

FAO All Somerset Providers

**Please ask for:** Alison Jeffery

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**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Providers,

### **Spring Term 2021 EYE**

Further to my letter to you dated 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021, I would like to reiterate the Government guidance regarding opening:

Early years provision should remain open and continue to allow all children to attend full time or their usual timetable hours. This includes early years registered nurseries and childminders, maintained nursery schools, as well as nursery classes in schools and other pre-reception provision on school sites.

In Somerset this includes schools that have lowered their age range and those that are run by community governance.

### **Spring Term 2021 funding**

The government guidance document: 'Use of free early education entitlements funding during coronavirus (COVID-19)' states:

*'Local authorities should return to the normal funding approach (that is, 'funding following the child') for all providers from 1 January 2021.*

*Therefore, we will fund all local authorities on the basis of their January 2021 census for the spring term.* [Use of free early education entitlements funding during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

### **Key points to note for completing the actual form and census:**

- If a child is off sick or self-isolating, then a provider should record their hours as if they were normally attending.
- If a provider is temporarily shut due to COVID, then they should record the number of funded hours they would have expected to deliver.

- Somerset's policy is that providers can claim 4 weeks of funding for children's non-attendance so therefore any children that are currently not attending can be counted on the census subject to their place being retained and open to them.
- If children are registered and booked into the setting but choose not to attend, and the place is retained, then they can be counted on the census.
- Where a provider is counting a child on the census, the place must be genuinely 'available': this means a provider **must not** count a child where they have furloughed the staff who would be required to deliver the child's place.

**We will continue to provide funding in the following circumstances:**

Where a setting receives a local Public Health directive to close, we will continue to provide funding up until Feb half term 2021 (current lockdown timescales and subject to review).

Where parents wish to keep their children at home but retain their place at a setting we will continue to fund up until February half term (current lockdown timescales, subject to review and subject to the setting remaining open). Please ensure that the parent agrees with the hours continuing to be claimed and that they have provided a signed parent's declaration form confirming the hours.

**Please note that where any instances of overclaiming occur we will ask to see the signed parent's declaration form.**

Where staffing is reduced, or a setting is forced to close because of sickness we will continue to fund for all children on roll up until half term (current lockdown timescales and subject to review). **Should any setting have concerns about their ability to open safely due to reduced staffing, we would urge them to notify their link officer as a priority and we will support them to assess the situation and whether funding can continue to be claimed.**

In all circumstances above we would expect that the setting continues to keep in regular contact with families and provide some activities for children to do from home. This will ensure some continuity of education for children that are unable to attend their setting.

If you are not open to all, please be advised that parents that cannot access a place at your setting can choose to use their hours elsewhere and therefore the funding will follow the child. Where settings have chosen to close to all or some children, these parents should not be charged a notice period if they choose to take their entitlement hours elsewhere.

Please note that the terms and conditions of the Provider Agreement April 2020 still apply to those offering and claiming the early years entitlement. All normal deadlines for the Spring term 2021 apply and there will be no exceptions to this.

If a setting has any questions regarding the above exceptions or concerns about their financial viability, then please get in touch with your link worker.

Thank you again for your continued support and for all that you are doing to support your children, families and communities at this challenging time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Jeffery', written in a cursive style.

Alison Jeffery, Early Years Lead