



Early Years & Childcare Provider Bulletin

BUSINESS & FUNDING FOCUS

EY and Childcare Provider Bulletin; Business & Funding Focus 5 December 2025



Dear provider,

With the festive break in sight and excitement in the air, we hope all providers are enjoying the run up to the New Year and thank you all for your hard work during 2025.

We look forward to working with you all in 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 Updates

The next Grant Panel for the Early Years Expansion Capital Grant and the Wraparound Revenue Grant is February 27th 2026. The application window will close on Friday 30th January 2026.

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

Phase 2 applications for School Based Nursery have now closed, if you wish to be considered for phase 3 please fill in an expression of interest via the [online application service](#) before 11th December.

Phase 3 ([School-based Nursery Capital Grant 2025 to 2026: information for applicants](#))

As part of phase 3, local authorities will be invited to develop multi-year funding proposals (2027–2030). The DfE will publish separate guidance to support this process in early 2026 and will engage with local authorities and schools in autumn 2025 to provide further details.

Early Years Funded Entitlements - Spring Term 2026

Children become eligible for the funded entitlement from the term after

they reach the relevant age and up until statutory school age, which is the term after their 5th birthday. The table below confirms when a child is eligible to receive funding in the Spring term:

When child turns the relevant age (9 months, 2, 3 or 4 years) between	When they can get their hours from
1 September to 31 December	Spring Term starting on or after 1 January

A child will be entitled to the extended funded hours from the term **after both** of the following conditions are satisfied:

1 - the child has reached the relevant age and is eligible to receive funding (see table above)

AND

2 - the parents have applied before the deadline date, have a valid eligibility code and the code has a start date on or before **31st December 2025**.

A child will enter the grace period when the child's parents cease to meet the eligibility. The end date of the grace period should only be considered in these instances. It should not be considered as part of the eligible period of the parents' code. Funding for the extended entitlement cannot be claimed for the first time when an eligibility code is in its grace period. This also applies if a child moves settings during the term and wants to claim the Extended Entitlement for the first time at a new setting and the code is in its grace period. Providers should remind parents to reconfirm their eligibility codes before the end of the validity period, not the Grace Period end date. The "Expiration Dashboard" in the Nursery Funding Portal can be used to identify those codes approaching their end date and the "Review previous checks" menu option can be used to confirm when a funded place can start.

Back dating the start date of eligibility codes will only be give consideration in "very exceptional circumstances", for example hospital admission, bereavement or where the parent is a victim of domestic abuse or other serious crime. Local Authorities do not receive funding for non-eligible codes therefore, costs for back dated codes must be met from local contingency budgets made up from limited public funding.

Charging Compliance

Have you updated your information for families?

Costs of chargeable extras should be published on provider websites or, where they do not have any website, on local authority Family Information Services. This should be fully implemented by January 2026 at the latest.

Invoices and receipts should be itemised, and broken down into:

- the free entitlement hours
- additional private paid hours
- food charges
- non-food consumables charges
- activities charges

This should be fully implemented by January 2026 at the latest too.

To update your information on Glosfamilies Directory, please sign in via [Glosfamilies Directory | Sign in](#) or email earlyhelphub@gloucestershire.gov.uk

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.

Best Start in Life

Have you visited the new Best Start in Life website yet? [Homepage](#) | [Best Start in Life](#)

The Childcare Choices website is now the Best Start in Life parent hub. If families search for Childcare Choices they will be automatically redirected to the Best Start in Life website.

We are encouraging all providers to check they are using the new webpage in communications and have replaced any links on their webpages.

There are campaign resources available within the partner resources section of the website which includes content for social media and can be used for other communication such as emails or on websites.

DBS checks for GCC staff visiting EY Providers

Please look on the news section of the webpage and read letter from Kirsten Harrison, Director of Education which aims to provide reassurance to settings that GCC staff have all been appropriately vetted/cleared through safe recruitment processes.

Let's Talk Business: A Space for your

Questions

Can I charge a reservation fee?

For children accessing any hours above their funding entitlement - yes.

For any children accessing funding only- no. You can only charge a refundable deposit for children who are accessing funding only, and this must be refunded within a reasonable amount of time.

How do I find out about the childcare sufficiency in my area?

The Childcare Sufficiency Duty report is available via the direct link

[Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report | Early Years Service](#) and includes information for each locality. A Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report aims to provide an assessment of childcare provision for children aged 0-14 years old (and up to 18 years old for children with SEND) to meet the needs of working parents and those studying or training for work.

Training & Meetings - Book now!

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](#)

Sensory Integration Occupational Therapy training (SIOT) – Play to Ignite Development - 15/01/2026 - 4:00 -6:00pm - Kingsway Primary School, Valley Gardens, Gloucester, GL2 2AR [Book here](#)

Childminder Network Meeting - 19/01/2026 - 7:00 - 8:00pm - Online via TEAMS [Book here](#)

Childminder Play Session - 20/01/2026 - 9:30am - 12:00noon - The Beacon Children's Centre, Valley Gardens, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL2 2AR [Book here](#)

Sensory Integration Occupational Therapy training (SIOT Level 1) – 22/01/2026 - 4:00 - 6:00pm - Longford Park Primary Academy, Clock Tower Road, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL2 9FP [Book here](#)

SENCO in the Early Years - 22/01/2026 & 29/01/2025 (2 day course) -

9:15am - 3:00pm - Shire Hall, Westgate St, Gloucester, GL1 2TG

[Book here](#)

Sensory Integration Occupational Therapy training (SIOT Level 1) –

29/01/2026 - 4:00 - 6:00pm | Scheduled | WIN26SIOTL1-04 | Early

Years | Severnbanks Primary School (Naas Lane, Lydney,

Gloucestershire, GL15 5A [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 eyservice@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 eyservice@goucestershire.gov.uk and we will consider your request on a case-by-case basis.



Gloucestershire County Council, Shire Hall, Westgate Street, Gloucester GL1 2TJ

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