



Early Years & Childcare Provider Bulletin

EY and Childcare Provider Bulletin: Business & Funding Focus (BFF) 21 November 2025



Dear provider,

As the weather turns colder and we head towards December, we hope you are all looking forward to planning your festive events.

The team continues to work with all funded providers to ensure your fee structures are compliant with our local Provider Agreement and DfE statutory guidance in preparation for January 2026.

Early Years and Childcare Business and Funding colleagues

If you have any questions please email [EY Business Support](mailto:EYbusinesssupport@gloucestershire.gov.uk), EYfunding@gloucestershire.gov.uk or [Wraparound Team](#)

Expansion News

The next Grant Panel for the Early Years Expansion Capital Grant and the Wraparound Revenue Grant is February 27th 2026. We are currently accepting applications and will be accepting them up until 30th January.

For more information on the grants please visit:

[Early Years](#)

and

[Wraparound](#)

Please do be in touch if you have any questions:

eybusinesssupport@gloucestershire.gov.uk

School Based Nursery Updates

All applicants for the SBN must receive approval from GCC before submitting their application. We will need time to review your projects and written approval will be sent to support your application as required.

Please ensure all details supporting your project are submitted to us by

5pm on 28th November to eybusinesssupport@gloucestershire.gov.uk.

We are more than happy to support these applications in any way we can so please get in touch if you require anything further from us.

Local authority approval form – [school-based-nursery-capital-grant-2025-to-2026-local-authority-approval-instructions-and-form.docx](#)

Current Guidance

Initial page - [School-based Nursery Capital Grant 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

Subsidiary linked pages

[Home - Apply for a School-Based Nurseries Capital Grant](#)
[School-based Nursery Capital Grant 2025 to 2026: information for applicants](#)
[School-based Nursery Capital Grant 2025 to 2026: grant funding agreement terms and conditions](#)

EARLY YEARS FUNDED ENTITLEMENTS UPDATES

The autumn term amendment task is now open and closes on Friday 28th November. For your new starters or leavers please ensure that you enter a start date or leaving date and adjust the weeks accordingly.

Eligible Working Parent Entitlement (WPE) Codes

WPE codes must be eligible on set days each term. The dates are linked to when parents apply for their codes and also when they reconfirm them.

The facility to check a code in the Provider Portal is always available and is not dependent on a funding task being open.

Providers must not offer parents a funded place without validating their code beforehand.

Information confirming the deadline dates are detailed on the “Run a new check” screen:

Run a new check

You may only perform checks where the parent/carer has given consent for you to do so and when they have agreed that this check information can be shared with the Local Authority and any other provider the child attends. Please refer to **section 5 of the Nursery Funding Portal User Guide** for details on how to run a check for a new starter.

Parents must have applied for their eligibility code by:

31st December in order to receive the expanded/extended hours in the Spring term

31st March in order to receive the expanded/extended hours in the Summer term

31st August in order to receive the expanded/extended hours in the Autumn term

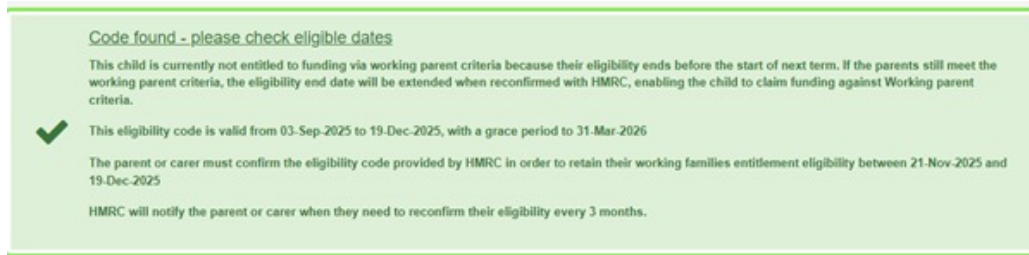
START DATES for the eligibility codes must be on or before:

31st December in order to claim the expanded/extended hours in the Spring term

31st March in order to claim the expanded/extended hours in the Summer term

31st August in order to claim the expanded/extended hours in the Autumn term

We recognise that the green box and tick returned when checking invalid codes can be misleading, however, the text within the result area confirms the details when a code is not valid.



The result in this example confirms that the parents working situation is eligible, however, the date range of the code is not valid in this term. The start date of this code needed to be 31st August or before to claim funded hours in the Autumn term.

SEND Status for funded children

Thank you to everyone that has populated the SEND Status in the “Child Details” area of the funding headcount task this term. This field was made active in the summer term 2025 with a “soft” launch initially, but we are now working with all providers to collate this information. Accurate data will help us plan sufficient provision in the county, allocate resources, and secure funding for specialist services to support you all more effectively.

We still have over 12,000 children with no details recorded against them so we would like to take this opportunity to remind you to complete the field before the amendment task closes on 28th November.

The following section taken from our FAQs will assist you with the necessary requirements:

What categories should I use for SEND Status on the headcount task?

The categories you should use are as follows:

- 9 = Early Action (MyPlan)
- L = Early Action Plus (MyPlan Plus)
- E = EHCP
- N = No Special Provision

All the other categories relate to school children's SEND status and should not be used for early years children.

For all your funding questions please visit our website for our comprehensive FAQs at:

[Early Years Funding](#) | [Early Years Service](#)

Charging Compliance

Following the updated statutory guidance in April 2025 [Early education and childcare - GOV.UK](#), we are working with all providers to ensure fee structures:

- Have no hidden or mandatory charges for funded hours.
- Are transparent and clear for parents.
- Are compliant with our local Provider Agreement and DfE statutory guidance.

There is a lead-in time of January 2026 to allow providers to meet new transparency expectations (for any provider that has 10 or more children).

We will ask to see the following documents or policies:

- Fee policy
- Voluntary charges policy
- Packed lunch policy
- Itemised invoice templates

All providers will be contacted as part of this audit

All children should be accessing high quality childcare. There should be no basic EYFS offer, or a two-tiered system offer. We would expect to see providers offering care over and above the EYFS to have an "Outstanding" Ofsted grading. Please see the following guidance taken from DfE's Statutory Guidance:

A1.32 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.

Update for Childminders: Document Review in Progress

Thank you to everyone who has submitted their documents so far—we appreciate your prompt response and the time taken to send these through.

We appreciate your patience as we review all submissions and check policies and invoices as quickly as possible. If we need any further information or clarification, we'll be in touch.

Have you sent everything we need?

Please make sure you have submitted:

A copy of your parental contract or fee policy (showing private rates and voluntary charges)

A copy of an invoice (or an invoice template)

When sending an invoice, check it includes:

The word 'invoice'

An invoice number and date

Period covered (e.g., monthly, termly)

Child's name and parent(s) name

Provider details (business name, address, contact info)

Method of payment (e.g., BACS, cash, cheque)

Itemised charges and total amount due

If you notice any missing details, please resend updated documents as soon as possible.

Important: All parents should receive an invoice, even if there are no charges. Invoices help parents confirm their child's funded hours and can support applications such as Universal Credit. If you do not normally issue an invoice because a child only uses their funded entitlement, you must still provide an invoice or a termly/yearly statement showing the hours claimed. This ensures transparency and helps parents understand they are receiving their funded entitlement.

Recruitment and Retention of Staff

Apprenticeship route		Diploma only route	
PROS	CONS	PROS	CONS
Level 2 Early Years Practitioner (EYP) and Level 3 Early Years Educator (EYE) available via this route	End Point Assessment requirements (currently including things like 90 min professional discussions, case studies and formal observations depending on level)	Level 2 Early Years Practitioner (EYP) and Level 3 Early Years Educator (EYE) available via this route	Not available for 16-18 year olds.
Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner (EYLP) ONLY available as an apprenticeship	20% off the job requirement – roughly 6 hours per week	No minimum requirement for minimum contracted hours	Not all providers have access to the funding
Employer funded (LEVY or 5% contribution from employer)	Length of course is typically 18 months	Suitable for volunteers	No off the job requirement
Can pay apprenticeship wage (dependent on age)		Can be completed in 12 months (or sooner dependent on how quick the learner completes their work)	Have to pay minimum wage
		Different funding options available dependant on age, wages and previous qualifications	
		Ideal for staff upskilling from Level 2 to Level 3, or experiences staff to gain a qualification.	

Further topics of interest

FUNDING LOOP

If you are a provider that uses the software “Funding Loop” to support your applications for the Early Years funded entitlements, you must let us know by emailing Eyfundings@gloucestershire.gov.uk

You will be required to sign a subsidiary agreement accepting the risks to the accuracy of your claims.

Please be aware that your parents can opt to not provide their National

Insurance number and date of birth in their Funding Loop account. This will prevent us from accessing the child's eligibility for Early Years Pupil Premium and you could be missing out on hundreds of pounds of additional funding.

The recent change to the "Child Details" area of the Portal requiring a SEND Status to be included is not currently included in Funding Loop, however, you are required to add this to your tasks before submitting your claims.

LET'S TALK BUSINESS: A SPACE FOR YOUR QUESTIONS

What are the termly deadlines dates for parents to apply for their eligibility codes?

Parents MUST apply before the following deadline dates and the code must have a start date on or before:

- *31st August for the Autumn term,*
- *31st December for the Spring term*
- *31st March for the Summer term.*

Why can't I enter extended/expanded hours on the headcount task?

If the eligibility code is not valid in the right term, you will not be able to add extended/expanded hours into the funding task. Please visit "Review previous checks" in the Portal and ensure the "Eligible from" date meets the correct range discussed in Section 4.7 of the Provider Agreement.

Training

Training & Meetings - Book now!

SIOT Level 2 - Practical strategies: sensory processing in the Early Years (FULL) - 27/11/2025 - 4:00 - 6:00pm - Kingsway Primary School, Valley Gardens, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL2 2AR - [Book here](#)

SIOT Level 1 - 01/12/2025, 4:00 - 6:00pm at Oakwood Primary School. [Book here](#)

Sensory Integration Occupational Therapy training (SIOT) – Play to Ignite Development - 04/12/2025 - 4:00 - 6:00pm - Oakwood Primary School, Cotswold Road, Cheltenham, GL52 5HD - [Book here](#)

Childminder Play Session - 09/12/25, 9:30 - 11:30am - The Link Children's Centre, Matson Avenue, Matson, Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL4 6DB. [Book here](#)

Childminder Network Meeting - 11/12/2025 - 7:00 - 8:00pm - Online via TEAMS - [Book here](#)

Childminder Play Session - 16/12/2025 - 9:30 - 12:00pm - The Beacon Children's Centre, Valley Gardens, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL2 2AR - [Book here](#)

Total Communication Training in the Early Years - This training is provided in house at your setting.

You can now book Total Communication in the Early Years through GCC+. To do this you will need to log into your setting's GCC+ account. Go to the **search bar** on the **home page**, and type in Total Communications and **press the search key**.

You will then see the link for the Total Communications for you to book.

(Please note – if you search in the ‘training section’ or the ‘services’ section, you won’t find it. It must be searched for in the home page search and the search key pressed). NB - If you just press enter, it won’t find it.

Once you have booked and checked out your training, you will be contacted by an EY Inclusion Advisor to arrange the date and time for the delivery of your course. If you have not heard from us within 2 weeks, please contact the EY Admin Team: eyservice@gloucestershire.gov.uk.

Please note: Most training and all events (excluding some meetings) are subject to a charge. Please check the price when you make your booking. If you are in any doubt, please email eysservice@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Please refer to the cancellation policy for your event, as charges may apply.

CANCELLATION POLICY

- 2 weeks before the training course is due to take place – 100% refund
- Less than 2 weeks before the training course is due to take place – 0% refund
- If GCC cancels a training course, we will issue a refund automatically. If you paid by credit card, the refund will be paid back to the same card. If you paid by invoice, you will receive a credit note.
- If you need to cancel your place on a training course within two weeks of the course and there are special circumstances, please contact eysservice@gloucestershire.gov.uk and we will consider your request on a case-by-case basis.



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