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Dear Colleague

Early Years Funded Provision During the Covid-19 Crisis – Post 1st June 2020

We are now just over one week into the wider opening of early years’ provision in response to the Government’s request for early years’ providers to welcome back all children that require childcare from 1st June 2020. Many thanks to the significant number of early years’ providers within North Yorkshire who worked tirelessly to deliver this request. The huge challenges of adapting the operational delivery of early years’ education and childcare to offer safe, sufficient, appropriate and affordable provision are very much recognised. Based on the available information we have, there are now 73% of early years’ providers within North Yorkshire currently open.

We are seeing an increasing number of both parents and providers contacting the Local Authority with queries, particularly where there are difficulties in accessing or providing funded early years’ places. It is anticipated that the demand for childcare places will increase over the coming weeks as more parents return to work. In preparing for the wider re-opening of workplaces and the associated requirement for childcare, providers are asked to proactively work with the Local Authority and each other in order to ensure sufficient childcare provision is available. The Government guidance and expectations will be applied by the Local Authority in supporting and working with providers to ensure sufficiency of funded places.

The Summer term 2020 funding will be provided, as previously notified and in accordance with Government guidance, based on the funded hours that would normally be expected to be delivered during the Summer 2020 term based on the headcount data submitted. There are associated expectations on providers in relation to the wider opening of provision and for meeting the increased demand for funded places. This is detailed as below:

- Wherever possible, providers are expected to deliver the funded provision which is required for the children that would normally attend their setting during the Summer term 2020.
- Providers, whether open or closed, are expected to maintain regular contact with parents whose children have funded places, in order to determine their provision requirements. This may change as parents' workplaces re-open. It is suggested that parents are contacted on a weekly basis.
- Providers are encouraged to regularly review their operating models. This is to determine whether the provision of funded places can be safely expanded as parental demand for early years' education and childcare increases. This may involve consideration of expanding the size of "bubbles" within the constraints of Government guidance to include children who are newly returning, introducing additional operating "bubbles" and removing staff from furlough to deliver additional provision.
- Providers are expected to work in partnership with other providers, particularly in circumstances where a child normally splits their funded hours with more than one provider, and arrangements now need to be put in place for the child to attend a single provider. Providers may wish to consider local agreements between each other with regard to funding, in order to ensure that parents can continue to fully access their funded provision entitlement. If you remain closed the local authority will expect you to also consider these partnership arrangements.
- Any provider who has vacant funded places, i.e. where the number of funded hours which have been claimed on the Summer 2020 term headcount are not fully occupied, as a result of some parents choosing not to take up their funded place at present, will be expected, wherever possible, to offer a funded place to children who are unable to access a funded place at their normal provision.
- Providers will be contacted by Local Authority Officers in instances where parents are unable to access a funded place at their normal provision to discuss the reasons why the place cannot be offered, to explore alternative operating models to enable the funded place to be offered and to explore what local partnership options the provider has considered / offered to ensure that the parent is able to access funded provision.
- Providers who have indicated that they are intending to remain closed until September 2020 will be contacted by Local Authority Officers to review their reasons for remaining closed. Advice and support will be offered to assist providers in this position, wherever possible, to re-open and to safely offer funded provision, even if in a reduced capacity, as soon as possible and in accordance with Government expectations.
- It is essential that the Local Authority has a full picture in relation to the available early years' provision within North Yorkshire during the period of the Covid-19 outbreak and the recovery period. In this regard it is important that all providers complete and submit the twice weekly DfE survey in a timely and accurate manner.

Once again, thank you for your high level of commitment and professionalism in ensuring early years' children are able to continue to access safe, high quality and caring education and childcare during these challenging and difficult Covid-19 times. Please be assured that your contribution is greatly appreciated and recognised within North Yorkshire County Council. Please do not hesitate to contact colleagues, as follows, if you have any queries or require any operational advice and support:

Families Information Service (FIS) – place sufficiency issues and operational advice and guidance

Fis.information@northyorks.gov.uk

Early Years Funding Team (EYFT) – early years' funding queries
eyft@northyorks.gov.uk

Early Years Business Support Team – early years' business and financial management queries,
advice and guidance
finance.enquiries@northyorks.gov.uk or telephone: 01609 797601

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H Emmett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Howard Emmett
Assistant Director – Strategic Resources