

MAKING YOUR FEE OFFER CLEAR

Background

It has long been the case that parents / carers would contact their local authority or childcare provider to query their invoice, confused by some of the additional charges they have incurred. These queries are becoming increasingly regular, so we have put together some information for providers to help reduce the number of parents / carers challenging the charges they see on their invoices.

Relevant FEE Guidance

When communicating your offer, the below guidance needs to be adhered to:

Operational Guidance:

- Childcare providers have a responsibility to ensure that their admissions information is clear and accessible for parents / carers.
- Settings should ensure that they are completely clear and transparent about which hours / sessions can be taken as free provision and this should be consistent for all parents / carers taking up free hours.
- The guidance does not address how providers operate their private businesses over and above a child's free hours. This is a matter between the provider and the parent / carer, providing it does not affect their ability to take-up their child's free place.

Statutory Guidance:

- Providers should be transparent about any additional charges, for example, for those parents / carers opting to purchase additional hours or services.
- Local Authorities should ensure that providers publish their admissions criteria and make certain that they are working with parents / carers to ensure they understand which hours / sessions can be taken as free provision. Not all providers will be able to offer fully flexible places, but they should work with parents / carers to ensure that as far as possible the pattern of hours are convenient for parents / carers working hours.
- Providers are encouraged to offer flexible packages of free hours.
- Providers can charge for meals and snacks as part of a free entitlement place and can also charge for consumables such as nappies or sun cream, and for services such as trips and specialist tuition. Parents / carers can therefore be expected to pay for these, although these charges **must** be voluntary for them.
- Where parents / carers are unable or unwilling to pay for meals and consumables, providers who choose to offer the free entitlements are responsible for setting their own policy on how to respond, with options including allowing parents / carers to supply their own meals, nappies, or

waiving or reducing the cost of meals and snacks. Local authorities should ensure that providers are mindful of the impact of additional charges on the most disadvantaged parents / carers.

- Local Authorities should not intervene where parents / carers choose to purchase additional hours of provision or additional services providing that this does not affect their ability to take up their child's free place.

What this means

It is important that all childcare providers operate within the parameters of the guidance (as outlined above). It is clear from these bullet points that parents / carers should be fully informed about how the funded hours can be taken up within the sessions that you offer, with the cost of additional hours made clear. Charges for meals and other consumables, or additional services must also be clearly communicated prior to the uptake of a government funded childcare place. Charges for meals, other consumables and additional extras must be voluntary, with alternative options presented for parents / carers who do not want to / or cannot afford to pay for these. In the situation where an alternative cannot be offered i.e. child cannot bring in a packed lunch due to another child's serious food allergy, this needs to be communicated to the parents / carers. Local Authorities cannot get involved with how a provider operates their charging policy so long as it does not prevent a child accessing their free place.

Why is it important?

In general terms, people would not purchase a service without knowing what the costs they will incur will be. However, due to the government funded hours being commonly known as Free Early Education, some parents / carers are misunderstanding that they will receive 570 / 1,140 hours and that this will cover all aspects of their child's care. Should a provider then invoice them for additional hours, consumables, services or other extras, it can come as a nasty shock for parents / carers who hadn't budgeted for this.

What do I need to do?

- **Marketing / promotional materials** - should clearly outline how parents / carers can access their funded hours i.e. within specific sessions with the affiliated price structures, as well as the cost of meals and consumables and additional services. These should be listed along with the daily charges involved.
- **Business websites** - ideally this information should also be available for parents / carers to access on there.
- **Charging Policy** - as charges for meals and other consumables must be voluntary for parents / carers, when they are unable / unwilling to pay, providers are responsible for setting their own policy on how to respond, including allowing them to supply their own food, nappies or waiving or reducing the cost of meals and snacks. Additional charges must not

be mandatory. It should be explained to parents / carers what the impact of waiving the charges will be, for example, not being able to join in with cooking or musical movement classes and what alternative arrangements will be made for their child whilst other children participate in these sessions.

The DfE have produced a breakdown of what information providers should be passing onto parents / carers within their FEEE offer. This should be taken as advice and is non-exhaustive:

Providers' Details

Does the FEEE information -

1. include the provider's details – name, address, phone number etc.?
2. state the provider's daily opening times?
3. state the provider's annual opening times (i.e. term-time only)?
4. contain the provider's Ofsted registration number?

Information about the Entitlements

Does the FEEE information -

5. clearly state the hour / sessions / days that the funded entitlement can be taken?
6. provide details about the entitlements and the financial support available?
7. provide details on Tax-Free Childcare (where applicable)?
8. signpost to Childcare Choices for parents / carer to see what other entitlements they have access to?
9. provide details about parent(s) / carer(s) eligibility?
10. provide details about the application process for the funded entitlement?
11. contain details about additional funding such as Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) or the Disability Access Fund (DAF)?
12. When is the fee information provided to the parent / carer?
13. Is the FEEE information available on the provider's website?
14. Is the FEEE information available as a leaflet?

Delivery Model

Does the FEEE information -

15. provide details about the delivery model for funded entitlement?
16. specify the options available for accessing the free entitlements?
17. specify the offers available for parents / carers to access 30 hours?
18. specify the hours that the funding covers?
19. specify if there are a minimum number of hours /sessions / days that the entitlement can be taken?
20. provide details on the timings of the sessions?
21. state if entitlement hours only are available or are they dependent on paying for additional hours?
22. state if there are a limited number of entitlement places available?
 - a. specify the number of entitlement places available?
 - b. state the admissions criteria for entitlement only places?

- c. state if there are a limited number of free places (no additional charges) within the entitlement?
- d. specify the number of free places (no additional charges) within the entitlement?
- e. state the admissions criteria for free (no additional charges) places?
- 23. state how many funded weeks there are per period?
- 24. provide details of the provider's stretched offer (where applicable)?
 - a. provide an explanation on how the stretched hour works?
 - b. state how many weeks the funded hours are stretched over?
 - c. provide details on the cycle for the stretched offer (e.g. does it run from September to August?)
 - d. give an example(s) of the stretched model to parents / carers?
 - e. clarify how many hours the stretched offer equates to each week (e.g. on a pro rata basis)?
 - f. explain how parents / carers can use any outstanding hours when accessing the stretched entitlement?
 - g. explain how payments will be taken for the stretched offer?
- 25. Do the hours / sessions available to parents / carers include the lunch hour? (Or are these to be paid for separately?)
- 26. clearly distinguish between entitlement hours and chargeable hours?
- 27. make it clear that the service accessed through the entitlements and through parent / carer-paid hours will be consistent?
- 28. provide a policy for closures (such as bank holidays) where parents / carers are not able to access their entitlement hours?
- 29. provide details on staggered starts?
- 30. Is the delivery model sufficiently flexible for parents / carers?
- 31. Is the delivery model reasonable for parents / carers to take up their entitlement hours?

Costs (including additional costs)

Does the FEEE information -

- 32. make it clear what parents / carers are being charged for?
- 33. state the charges per hour / session / day?
- 34. make it clear that there is no cost to the hours delivered as part of the early years entitlement?
 - a. state the funding is used as a subsidy?
 - b. state that parents / carers must pay the difference between the funding the provider receives from the local authority and the provider's standard rate?
- 35. clearly define the different rates they charge (e.g., based on age range, for full-time / part-time attendance)?
- 36. Is it clear which charges apply to the early years entitlement?
- 37. clearly state the rate charged for additional hours outside of the entitlement? a. state this charge per hour?
- 38. provide the rates for wraparound care?
- 39. state that additional hours are required to be purchased in addition to the entitlement hours?
- 40. state any additional charges for enhancements where a child has SEND?
- 41. clearly state what each additional charge is for?
- 42. clearly state how much the additional charge is for each item?
- 43. clearly state which meals and / or snacks are included in the additional charge?

- 44. give a clear breakdown of the consumables that are being charged for? a. state that additional charges are required for items / services that would be reasonably expected to be delivered under the basic requirements of the EYFS?
- 45. make it clear in which sessions / days specific activities that require additional fees occur?
- 46. state that additional charges are voluntary?
 - a. Does the FEEE information specify which additional charges are voluntary?
- 47. set out a clear policy for parents / carers who are unwilling or unable to pay additional charges?
- 48. explain how the entitlement hours are funded (i.e., through the local authority) based on headcount?
 - a. Does the FEEE information explain what would happen if a child were to move settings during a period?

Deposits

Does the FEEE information -

- 49. specify that a parent / carer must pay a deposit for accessing the early years entitlement?
 - a. specify when the deposit must be paid?
 - b. provide a timescale in which the deposit will be refunded?
- 50. specify that a parent / carer must pay a registration fee for accessing the early years entitlement?
 - a. specify on how registration fees are managed for parents / carers / children wishing to access solely the funded entitlement?

Other Documents

- 51. Does the information provided in the fee structure correspond to the parent / carer agreement and declaration form?
- 52. Is the parent / carer declaration signed by both the parent / carer and the provider?
- 53. Does the parent / carer declaration include details about additional services offered?
- 54. Does the parent / carer declaration include details about data sharing?

Other Items

Does the FEEE information -

- 55. provide details on what happens if a parent / carer falls into arrears?
- 56. provide details on discounts available to the parents / carers (e.g., blue light discount, sibling discount, etc.)?
- 57. state how often it will be reviewed?
 - a. state how much notice parents / carers will be given for any changes?
 - b. state the cost of the uniform?
 - c. state whether a uniform is required?
- 58. avoid jargon?
- 59. provide details on any notice periods that parents / carers need to be aware of?
- 60. provide details about the complaints procedure?
- 61. Is the FEEE information simple and easy for parents / carers to understand?
- 62. Is the FEEE information clear and transparent?

In a nutshell, your FEEE offer needs to be fully transparent, supplied to parents / carers prior to their child taking up a space, with alternative options provided around meals, other consumables and additional services for those who do not wish to purchase these, unless there is a valid reason why this cannot be offered.

When should parents / carers receive this information?

Parents / carers should be made aware of your FEEE offer at the point they make enquiries about having their child(ren) claim government funded hours at your setting.

In the case of children who are already at your setting before being entitled to the funding, we strongly recommend that your FEEE offer is also communicated from the point of initial enquiry about your setting, as part of the welcome pack of information you provide. Parents / carers should be given a reminder in at least the funding period prior to them claiming the funding.

Next steps

Please take the time to review your promotional material / website to ensure that your FEEE offer complies with the Government guidance, and update if necessary.



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For more FEEE information for Providers, please visit the [FEEE Website for Providers](#)