If children must attend another Provider during the temporary closure, the funding must follow the child.

Providers closing part way through a term

If a Provider closes and ceases to trade, they should inform the Council immediately at earlyyearsdata@essex.gov.uk to let them know the date of closure and the reason. Under the terms of the Contract with the LA the Provider is expected to give at least 6 weeks' notice and repay any monies due to the Council.

Where a Provider ceases to trade, any funding that is overpaid will be required to be repaid within 30 days of notification. The Council has a process for managing overpayments where consideration will be made to the value of the debt, whether the company is still trading and still at the registered address, and whether there is a Parent company. A legal process will follow to recover the debt.

Change of ownership

If a Provider sells or buys a business, they should inform Early Years and Childcare by emailing earlyyearsdata@essex.gov.uk and request the link to seller and buyer change of ownership form.

Change in Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate registration number

A new Early Education Funding contract will need to be signed, and a new Provider Portal account may need to be set up if Ofsted or Independent School Inspectorate issue a new EY registration number. Email earlyyearsdata@essex.gov.uk to request a new contract. You may be able to retain your existing Provider Portal account if the named person is still in place.

Child's non-attendance

If a child is absent from the setting for more than 4 weeks, please inform the funding team at FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk. The Council will decide on a case-by-case basis whether any repayment of FEEE will be required.

5.9 Overpayment of FEEE funding

Once amendment Headcount has been finalised if any Providers have been overpaid funding for the term, they will be notified by the Council. If funding is claimed the following term the overpayment will be deducted from funding due for the term. If funding is not claimed the following term, an invoice will be raised for repayment of amount within 30 days. Overpayments must be repaid by the end of the relevant financial year.

6. Data Collections

6.1 Childcare Sufficiency

All Providers offering the FEEE funding are required to submit a termly return of Childcare Sufficiency information to the Council via the EYCC Provider Portal, or by whatever format

requested by the Council. This is to ensure Provider record details are kept up to date on a termly basis by completing the occupancy and places data return. The Council reserves the right to withhold FEEE payments where Childcare Sufficiency information has not been submitted within the required timeline.

6.2 FEEE Audit

The Council will undertake FEEE audit checks with Providers throughout the year. Providers will be expected to complete the FEEE audit on request from the Council. A visit may be required to discuss any concerns highlighted. Failure to respond to a FEEE audit request or actions could lead to the Council withholding FEEE payments until audit and actions have been completed. The Council will maintain a risk register of Providers to check for compliance.

6.3 Better Start

Providers are required to submit termly development progress data for children accessing FEEE2 and FEEE2W funding on the Provider Portal using the Better Start tab. Failure to submit progress data could lead to the Council withholding FEEE payments.

6.4 Early Years Termly Census

In the 2026/27 Financial Year the Early Years Census will be collected termly, compared to previous years when data was only collected in the Spring term. The termly Census dates are as follows:

Term	Census Day	Census Collection Dates
Summer-26	25 th May 2026	18 th May – 29 th May
Autumn-26	1 st October 2026	28 th September – 9 th October
Spring-27	21 st January 2027	18 th January – 29 th January

The required data will be collected via the Self Update section of the Provider Portal and submitted to the DfE with your Headcount data for that term. Full details of the required data can be found here: [Early years census 2026-27 financial year](#)

6.5 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

For children who have deferred their school place and will be going into Year 1 when they leave after the summer term, the EYFSP must be completed and submitted when requested.

7. Help with queries

It is the responsibility of the Provider to ensure that all supporting information and guidance is given and explained to Parents before committing to accessing a place. Parent/Carer Agreement Forms will be checked as part of any future audit checks.

The Council will give the appropriate help and support to Providers where this is required. Please note all queries should be made by email to the relevant mailbox as set out below. In all cases, the needs and best interests of the child should be paramount.

FEEEQueries@essex.gov.uk – Early Years and Childcare

For queries relating to the FEEE contract or Provider Handbook

2yearold@essex.gov.uk – Data Collection and Maintenance Team

For queries relating to:

- FEEE2 applications
- payments for two-year-olds
- Better Start data submissions

earlyyearsdata@essex.gov.uk – **Data Collection and Maintenance Team**

For queries relating to:

- the EYCC Provider Portal (including log in/password queries)
- headcount, late claims, and Early Years Census submissions
- Working Parent entitlements
- the registration of provisions, updating of bank account and contact details

BMC@essex.gov.uk - **EYCC Business Management Consultants (BMC)**

For information, advice and guidance for Providers in starting, managing, expanding, and sustaining a quality childcare business

CCDL@essex.gov.uk – **Children Community Development Leads (CCDL)**

For queries on the development of sufficient FEEE places and Childcare Sufficiency.

workforcedevelopment@essex.gov.uk - **EYCC Workforce Development Team**

For queries relating to workforce development and training

Ey.resourcepanel@essex.gov.uk – Early Years Resource Panel

For queries relating to SENIF

Compliments and Complaints visit Essex County Council website via

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/complaints>

Appendix A – Invoice example:

Provider Logo
 Provider name
 Provider address line 1
 Provider address line 2
 Provider postcode

Ofsted EY Number:

Parent name
 Parent address line 1
 Parent address line 2
 Parent postcode

Invoice Date
 Invoice number/refence

Invoice for [INSERT CHILD NAME] for [INSERT TIME PERIOD e.g., term]		
Attendance pattern [INSERT HOURS / SESSIONS / DAYS] This example: Monday, Thursday, Friday mornings 9-12. Tuesday and Wednesday all day 9-3		
Item	Breakdown	Cost
Funded Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) hours	12 x Monday to Friday Mornings (9am to 12noon) 15 hours per week for 12-week term	0
Additional sessions / hours	12 x Tuesday afternoon £12 (1pm to 3pm at £6 per hour)	£144
	12 x Wednesday afternoon £12 (1pm to 3pm at £6 per hour)	£144
Additional costs	12 x Tuesday lunch club £6	£72
	12 x Wednesday lunch club £6	£72
Total amount due		£432

Payment terms
Payment is due on first day of the term [INSERT DATE]
Payment can be paid in two equal instalments of £216 on [insert date] and [insert date]
Payment to be made by Standing Order or Bank Transfer Bank account name Bank sort code Bank account number

Appendix B

Chargeable extras template: how to set out costs on your website

[Opening text for providers to give information about the services that they offer]

Description	Unit	Unit price	Line total
Funded entitlement hours –xxx hours per week (most not have a charge). [enter number of free hours per week, explain any stretched offer provided]	Weekly	Free	Free
Additional hours purchased – xxx hours per week [enter number of hours per week]	Weekly		£
Meals/snacks [Explain how many meals are provided and the type of meals]	Daily		£
Consumables (for example, nappies and sun cream) [Provide details of the charges made for consumables and <u>itemised</u> details of what these charges relate to.]	Daily		£
Additional voluntary services (for example, trips, forest school sessions or foreign language lessons) [Provide details of the charges made for additional services and itemised details of what these charges relate to.]	Daily/per activity		£
		Total	£

[If you allow Tax Free Childcare or Universal Credit Childcare to claim back some of the costs, explain how this works in your setting here]

If you do not wish to pay for specific consumables, for example because you wish to provide your own, please make your nursery aware so next steps can be discussed.

Appendix C - Guide for an Admission/FEEE Policy and Invoice

The information listed below is a useful guide as to what needs to be included in an admission and FEEE policy for a setting offering Funded Entitlement places in Essex. Your policy must provide clear and transparent information so parents can understand how funded hours are applied.

You must start by stating the below information:

As an Ofsted registered early years provider you are legally bound to meet the requirements of the Ofsted regulations, and the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework published by the Department for Education.

Detail your criteria for admitting children into your setting and managing your waiting list (if applicable) by explaining how places are prioritised. This may be, for example, by:

- Children in need
- Looked after children
- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Siblings of children already in your setting
- Early Learning for 2-year-olds (FEEE2).

The criteria you choose is entirely at your discretion. It must be available for any parent who wishes to see it, and it needs to be adhered to.

Opening hours of setting and hours when funding is available

State the opening hours of the setting, for example:

- 9am – 3pm Monday to Friday 38 weeks of the year (term time only)
- 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday 51 weeks of the year

State the days and times that your setting will make funded hours available to parents. It must be clear to parents' which days and times funded hours are available to use without paying for additional private hours. You must not restrict the FEEE hours by age, the FEEE hours offered must be available for all children to access for all the entitlements you offer.

There must not be any artificial breaks when the funded hours are being accessed e.g. 9am-12pm and then 1pm-4pm.

The maximum number of funded hours which can be accessed in one day is 10 hours. If the setting is open for longer than 10 hours, then hours outside of the 10 hours must be voluntary.

An example of a compliant offer, but your offer may vary:

- 9am – 3pm Monday to Friday 38 weeks of the year (term time only) - 6 funded hours per day
- 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday 51 weeks of the year – 10 funded hours per day 8am to 6pm with option to pay for 1 hour 7-8am

State the funding streams you offer:

- Early Learning for 2-year-olds Entitlement (FEEE2 15 hours)
- Universal Entitlement for all 3- & 4-year-olds (FEEE3&4 15 hours)
- Eligible Working Parent Entitlement for 3- & 4-year-olds (FEEE3&4 EFE 15 hours)
- Eligible Working Parent Entitlement for 9 months – 2 years old (FEEE1W & FEEE2W 30 hours)

FEEE2 can only be claimed by one provider, other entitlements can be split between 2 providers

Weeks per year – Term time and Stretched

You can offer funding for 38 weeks (term time) or choose to stretch the funding claim over 39 to 51 weeks of the year. You can offer both term time and stretched offer if you wish to. If you offer stretched weeks, then there may be some unused residual hours. You need to state whether and how these would be offered, so parents are aware that they may not be able to access their full entitlement. These must be offered as hours only and cannot be shown as a cash value.

Explain to parents how many hours per week they can access when 15/30 hours are stretched over how many weeks the offer is.

Essex recommends stretching the funded per term, for example:

Term	Weeks in each term	Maximum stretched weekly entitlement	Funded weeks in term	Number of FEEE hours
Summer	19	10.26	13	195
Autumn	17	12.35	14	210
Spring	12	13.75	11	165
Total per year	48		38	570

Alternatively, the funded can be stretched on an annual basis. When stretching the funding annually this should be over a financial year and not academic year. Funding is paid on a financial year, so rates are subject to change each April. If stretching over an academic year this may have financial implications to either the setting or families.

	48 weeks - FEEE offered 5 hours per day	51 weeks FEEE offered 10 hours per day
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570 hours per year	10 hours per week (2 days) 10 x 48 = 480 hours. Leaves 90 hours	10 hours per week (1 day) 10 x 51 = 510 hours. Leaves 60 hours
1140 hours per year	20 hours per day (4 days) 20 x 48 = 960 hours. Leaves 280 hours	20 hours per week (2 days) 20 x 51 = 1020. Leaves 120 hours

You can only claim the residual hours when a child is attending for more than their Funded Entitlement hours. The residual Funded hours can be offset against private hours paid for additional days if the parents want additional days.

Voluntary Chargeable Extras

These are all additional voluntary charges that parents may incur when accessing funded hours. These costs should be clearly detailed within the policy with a breakdown of the individual cost of the following areas, which have been accessed by the child, where these are offered.

- *consumables to be used by the child, such as nappies or sun cream.*
- *meals and snacks consumed by the child.*
- *extra optional activities such as events, celebrations, specialist tuition (for example music classes or foreign languages) or other activities that are not directly related or necessary for the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.*
- *Providers can also charge for any additional, private paid hours according to their usual terms and conditions provided taking up private paid hours is not a condition of accessing a free place.*
- *Providers should not include items and activities, such as arts and crafts, staffing, which are covered by the [EYFS \(Early Years Foundation Stage\)](#).*

Parents cannot be made to pay for extra services or hours in order to have a funded place. Payment for consumables, meals and extra optional activities are voluntary. Providers are responsible for setting a clear policy on stating suitable options for alternatives to payment for consumables, meals and extra optional activities such as waiving or reducing the cost or allowing parents to supply their own. A food policy should be in place for parents who are bringing in their own food.

From January 2026, the cost of all voluntary chargeable extras, how funded hours are delivered, and admissions criteria should be published on a providers' website or the Essex Family Information Service website except for childminders.

You may need to explain to parents that Funded Entitlement is not intended to cover the cost of meals, other consumables, additional hours, or additional activities. Providers can have a voluntary charge, but clear alternative options to payment must be offered.

DfE guidance states: 'Government funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of free, high quality, flexible childcare. The 15 or 30 hours must be able to be

accessed free of charge to parents. There must not be any mandatory charges for parents in relation to the free hours. Government funding is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional hours or additional services.”

Clearly state your fee payment plan including information about when you will invoice, the amount of any deposits that is applied and when it will be repaid, and the action you will take around non-payment of fees.

Deposits must not be applied to the Early Learning for 2-year-old entitlement (FEEE2). They can be applied to the working parent entitlements, universal 3&4 entitlement and if a FEEE2 child is accessing additional private hours.

Registration fees must not be applied for any of the entitlements for funded only children. They can be applied if additional private hours are being accessed.

Voluntary Consumables and Voluntary Chargeable Extras are not intended to be used as a “**top-up.**”

The DfE defines a top up as “any difference between a provider’s normal charge to parents and the funding they receive from the local authority to deliver free places.”

Refer to your complaints procedure and how to appeal. Include local authority contact details should parents not be satisfied with the outcome of their concern.

Pricing structure example

- Provider open 7.00am – 6.00pm (11 hours) – day rate £77.00
- Provider offers 5-hour sessions as well 7.00-12.00 or 12.00-5.00pm – session rate £35.00
- Funded hours can be taken 10 hours per day 7.00am-5.00pm or 5 hour am/pm session.
- Provider open term time only
- Voluntary charge for meals & snacks £4 per session or £8 per day or parents can bring their own – see food policy
- Voluntary activity charge £3 per day or £1.50 per session – see funding policy for list of activities and suitable alternative option
- Voluntary additional hours are charged at £7.00 (in line with day rate)

Parent wants child to attend 2 days per week Monday and Tuesday and access 15 hours funding.

Cost of childcare:

- Monday
 - 10 hours funded – no charge.
 - Voluntary option to attend until 6.00pm – 1 hour £7.00
 - Voluntary meals & snacks for funded day - £8.00
 - Voluntary activity charge for funded day - £3.00
- Tuesday
 - 5 hours funded – no charge am session.

- pm session voluntary £35.00 or until 6pm £42.00
- Voluntary meals & snacks for funded am session - £4.00
- Voluntary activity charge for funded am session - £1.50

Total cost of childcare per week if parent wants child to attend full day and opts in to voluntary charges:

- Monday £18.00
- Tuesday £47.50
- Total per week £65.50

Working Parent Entitlements

It is not essential to include this; however, it is highly recommended if a parent is found to be not eligible and challenges any subsequent fees, they may be liable for.

- Eligible working parents will be able to apply for the Working Parent Entitlement the term after their child turns 9 months
- Working parent funding can be applied for on [Homepage | Best Start in Life](#)
- It is parents' responsibility to apply for the Working Parent eligibility code before the fixed deadlines 31st March for the summer term, 31st August for the autumn term and 31st December for the spring term and to reconfirm their codes every three months.
- Working parents will remain eligible at a current setting if they fall into their grace period but cannot start with a new setting until their code has been reconfirmed and prior to the cut-off date.
- New or lapsed codes will show as eligible once confirmed but cannot be claimed for until the next cut-off date. E.g. A new code confirmed on 2nd January may show the child as eligible, but it has missed the cutoff date of 31st December and cannot be used until the summer term.
- Working Parent Entitlement cannot be used once the child has started at reception in school.

Early Learning for 2-year-old Entitlement (FEEE2 15 hours)

This is not a universal offer; only eligible children can access this funding via an application process. To check for eligibility and apply Parents should go to [Funded childcare for 2-year-olds: Overview | Essex County Council](#). If eligible a parent will be given a unique reference code starting with TYF which they give to the provider to submit a placement notification. This code does not need to be checked again and remains valid until the term after the child turns three where they will qualify for the universal three-year-old funding of 15 hours.

There may be other items you wish to include in your admissions and fees policies, but you must ensure that everything stipulated above is included to be compliant with the Essex Early Education Funding Contract and Provider Handbook on providing Funded Entitlement places.

Essex County Council cannot sign off policies which are not DfE (Department for Education) compliant, and this may delay the application process.

Essex recommends including the following additional funding streams:

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

EYPP is additional funding for early years settings to improve the provision for eligible children. This means that for low-income families, Providers are entitled to receive additional funding for all children accessing up to 15 hours funded entitlement for FEEE1W, FEEE2W, FEEE2 and FEEE3&4 universal.

Disability Access Fund (DAF)

The DAF is payable as a lump sum once a year per eligible child for all the entitlements. To be eligible a child must be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. DAF can only be claimed by one provider per year.

Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF)

Providers can apply for SENIF for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities if they need additional support to include children in activities. SENIF if agreed is paid for FEEE hours attended.

Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)

The deprivation supplement is paid per hour for FEEE3&4 universal and extended hours only and is paid directly to the provider. This funding is added automatically for children who live in an eligible postcode where providers are claiming FEEE3&4.

Tax Free Childcare

Parents will need to check to see if they are eligible for Tax Free Childcare. To check for eligibility and to apply, go to [Tax-Free Childcare - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare)

Please note: Providers must sign up to offer Tax Free Childcare, [Sign up to Tax-Free Childcare if you're a childcare provider - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-to-tax-free-childcare)

Invoices

Invoices should be clear and transparent so that parents are able to clearly understand how the amount on the invoice has been calculated. Please refer to example invoice in Provider Handbook.

The invoice should include the following:

- Settings details
- Period of invoice
- FEEE hours, how many per week zero charge
- Private paid for hours/sessions/days, how many and charge per hour/session/day
- Voluntary meal/snack charge, how many days and charge per meal/snack per day
- Voluntary consumable charge, how many days and charge per day

- Voluntary activities charge, how many days and charge per day

We would also recommend adding the following:

- Days/dates funded hours taken
- Days/dates private fees
- Pattern of attendance

Other Documents

- does the information provided in the fee structure correspond to the Parent contract?
- does the Parent contract include details about additional services offered?
- does the Parent contract include details about data sharing?
- is the Parent agreement form (PAF) signed by both the Parent/carer and the Provider?
- do Parents have access to the FEEE Guide for Parents?
- do you have the voluntary contributions costs, how funded hours are delivered and admissions criteria detailed on your website or on the LA Family Information Service website?

GUIDE TO PROVIDING FUNDED EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT CHILDCARE

