

# Frequently Asked Questions for West Sussex Early Years and Childcare Providers – COVID-19 response for Free Entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 Year Olds

**27 March 2020**

These questions seek to provide additional information to West Sussex Early Years providers **specifically relating to Free Entitlement** (FE) for 2, 3 and 4 Year Olds.

This document supplements additional separate FAQs being made available via our Special Broadcasts.

Where we refer to settings or providers, this includes all early years providers, groups settings and childminders that offer FE.

Please make sure you continue to check the information on the government website to ensure you have the most up to date information:

[GovUK-COVID-19: guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings](#)

[NHS111](#)

[Public Health England](#)

[Public Health England](#) (blog)

[West Sussex County Council](#)

## Department for Education coronavirus telephone helpline:

Queries about coronavirus (COVID-19), relating to schools and other educational establishments in England:

- 0800 0468687 (Monday to Friday 0800-1800 and weekends 1000-1600)
- [DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk](mailto:DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk)

## Asking us a question:

If you have any additional questions about Free Entitlement, please email us at [free.entitlement@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:free.entitlement@westsussex.gov.uk)

For any other question, email [family.info.service@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:family.info.service@westsussex.gov.uk) and title your email **COVID-19 setting query**.

We will review any new questions and post answers regularly over the coming weeks via the broadcast email.

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## Can I offer a funded place to a child if their parent is not a critical worker or a vulnerable child?

No, you can only stay open to provide care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children, funded or otherwise. Children who do not fall under these categories must stay at home to help stop the spread of the virus.

## Will Free Entitlement funding continue if my setting has closed?

In line with the announcement on 17 March 2020 by the Secretary of State, West Sussex County Council will continue to fund Early Years Free Entitlement for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds where provision has had to close due to Covid-19, or where children are unable to attend due to COVID-19.

This includes funding for both the spring and summer terms, depending on the length of time the COVID-19 measures are in place.

## Can I register to offer FE to support keyworker families and vulnerable children?

If you do not currently offer funded places and would like to explore this further, please contact the Family Information Service via email [family.information.service@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:family.information.service@westsussex.gov.uk) to discuss.

## How do settings calculate their Summer term estimates?

Settings should submit their Summer estimate claims as per the normal process. For example, expected funded hours based on registered children and Parent Declarations, as would have been prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please submit your estimates based on the most accurate information you have to date. Please refer to our estimate help guide for further guidance:

[www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecportal](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecportal).

Please do **not** include any children you are taking temporarily from another setting that has closed due to COVID-19 in your **estimate** claim, as they should be added to their usual setting's claim.

Those children who are attending a different setting, as a result of COVID-19, will be recorded separately on a short form which we will share with you as soon as possible.

## Should I amend my Summer term estimate claim, as my setting has now closed?

If you have closed due to COVID-19, please do not make any adjustments to the normal process of claiming your summer term estimates. Please see the question on 'How do settings calculate their Summer term estimates?' for further guidance on completing this.

## **Frequently Asked Questions for West Sussex Early Years and Childcare Providers – COVID-19 response for Free Entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 Year Olds**

### **Can we include new FE children who have just become of eligible age in our Summer term estimate claim?**

Yes. The normal process will apply. Please ensure the parent has completed and signed the Parent Declaration form and if claiming for Extended FE their 30hr code is valid. You can check this by using the online instant eligibility checker available via the [Online Provider Portal](#).

### **When can I expect to receive my Summer estimate payment?**

The summer term estimate payment is expected to go out as per the original schedule which can be found here [www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecportal](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecportal).

### **Our setting has stayed open for children of critical workers/vulnerable children, and we cannot access any of the Government support as it's not yet available. Can the full Free Entitlement payment be brought forward for Summer term to help us remain open?**

Settings that have submitted an estimate claim for Summer term, can expect to receive 70% of this payment ahead of the Summer term which should alleviate any immediate cashflow issues. This and future payments are planned to be paid as per the advertised week commencing payment dates. Please see [www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecportal](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecportal).

### **Will there be a Summer headcount still for closed settings?**

We will still need to collect child level data from providers for the summer term, as we would usually. This should be based on the children you were expecting to attend as per your estimate. We will notify you via the broadcast email when the Online Provider Portal will be open for child level data.

### **Can FE children change their hours for the Summer term, or will I only be paid based on my existing children's funded hours?**

Please submit your estimates based on the children you were expecting for the Summer term, including any increase in hours from Spring and those new children who will become of eligible age for Summer FE.

If you are aware that families were planning to change the number of FE hours that they are accessing at your setting, and the change of hours had been agreed with the family, then please update this on the Portal when asked to submit data. If you have not been notified of any planned changes, please keep the child's hours the same as the spring term.

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### Can I charge families accessing a place at my setting if it is over and above their FE hours?

The government are clear in their guidance that every child who can be safely cared for at home should be. Children of key workers should only be accessing for the essential times when they would not be able to work without this childcare provision.

Where a parent already pays for hours over and above their funded hours that is a private agreement between the setting and the parent. The government is urging all childcare providers to be reasonable and balanced in their dealings with parents, given the great uncertainty they will be facing too.