Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) Guidance 2025 – 2026

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1. Introduction

Welcome to Leicestershire County Council's guidance for the delivery of the funded childcare for children aged 9 months and upwards until they start school.

For further advice, guidance, good practice ideas and to access a copy of the current statutory guidance and accompanying policies please visit our FEEE website.

2. Funding the Entitlement

In order to receive FEEE funding for eligible children aged 9 months and upwards, providers are required to sign up to the local authority's directory of early years providers and must:

- be registered by Ofsted on the early years register and subsequently be in receipt of a Certificate of Registration
- or fall under a schools Ofsted registration
- or be considered as 'exempt' from the Ofsted Registration process
- or be part of a registered Childminding Agency (CMA)
- be of the appropriate Ofsted / CMA grade
- agree to the terms and conditions stipulated in the Provider Agreement.

There are 3 streams of FEEE funding which can be accessed:

- The 3- and 4-year-old universal offer. This offers all children up to a maximum of 570 hours (per annum which is the equivalent of 15 hours per week for 38 weeks per year). There is no eligibility criteria for this offer as it is universal and all 3- and 4-year-olds can access this funding the period following a child's 3rd birthday.

- The Working Parent Entitlement. This offer is from the period after a child turns 9 months old. Eligible working parents will be able to receive a maximum of 1,140 hours, per annum (which is the equivalent of 30 hours per week for 38 weeks per year).

  Eligibility for this funding has to be reconfirmed by parents / carers via www.beststartinlife.gov.uk and then validated by providers every 3 months (by the validity end date of the eligibility code as sometimes it can be required more often). Please visit the Working Parent Entitlement web page to see the eligibility criteria that parents / carers have to meet to receive this funding.

- The 2-year-old funding offer for families who are receiving additional forms of support. This offers eligible children the chance to take up to a maximum of 570 hours per annum (which is the equivalent of 15 hours per week for 38 weeks per year). Once a parent / carer is eligible for this funding, they will remain eligible even if their circumstances change. Parents / carers are not expected to re-check their eligibility. Please visit the funding for 9 month to 2 year old children web page to see the eligibility criteria that parents / carers have to meet to receive this funding.

Where a child accesses a provision part way through a period, funding is pro-rata'd accordingly.

2.1 Funding Periods

Leicestershire deals with funding 'periods' rather than 'terms'. This is in recognition that the constantly changing term dates can make planning difficult. This way of working not only provides consistency year after year but also brings the funding in line with the government's set eligibility deadline dates and birth date criteria.

The number of weeks for each period is typically 11 – Spring, 12 – Summer and 15 – Autumn; However, this can occasionally change, so please always refer to our FEEE Calendar found in FEEE Guidance and Policies, under 'FEEE payments' which will confirm the correct number of weeks which can be claimed in each period.

The FEEE calendar also shows the **maximum hours** allowed per period excluding any banked hours.

Term-time only providers should only claim for the number of hours they are open for in any period. Any unused hours accrued from the child's funding start date can be banked to use in subsequent periods within the academic year at the same, or another, setting.

2.2 Eligibility of children based on their age

The following eligibility table shows when a child is eligible to receive funding from. This is applicable to all aspects of the 9-month and upwards, 2-, 3- and 4-year-old funding.

A child born between:	Will be eligible for a funded place from:
1 April and 31 August.	The start of the autumn period (from the 1 September) following them reaching 9 months old or their 2nd or 3rd birthday, if eligible, until they go to school.
1 September and 31 December.	The start of the spring period (from the 1 January) following them reaching 9 months old or their 2nd or 3rd birthday, if eligible, until they go to school.
1 January and 31 March.	The start of the summer period (from the 1 April) following them reaching 9 months old or their 2nd or 3rd birthday, if eligible, until they go to school.

2.3 Specific information for the 2-year-old offer for families who are receiving some additional forms of support

In Synergy, voucher codes for 2-year-olds are automatically produced when a parent / carer applies online. Once the parents' application for funding is approved by the local authority, an email / letter is sent to parents / carers as proof of funding. A copy of this confirmation should be given to the child's chosen childcare provider, so that they are able to add the voucher code in the Provider Portal when completing the headcount / adjustment tasks. The provider should follow the process below:

- **For Leicestershire children** ensure that they have the correct voucher code relating to the eligible child by seeing a copy of the email / letter sent by the local authority. Please keep a photocopy on file for your records.

- **For voucher codes that have been issued by a different local authority**, these will have to be checked by Leicestershire County Council before payment can be made as we will have no knowledge of these children. Evidence of eligibility (e.g., the confirmation letter or email provided by another local authority) will need to be uploaded to the 'Documents' tab in the Provider Portal for verification.

When claiming please ensure that you adhere to the 'effective date' on the letter. We will only pay funding from this date.

2.4 Specific information for the working parent entitlement

Prior to a setting confirming a child's funded place, we would advise providers to validate and check the dates of the eligibility code via the Provider Portal to ensure yourself that the child can be funded. When making a claim for children eligible for the working parent entitlement, providers are responsible for validating the 11-digit eligibility codes through the Provider Portal. Once validated, providers will be made aware of a validity start and end date, and a grace period end date.

Parents / carers are required to re-check their eligibility in line with their email reminder from the HMRC (this is usually every 3 months but can differ). Providers should ensure they encourage parents / carers to do this prior to the validity end date they are given to enable continuity of funding.

Please note that if a child tries to claim funding for the first time whilst in their grace period, they will not be able to access any of the working parent entitlement hours as per the statutory guidance:

'A1.26 Children should not start a new working parent entitlement place at a provider during a grace period This includes:

- *where a parent falls into their grace period before the child has started a place*
- *where a parent falls into their grace period whilst their child is in a place, and the parent seeks to move the child to a different provider.'*

If a parent / carer does not complete a check prior to the dates stated below they will have to wait until the following period to take up the working parent entitlement. If the child is aged 3-years-old they will still be able to access the universal 15 hours if they have reached the period following their 3rd birthday.

For a child who is entitled to both the working parent entitlement and the 2-year-old funding for families who are receiving additional forms of support, please note that if a parent / carer falls out of eligibility or does not renew the eligibility in time the child will still be able to receive the 2-year-old funding for families who are receiving additional forms of support.

Please note that where a child is entitled to both the working parent entitlement and the 2-year-old funding for families who are receiving additional forms of support, the provider must ensure that you claim for both funding streams on the headcount / adjustment tasks, i.e. 15 hours to be claimed under 2-year funding for families who are receiving additional forms of support and 15 hours for working parent entitlement. Providers are able to check if a child is eligible for the 2-year-old funding for families who are receiving additional forms of support when completing the headcount or adjustments tasks in the Provider portal, as long as they have the parent's permission to do so.

When parents / carers come to a provision with their eligibility code, please make sure you reference the table below which clearly states when a child is eligible based on their birthday. No payment will be made unless this criteria for funding is met, even if they have a valid eligibility code.

Eligibility checking deadline dates:

A check completed between:	Allows a child to take up a free place from:
1 April and 31 August.	1 September – assuming the child is already of eligible age (i.e., has reached the period after they reach 9 months old)
1 September and 31 December.	1 January – assuming the child is already of eligible age (i.e., has reached the period after they reach 9 months old)
1 January and 31 March.	1 April – assuming the child is already of eligible age (i.e., has reached the period after they reach 9 months old)

If parents / carers are having difficulty in getting an eligibility code or revalidation of a code, we will need to see written evidence from HMRC to make a payment. The local authority can only pass on funding when we see evidence of eligibility. We cannot get involved in any disputes between a parent / carer and HMRC. All enquiries must be settled with HMRC – the parent / carer can contact them on 0300 123 4097.

Where parents have applied for an eligibility code by the deadline (31 August, 31 December or 31 March) and HMRC requires some more information to make a decision, they may receive a decision after the start of the period. In such cases, if HMRC are able to make a decision in the first 14 days of the period the parent wants to start claiming, the eligibility code will be backdated by them to allow the code to be used in the current period. For example, a parent applies on the 25 March for the 30 hours to use for the summer period, but HMRC needed to assess their income, and did not make a decision until the 5 April. The eligibility code will automatically be backdated to the 31 March to allow them to start claiming their entitlement in the summer period.

If a parent applies for their eligibility code by the deadline (31 August, 31 December or 31 March) and receive a decision by HMRC **after** the 14th day of the new period, they may wish to consider compensation from HMRC's Claim Compensation for Childcare Service Issues as they will not be able to use the eligibility code in the new period and therefore the local authority will be unable to pay for any of the working parent entitlement hours.

Where a parent applies **after** the deadline and gets an eligible decision within the first 14 days, please note that they won't be eligible for backdating or compensation.

If you have concerns that a parent / carer has made a fraudulent claim for the working parent entitlement, you should raise these concerns directly with the HMRC on 0300 123 4097.

2.5 The funding process

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.

Providers can charge parents for the following extras in connection with the free hours, but these charges 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

Providers can also 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.

Any charges in relation to services / time accessed outside the funded hours should be agreed with parents / carers prior to any charges being made. Providers should ensure all information relating to their current and future costs are clear and transparent for parents / carers, making sure their prospectus, contracts and invoices all reflect accurate information. By January 2026, the costs of chargeable extras should be published on provider websites or, where they do not have any website, on local authority Family Information Services. These should be clear, up-to-date and easily accessible to parents, to enable parents to make an informed choice of provider. They should set out, for each setting, the amounts charged for all the chargeable extras listed, as well as the pattern of hours that parents can take the entitlements. Childminders and providers caring for 10 or fewer children at any one time are exempt from publishing their charges.

Parents / carers invoices should clearly show the number of funded hours accessed and be itemised. There should not be a monetary amount shown for the free entitlement as the local authority are purchasing the hours on behalf of the parent / carer. To allow parents / carers to see that they have received their child's free entitlement hours completely free of charge and understand that any fees paid are for additional hours or optional services, providers need to ensure that by January 2026 their invoices break down separately into:

- the free entitlement hours
- additional private paid hours
- food charges
- non-food consumables charge
- activities charge

When parents / carers first join the setting, they should be told what the setting's policy is when children become eligible for funding.

Parents must be able to opt out of paying for chargeable extras and the associated consumable or activity for their child. For activities and extra services, providers should be made aware that participation in any optional extra activity should be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Children who do not participate in optional activities should continue to receive provision that complies with the EYFS.

Providers should be mindful of the impact of charges on families, particularly the most disadvantaged. Providers who choose to offer the free entitlements, are responsible for setting a policy on providing parents with options for alternatives to additional charges. This policy must offer reasonable alternatives that allow parents to access the entitlement for free, including allowing parents to supply their own, or waiving the cost of these items.

In all cases, these chargeable extras must not be a condition of taking up a free place. All parents, including disadvantaged families, must have fair access to a free place. The local authority will intervene if a provider seeks to make additional hours, optional services or optional consumables a mandatory condition of taking up a free place.

Providers should deliver the free entitlements consistently, so that all children within a setting accessing any of the free entitlements receive the same quality and access to provision, regardless of whether they choose to pay for voluntary hours, voluntary extra services, meals or consumables.

The local authority has a duty to ensure that the free entitlements are available free of charge and therefore that providers do not charge parents for the following in connection with the entitlement hours:

- Top-up fees (any difference between a provider's normal charge to parents and the funding they receive from the local authority to deliver free places). The definition of "topping-up" is 'an amount added to something in order to raise it to or maintain it at a desired level.' Please see an example of "topping up" below, which is prohibited by the Statutory Guidance:

  A child attends a setting on a full-time basis accessing 50 hours per week. Of these 50 hours, 30 hours of FEEE are being claimed, therefore the parent has 20 non-funded hours to pay for plus any food costs or consumables. The provider deducts the 30 hours FEEE funding that the local authority provides from their full-time session cost and charges the parent the remaining balance, that equates to their daily rate. The provider therefore receives back the full cost of their advertised session from both the local authority and the parent. This explanation 1) assigns a monetary value to the FEEE hours and 2) is a top-up.

- the supply of 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 free entitlement place

- non-refundable deposits as a condition of taking up a child's entitlement place

- general charges, including but not limited to, non-itemised enrichment charges, sustainability charges, business continuity charges, additional charges, enhanced ratios, hourly rates, or any other supplementary charges on top of the free hours

- any additional fees that are not specifically identified and itemised as being for chargeable extras.

Providers should adhere to the following terms, regardless of whether they charge any chargeable extras.

Providers should work with parents so that parents understand which hours and sessions can be taken as free provision. Not all providers will be able to offer fully flexible places, but providers should work with parents to ensure that as far as possible the pattern of the entitlement hours are convenient for parents' working hours. Children should be able to take up their free hours in continuous blocks if they wish to, 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 hours in between.

Providers and parents should be aware that the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) provides additional funding to providers to support the quality of early education for eligible children taking up early education and childcare entitlements. The Disability Access Fund (DAF) supports eligible, disabled children's access to the entitlements.

Where possible providers should consider if there is any alternative funding that may be used to subsidise the cost for the parent / carer, this may mean utilising EYPP funding if the child qualifies or supporting the cost of the 'extras' from the deprivation supplement received. If possible, you should also consider whether offering the parent / carer alternative times to access their hours would mean they incur less additional costs. If an agreement cannot be reached parents / carers should be signposted to the Family Information Service to find an alternative provider which better suits their needs.

2.6 How the funding is paid

The local authority delivers the entitlement on a period basis - 'Autumn', 'Spring' and the 'Summer'. As you will see from the payment schedule, these periods also include the half term breaks and the holiday periods.

In each period a set amount of hours is available for providers to claim. Providers may if they wish, offer these hours flexibly, and do not have to operate in a period only way, as long as they do not claim for more than the total number of hours available in a period.

The funding paid is based on information supplied by early years providers via the headcount / adjustment task. It is the responsibility of the provider to check that each submission is accurate and reflects the claims and attendance of the children on register at the setting.

The payment schedule can be found by looking at the relevant FEEE Calendar found in FEEE Guidance and Policies, under 'FEEE payments'. The FEEE Lead may consider on a case-by-case basis whether a payment can be made outside of the payment run. On the rare occasion where circumstances may warrant the FEEE Lead to authorise this, there will be an additional charge to the provider.

2.7 Provider Portal

By using the Provider Portal , settings can:

- Submit their estimate, headcount and adjustment tasks (including parental details, which will allow us to confirm eligibility for EYPP on your behalf)
- Check a child to see if they are eligible for the 2-year-old funding for families who are receiving additional forms of support

- Validate the working parent eligibility codes
- Access their estimate, actual and adjustment payment summaries
- Nominate a child for DAF and upload the relevant evidence required
- Complete the Self-Update form on a regular basis to ensure that your setting information is accurate and up to date.
- Complete and submit the mandatory DfE's Census Additional Information form which is required every spring period. Please note that from Spring 2026, the DfE has changed the DfE's Census Additional Information from annual to termly, so providers will be expected to complete and submit this mandatory form each period to remain on the Directory of FEEE providers.

You will be able to submit children's information multiple times whilst the headcount or adjustment task is open. This makes the system more flexible by allowing you to enter information at the start of the period. You can then update this information if you get requests from parents / carers or, if you notice any mistakes, these can be rectified and then the tasks can be resubmitted.

Additionally, you will be able to view previously submitted tasks – allowing you to marry up payments with claims far more easily.

There are user guides available via our dedicated webpage to the Provider Portal which will support you in completing the headcount / adjustment tasks as well as the other elements listed above. Please ensure you read the guides thoroughly prior to completing your headcount / adjustment tasks.

2.8 The estimate payment

The estimate is an advanced payment made at the beginning of each period to all settings who submit an estimation of their total weekly hours multiplied by the number of weeks for the forthcoming period. Please refer to FEEE Calendar found in FEEE Guidance and Policies, under 'FEEE payments' for payment dates. Specifically, the payment is calculated by:

- the provider submitting an 'Estimate' of total hours they wish to claim in the new period multiplied by the number of weeks, and then the local authority;
- calculating the advertised 60% payment by converting the total number of estimated hours, multiplying it by the number of term time weeks available in the new period and by the current rate (not including the deprivation supplement).

2.9 The actual payment

The actual payment is calculated based on validated hours submitted at the actuals task. This also applies to Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) - the finalised figures from the headcount should be checked prior to the adjustment task opening (so these can be rectified on the adjustment task if needed).

Some children may also receive a deprivation supplement (this excludes children who are aged 2-years-old) – this will depend on the child's postcode. Once you submit your headcount / adjustment tasks, the FEEE Team will run your children's postcodes through the Government's IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indices) Postcode Checker. Each child's postcode

is ranked – any postcode that scores between 1-9744 will receive an additional £0.08 per hour and any scores ranked between 9745-22737 will receive an additional £0.04 per hour. For any score ranked 22738 or higher, they will not receive a monetary value.

The actual payment will not be made unless you submit a headcount task by the return date.

A summary for each payment will be available via the Provider Portal once the FEEE team have processed the data. These details should be checked to ensure all eligible children have been funded correctly.

If the estimate payment was greater than the total amount payable for the period, the shortfall will be clawed back from the next payment run until it has been paid back in full, or the provider will be invoiced.

2.10 Adjustment payments

The local authority also administers mid-period adjustments which gives providers an opportunity to adjust their claim after their headcount has been submitted. This may mean informing us about leavers or children who have increased / decreased their hours as well as any new children who joined the setting after the headcount was submitted.

Where a child is transferring between provisions in Leicestershire, both providers should complete the necessary adjustment task, claiming accurately for the hours relevant to their provision. The payments will be amended and reflected at the next payment run. We recommend you also upload a copy of the child's full PSOU in the Provider Portal to the 'Documents tab' in the specific child's record to avoid any delay in payments.

After the adjustment period has closed, we will only accept amendments made on the Provider Portal to legitimate claims that are after the adjustment deadline date. **Any late claims for children who are at the setting before the adjustment claims period ends will not be funded**.

Please be aware that we **do not backdate funding to previous periods**. It is your responsibility to ensure that the headcount task is fully completed, and the payment summary is checked for any inaccuracies. If there is a mistake, this can be rectified on the subsequent adjustment task to ensure you receive the correct payment.

Owners / legal representatives who delegate the completion of headcount or adjustment tasks to their employees **must** quality assure their work before the final submission is sent via the Provider Portal.

Providers should also note that the childcare funding and EYPP funding will always follow the child. Funding cannot be kept by a provider to subsidise a notice period if the child is not in attendance. Notice periods are a private business matter and not something the local authority can comment on. Providers may not keep funding for a child that has moved to another provision.

2.11 Completion of headcount tasks

Completion of a headcount task allows providers to inform the local authority of eligible children on roll at their setting during the funded period.

All children to be claimed for should be on register at the provision on or prior to the submission of the headcount task.

If no children are being claimed for, there is no need to send a nil return.

Providers should note that where a headcount task is not submitted, no funding will be paid for the actual payment, and you may receive an invoice for monies paid in the estimate payment.

Providers should also note that they must not make a claim until they have confirmation of the child's eligibility such as a birth certificate, passport, or medical card. Two-year-old funding or the working parent entitlement require a voucher / eligibility code. Funding will be reclaimed if this documentation is missing when a compliance visit is undertaken by one of the Compliance Officers.

Additionally, all parents / carers claiming, must complete a PSOU (Parental Statement of Undertaking). This document can be found on the FEEE website under the 'FEEE Payments' section and should be amended in line with any alterations to the funded hours throughout the time that the child is in attendance.

2.12 Absence management

Children should be in attendance for **all of the FEEE funded time claimed for** unless there is a valid reason, such as illness or holiday. Providers are expected to maintain accurate records of each child's attendance (including start and leaving times) and ensure they actively engage with parents / carers and record the reason for absences. Where attendance is sporadic or consistently lower than the funded hours claimed, claims need to be amended. If attendance is consistently lower than the FEEE hours claimed due to high / short-term absences e.g., consistent late drop offs and early pick-ups and / or unexplained days off, money will be reclaimed from the Provider.

If claims are considered to be inconsistent with the hours attended or there are doubts about the validity of the claim, money will be reclaimed from the provider.

Providers must complete the headcount / adjustment tasks accurately and ensure that they reflect the child's attendance. Please note where absence does not exceed more than 50% of the period, we will continue to fund the child's place, and providers can continue to claim for the usual amount of hours the child would have attended had they been present for 100% of the time.

Arrangements for keeping the child's place open during long periods of absence are a private business matter and not something the local authority can comment on.

2.13 Cross border arrangements

If a child is also attending another setting which is not in Leicestershire, providers must ensure that the parent / carer does not claim for more than their eligible hours in total.

Leicestershire cross-references child data with neighbouring authorities ensuring that no duplication of payment is made.

2.14 Flexibility

Early years providers are expected to operate flexibly to support parents / carers in optimising the amount of funded hours which can be taken.

Leicestershire acknowledges that it may not always be possible for parents / carers to access the hours they want at the provider of their choice.

The local authority requests that children are able to take up their free hours in continuous blocks if they wish to, 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 hours in between.

Parents / carers are able to bank hours or stretch their entitlement if they so wish, which Leicestershire strongly supports.

- Banking hours is where parents / carers can use less hours in a period and then use them in another period e.g., though the summer holidays.

- Stretching hours is where parents / carers can use less hours per week but over a longer period e.g., approximately 22.35 hours per week for 51 weeks for a 30-hour child or 11.17 hours per week for 51 weeks for a 15-hour child. This is limited to total hours in a period.

2.15 Quality

Leicestershire County Council will fund:

- places for all children aged 9 months and upwards until they start school at any provider judged 'Requires Improvement', 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted or at any childminder registered with a childminder agency judged 'Effective' by Ofsted if a parent / carer wants their child to take up their free place at that provider and the provider has been accepted onto the Directory of FEEE providers. However, those children in receipt of 2-year-old funding for families who are receiving additional forms of support should only be in settings with a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' Ofsted inspection grade. Where providers already claim for existing eligible 2-year-olds and subsequently receive a 'Requires Improvement' judgement by Ofsted, **no newly eligible** 2-year-olds will be funded in that provision until the Ofsted grade is improved upon. For continuity, funding will continue to be paid for children who have previously been claimed for.

- The local authority will no longer fund any **new** children of any age range in a setting following the publication on the website of a first 'Inadequate', 'Ineffective' or 'Not Met' inspection grade by Ofsted or childminder agency. Nor will existing 3- and 4-year-old children who become eligible for the working parent entitlement (additional 15 hours per week) whilst a provider has one of these grades be able to use any of the additional hours in this setting.

- Funding for all **existing** children will cease, and the provider will be removed from the FEEE Directory of Providers, as soon as is practicable, for those providers that receive a second consecutive 'Inadequate', 'Ineffective' or 'Not Met' grade, once the inspection report has been published by Ofsted or the local authority has been notified by a childminder agency of the outcome. These providers will be able to reapply for the FEEE funding once their Ofsted or Childminder Agency inspection grade has improved and has been published, but they will be expected to complete a new FEEE registration application form, which can be found on the FEEE Guidance website under the section called 'Registering to provide FEEE for the first time'.

- places for all children aged 9 months and upwards until they start school at new providers registered with Ofsted until the provider's first full Ofsted inspection judgement is published or at a childminder registered with an agency until the agency's first full Ofsted inspection

judgement is published if a parent / carer wants their child to take up their free place at that provider and the provider has been accepted onto the Directory of FEEE providers.

- providers with exemptions from the Early Years Foundation Stage if a parent / carer wants their child to take up their free place at an exempt provider and the provider has been accepted onto the Directory of FEEE providers.

- individual children who have exemptions from the EYFS.

The local authority deems it vital that early years providers can demonstrate their capacity to improve. Therefore, removal of funding may be considered under the following circumstances:

- A provider who is judged as 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted / their registered CMA at two consecutive inspections.

- A provider who is judged as 'Requires Improvement; by Ofsted / their registered CMA, and who at their next inspection is judged 'Inadequate'.

The local authority reserves the right to withdraw funding to all childminders registered to a childminder agency following a second consecutive inspection judgement of 'Ineffective' as soon as practicable, once the Ofsted report has been published. However, the local authority will continue to fund the childminder agency's providers if the agency has assessed them as being of acceptable quality and Ofsted has not identified any concerns about the agency's assessment arrangements. The local authority will endeavour to treat all of the agency childminders in a comparable way to Ofsted-registered providers with equivalent judgements.

The local authority will determine the appropriate timeframe for withdrawing funding, as they will need to wait until the Ofsted inspection judgement has been published. When withdrawing funding, the local authority will take into account the continuity of care for children who are already receiving their free hours at a provider or with an agency registered childminder and Ofsted monitoring information about the provider or agency. When withdrawing funding from a childminder agency-registered provider, the local authority will also take into account parents' / carers' wishes.

3. The compliance process

The local authority undertakes compliance visits to ensure that government funding is being administered correctly. Providers should be aware that fraudulent claims could result in their removal from the Directory of Early Years Providers and possible legal action.

The Council advocates **strict adherence** to its anti-fraud framework and associated policies. Whilst individual circumstances of each case will be carefully considered, there will be a **zero-tolerance** approach to fraud and corruption in all its forms. The Council will take all necessary steps to identify, investigate and disrupt instances of fraud and take appropriate action against any individuals or organisations involved in fraud or corruption.

The Council fully recognises its responsibility for spending public money and holding public assets. The prevention, and if necessary, the investigation, of fraud and corruption is therefore seen as an important aspect of its duties which it is committed to undertake.

In keeping with its zero-tolerance approach, the Council will consider options for recovery, disciplinary proceedings (where appropriate) and it will also consider whether to make a referral to outside agencies including the Police. Decisions on whether to make a referral to the Police will be taken in light of the Council's objectives regarding financial recoveries (to which priority is given) and the likelihood of disciplinary proceedings.

Once you start claiming FEEE funding, at some point, you will be visited by one of our Compliance Officers. This will involve a visit to your setting. You will be asked to provide information in relation to the previous periods funding (this is so that we can see evidence across the whole of a period e.g., Spring, Autumn, Summer). The main purposes of the visit are to:

- Work in partnership with providers to ensure the requirements within the government guidance, local guidance and the provider agreement are being met.
- Ensure claims submitted by providers are accurate and reflect what has been signed and agreed by parents / carers.
- Identify areas where improvements, or additional information is required.
- Support providers with any queries or concerns they have around the administration of FEEE.

For a compliance visit, providers should have all documentation ready and provide suitable space and resources to enable officers to carry out the visit as efficiently as possible.

4. Additional Funding Available

4.1 Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

Providers may claim for additional EYPP funding, designed to support the most vulnerable children aged 9 months and upwards until they start school. This funding equates to a maximum of £570 per annum per child and is paid as a lump sum as part of the actual or adjustment payment. For further information on eligibility, claiming and how to evidence use of the EYPP funding, please view the EYPP Guidance.

EYPP is only paid on a maximum of 570 hours per year. When a parent / carer completes their Parental Statement of Undertaking (PSOU), they must state which setting is to receive the universal hours (this only applies if a child is attending more than one setting). Parents / carers must also tick to confirm that they are happy for you to check to see if they are eligible via the Provider Portal. Should a dispute arise and EYPP is being paid to another setting, you should send us a copy of the child's PSOU to show that the parent / carer wished for the universal hours (and therefore the EYPP) to be paid to you. We will then look into resolving this for you.

Once the headcount task closes and the FEEE Team have transferred the children's data to the system we use, we will check the children for EYPP against the DWP (Department for Working Pensions) database. You will then be able to view your submitted headcount task via the Provider Portal on the 'Summary' tab and this will show which children are eligible for EYPP – EYPP will appear under the 'Child Weightings' column.

Once EYPP funding has been approved it will not be necessary to re-apply.

4.2 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Providers are expected to claim for any additional SEND take up as they would all other claims for the FEEE funding.

The local authority recognises the costs providers incur when supporting children with SEND and Inclusion Funding may be available to contribute towards these costs. You can find information relating to the criteria and application process on our Inclusion Funding page.

4.3 Disability Access Fund (DAF):

Children aged 9 months and upwards in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and who are claiming the free entitlement are eligible for the DAF. This is paid at a fixed rate of £938 per annum. Parents / carers should nominate 1 setting only to receive this funding. Providers can reapply for DAF a year later if the child is still in attendance and still meets the above criteria.

This will not provide parents / carers with a discount but instead allows providers to maximise the potential of children in their setting through the support of additional resources, staff or activities, making reasonable adjustments where necessary to ensure a quality experience for all children. Please view the Disability Access Fund web page for more information. The SEND Entitlement Assistant will also be able to offer support to parents / carers who wish to access the Disability Living Allowance.

5. The Provider Agreement

As a member of the directory of early years providers, all providers are required to complete and sign a Provider Agreement. This confirms a commitment to adhere to the local authority's terms and conditions in relation to the receipt of funding for children aged 9 months and upwards.

Please note that the person signing the Provider Agreement must be the person recorded as the Ofsted 'responsible person' (this can be a delegated person, but the local authority requires a letter of authority), as per the Ofsted registration certificate, or who is registered with the CMA. If the setting is run by a committee or a governing body, the Chair of that responsible body is required to sign the Provider Agreement.

If a valid, signed, Provider Agreement is not in place, funding cannot be released. The PA must be signed and returned to us as soon as possible via Adobe Sign by the deadline date given, so that your first payment can be paid promptly.

5.1 What to do if your circumstances change

The local authority requires providers to inform them via a 'Change of Circumstance' Form, if there are any significant changes to their business or administration. The types of changes we need to be notified about, include a Change of Ownership, Change of Premises, Change of Banking Information, Change of Setting Name, Change of Organisational Status, Change of Committee Representative or Registered Person, Change of Provider Portal user or Closure / Withdrawal from FEEE. As soon as providers are aware of an impending change, we ask that you submit the Change of Circumstance form as quickly as possible, so that the FEEE Team have ample time to make the necessary changes and ensure that your future FEEE payments are not delayed. The form can be found on the FEEE Guidance page under the 'Change of Circumstance' section.

5.2 Removal from the Directory of Early Education Providers and withdrawal of funding

A provider may find their funding is withdrawn or withheld if it is found to be in breach of its provider agreement, or if serious concerns are raised in relation to the quality of the provision and the safeguarding of children.

Providers should be aware that if funding is withheld or withdrawn, the base rate, deprivation supplement and any EYPP monies applicable to the settings will be affected. You can find more information on the Removal of Funding Policy.

6. Useful Information

For all your funding advice, guidance, resources and good practice tools

For FEEE Fact Sheets to assist with the Administration of Funding

For access to the Provider Portal

For access to AnyComms+

The Family Information Directory

To check a child's eligibility for the 2-year-old funding whose families are receiving additional forms of support, parents can visit: Leicestershire's Parent Portal.

For advice and guidance on the administration of the funding or to discuss your payments please email feee@leics.gov.uk. Please note that you should not include any personal, private, sensitive or confidential information in an email due to GDPR. If you have a query regarding a specific child, please put this in writing and upload the document to AnyComms+. This request is in line with data protection regulations.