

The Purpose of our compliance visits

Once you start claiming FEEE funding you will, at some point, be audited 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 local authority undertakes compliance visits to ensure that no fraudulent claims are being made and that the 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 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.

Compliance visit process

We will initially contact you via telephone 1 week before our compliance visit with clear information regarding what is required and the necessary paperwork you need to have available or submit to us directly. We will also confirm all details in writing via email. On the day of our visit, providers should have all documentation ready and provide a suitable space and resources to enable the Compliance Officers to carry out the visit as efficiently as possible. If we require information for specific children, we will request this information via Anycomms+.

If inconsistencies or concerns are noted during the audit, the Compliance Officer may look at records beyond the time frame. It is for this reason that providers are required to keep records for funded children for at least one period upon them leaving the setting.

The Compliance Officer will review the data collated alongside the providers policies. The provider will receive the completed report highlighting any strengths, recommendations for changes in practice or actions to ensure compliance with the Provider Agreement and local / national government guidance within two weeks. The report will include details of any funding that needs to be returned to LCC or funding to be paid to a provider and details of any follow-up support to address any issues identified. Any claim where the information obtained is deemed fraudulent/inaccurate an invoice will be sent to the provider to pay back those funds.

If further actions / recommendations are highlighted by the Compliance Officer, the provider will be required to submit evidence that they have met any actions within a required time frame. If a provider fails to meet the actions given within the required time frame, a formal letter will be issued detailing the breach of the statutory duty and LCC will be entitled to terminate the Provider Agreement by giving reasonable notice in writing.

Continued failure to meet the actions given will result in the removal from the Directory of FEEE Providers and funding being removed. In all cases where funding is withdrawn, LCC will give the provider a written explanation of the decision to withdraw funding.

Below is a list of the documentation we would expect to review at our compliance visits:

Email – feee@leics.gov.uk

Birth certificates (or equivalent) – A copy of each child's birth certificate, passport or medical card

You must not claim FEEE for a child until you have a copy of the relevant information as stated above. Please ensure the legal name as stated on the birth certificate or equivalent is entered onto the headcount / adjustment tasks. You should not be inputting 'known as names', e.g. Jimmy for James. Providers are expected to keep children's individual documents until the end of the following period after the child has left. For instance, if the child leaves to go to school at the end of the Summer period, then the information for that child will need to be retained until the end of the following Autumn period.

Parental Statement of Undertaking (PSOU'S) – A copy of each child's PSOU

This form should be completed and signed and dated by the child's parent / carer. FEEE Funding can only be claimed if a parent / carer has signed this form. Please note that this form only needs to be completed once unless the parent / carer wishes to change their hours in the future. If this is the case a new form should be completed, signed, dated, and attached to the old PSOU. Please note that these documents do not need to be sent to the local authority unless requested. They should be securely stored and be available to view during our compliance visit.

Registers / Absence Management – A copy of your settings registers and documentation to support any short-term absences (where applicable), such as medical letters

Children should be in attendance for all the FEEE funded time claimed for unless there is a valid reason such as illness or holiday.

- Providers are expected to maintain accurate daily registers of each child's attendance (including start and leaving times) and ensure they actively engage with parents where attendance is sporadic or consistently lower than the funded hours claimed, amending their claims when relevant.
- If claims are inconsistent with the hours attended or there are doubts about the validity of the claim, money will be reclaimed from the provider.

- If a child is taken out of the provision, e.g. long-term sickness or another valid reason and this equates to half the period or more, only the funded hours attended during that period should be claimed for.
- Providers must complete the headcount tasks accurately and ensure that they reflect the child's attendance.
- We expect all settings to retain registers for a reasonable period after a child has left your setting (e.g. as per Ofsted / safeguarding requirements).

Charging Policies & FEEE Information – A copy of the fees / charges policy and / or a copy of the admissions policy

The Compliance officer will review the documents above that contain information regarding fees and charges and any policies relating to this. This is to ensure the provision is funded at the point of delivery, and that additional charges are voluntary and transparent for children taking up Early Education and government Funded hours. Parents should be made aware of providers FEEE offers at least one period before a child becomes eligible for FEEE.

Invoices – A sample of your settings invoices

If a child only attends the setting for their FEEE hours with no additional costs, then no invoice / statement is required. If a child is accessing more than their funded entitlement or incurs additional costs that are not covered by the funding, i.e. lunch costs, you will need to issue an invoice to the parent / carer. The invoice should be clear, itemised, and transparent to reflect the charges agreed with the parent and published in your prospectus and on your website. With regards to additional charges the National Guidance states the following:

'A1.33 Local authorities should ensure that providers are aware that they 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.'

A1.38 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.

FEEE funding should not be shown as a monetary amount on the invoice and instead should be shown as free hours accessed. You can charge parents a refundable deposit to guarantee the child's place. The deposit should be refunded at least by the end of the first term of attendance. A non-refundable deposit can be charged if a child is going to be accessing any additional hours / services.