

4 March 2025



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Early Years
Business News Tuesday



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Welcome

Congratulations to all successful applicants from round 3

Grant panels have been held and successful applicants should be receiving emails from both EY and wraparound teams. We will let you know when funding is expected to be with you after we have submitted the Officer Decision paper to Cabinet.

Amendment to our dates for the next application window – we will open the applications from 26 March (to take into account the two-week Easter holidays) until 30 April 2025.

If you need support completing applications or would like to discuss with the EY and Wraparound teams please get in touch.

If you are applying for capital funding for building work, extension or remodelling internal structures we have put together a [Project Sheet](#) to help you. This has questions and guidance about what information you need to provide.

The next Grant Panel will meet on the 21 and 22 May 2025.

If you have any questions please email [EY Business Support](#) the or [Wraparound Team](#).

EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE STATUTORY GUIDANCE – effective from 1 April 2025

As you will all know by now, DfE published an updated version of the [early education and childcare statutory guidance](#) on Friday 21 February. The new guidance is effective from 1 April 2025.

DfE have aimed to put transparency at the heart of how the entitlements should be passed on to parents, including that all costs should be clear and transparent to parents upfront. However, they have stressed that they are not seeking to stop providers from being able to charge for

voluntary extras, but the guidance reaffirms there must be no mandatory charges for parents, in line with the underpinning legislation and the recent [High Court judgment](#).

Overview of changes in the guidance

Providers are expected to publish their charges on their websites, or, where they do not have a website, on the local authority Family Information Services page (glosfamilies directory). Providers to have their charges published on websites by January 2026.

The guidance also sets out that providers are to break their invoices down into:

- the free entitlement hours (with no charge);
- additional private paid hours;
- food charges;
- non-food consumables charges;
- and activities charges.

This is so that parents can see that they have received their entitlement hours completely free of charge, in accordance with legislation, and can easily understand what is and is not included in those entitlement hours. Whilst providers can charge for voluntary extras there must not be any mandatory charges for parents in relation to the free hours.

The guidance makes clear that providers should be mindful of the impact of charges on families, particularly the most disadvantaged. Any additional charges (for consumables, meals and snacks, extra activities, and additional hours) must be voluntary for parents. Additional services should be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parents must be able to opt out of paying for chargeable extras and the associated consumable or activity for their child.

Providers can charge parents for the following extras in connection with the free hours, but these charges must be voluntary for the parent:

- Consumables to be used by the child, such as nappies or sun cream.
- Meals and snacks consumed by the child.

- Extra optional activities such as events, celebrations, specialist tuition (for example music classes or foreign languages) or other activities that are not directly related or necessary for the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.
- Providers can also charge parents for any additional, private paid hours according to their usual terms and conditions provided taking up private paid hours is not a condition of accessing a free place.

A local authority should intervene if a provider seeks to make additional hours, voluntary services or voluntary consumables a mandatory condition of taking up a free place.

Local authorities must take all steps available to ensure that the free entitlements are available free of charge and therefore that providers do not charge parents for the following in connection with the entitlement hours:

- Top-up fees - any difference between a provider's normal charge to parents and the funding they receive from the local authority to deliver free places.
- The supply of or use of any materials, including but not limited to, craft materials, crayons, paper, books, instruments, toys, or other equipment or learning resources that are necessary for the effective delivery of childcare.
- Business running costs, including but not limited to, rent, staff wages, cleaning materials, insurance, or utility bills such as energy, gas or water.
- Registration fees as a condition of taking up a child's entitlement place.
- Non-refundable deposits as a condition of taking up a child's entitlement place.
- General charges, including but not limited to, non-itemised enrichment charges, sustainability charges, business continuity charges, additional charges, enhanced ratios, hourly rates, or any other supplementary charges on top of the free hours.
- Any additional fees that are not specifically identified and itemised as being for chargeable extras.

Local authorities should ensure that children are able to take up their free hours in continuous blocks if they wish to, and there should be no artificial breaks in the entitlement hours. For example, a provider should not offer 10am to midday and 1pm to 3pm as entitlement hours and offer private paid hours only in between.

Gloucestershire will now start working on the Local Provider Agreement for 2025/26, taking these changes into consideration.

AMENDMENT TASK

The funding amendment task for the Spring term opened on 24 February and closes on 21 March.

You may notice an additional column on the task with the heading “Entitlement Weeks”. This is linked to the Early Years Census and will only form part of your Spring Term submissions. This column should reflect the number of weeks per year that a child is accessing their funded entitlement over. If you are a term time only setting, this will be 38 weeks. If you are open all year round and stretch the funding, the number of weeks can be anything between 39–52 to reflect the number of weeks your setting stretches the child’s entitlement over. Please note that if you do not enter anything in this column, we will use 38 weeks as the default figure.

Our IT developers have made us aware that this should be populated AFTER the “Weeks Attended for term” and “Average Hours Attended per week” columns, you have to go back to the column to be able to populate it successfully. Please accept our apologies for the confusion.

FUNDING DATES – SPRING TERM

When submitting your funding claims for the Spring term, please consider that 11 April is the end of the Spring term. Any child that has attained the relevant age by 31 March 2025, cannot claim funded hours until the Summer term. Funding can be claimed at the start of the term

beginning on or following 1 April, this will be 28 April, the start of the Summer term.

Fantastic free resources for providers regarding meal planning in your setting

Guidance: [Example menus for early years settings in England](#)

Example menus and useful guidance for early years settings to help meet the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements for food and drink.

Funding and Support to help meet the needs of children and families

Did you know that there are currently 122 Grants and charitable support records on [Glosfamilies Directory](#)?

The page content can be filtered by location and age groups (SEND Local Offer ages) using the filters to the right of the page.

We would recommend using a key word search to focus your search. For example, if you were to enter “**funding respite**” you would see 17 linked records. This could save a huge amount of time when researching. Please note the same records would appear if you searched “**respite funding**”, the word order is not essential for this function.

We include below a few services which may be of interest:

[Nicola Cory Support Foundation](#)

The Nicola Corry Support Foundation is a registered charity that helps families with children where either parents has been diagnosed with cancer. The Charity gives preference to families with young children living in the South West, although, as funds permit, we will consider requests from all over the UK. We may help families with:

- Childcare costs e.g. child minding, after school clubs, nursery
- Money to help families afford a treat together - weekend away or holiday to help in stressful times

- Grants to ease financial pressure caused by the disruption to income due to the illness

Buttle Chances for Children Grant (Age 2-18 years old)

Chances for Children grants are individually tailored grants of up to £2,400 for children and young people who have experienced a crisis that has recently had a significant and enduring impact on their wellbeing and educational engagement. We fund items and activities to help improve children and young people's wellbeing and increase their capacity to engage in education and learning.

Gloucester Relief in Sickness Fund

The Gloucester Relief in Sickness Fund is intended to assist any person who is resident in the city of Gloucester and who is both sick and suffering from financial hardship.

Gloucestershire Welfare Support Scheme

The fund provides practical support to eligible adults and families for food, gas/electricity top ups and household items such as furniture including white goods/appliances and furniture

Training

Provider Portal Training - Claiming the funded entitlements and using the Self Update Portal - 7 March 2025 - 10am until noon - Face to face at Shire Hall. Book via [link](#).

This training is now full, but if we have sufficient interest on the waiting list, we will organise another event. Please add yourself to the waiting list if you could benefit from this training.

Thank you.



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