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Early Years Bulletin

Dear Colleagues,

Happy New Year! I hope that you all had an enjoyable time during the Christmas break and had some rest. As you will be acutely aware this year has started with significant change to manage once again for our settings. Thankfully the Local Outbreak Response Team received a very small number of contacts from settings during the Christmas break and into this week so far has remained relatively quiet.

You will be aware that case rates have risen dramatically, and whilst case rates in the youngest children are the lowest our attention is now turned to looking forward following on from the announcement of the national lockdown and instruction that all early years setting will remain open.

The Education Incident Planning meeting along with the Early Years Task Group have resumed meeting this week and have received feedback and discussed the challenge that settings are facing in managing multiple expectations in fast moving and uncertain times. We are expecting further guidance to be issued by the DfE this week and will work closely with you and our WCC colleagues and partners to support you.

In this week's bulletin you will also find a range of information, guidance and advice that I hope you will find of interest.

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DfE provides update on rationale behind decision to keep early years provision open

Below is a link from the Early Years Alliance following a response from the DfE to queries on why early years providers have been asked to remain open during national lockdown.

<https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/news/2021/01/dfе-provides-update-rationale-behind-decision-keep-early-years-providers-open>

Education and Early Help bulletin

The Covid 19 Task group have received feedback that due to increased pressure on their time, some setting practitioners are struggling to find the time to read through the Education and Early Help Bulletin. They also feel that it is very focused towards schools.

The Early Years team completely understands that practitioners need to focus their limited time on activities that are of value to their sector, therefore please note that any articles that are included in the 'schools' Education and Early Help Bulletins' and are relevant to the early years sector are **always** replicated within the Early Years bulletin.

If you do not have the capacity to read both bulletins, please be reassured that you will not miss out on any important messages if you only read the Early Years Bulletin.

We have made the decision to continue to send the Education and Early Help Bulletin to all early years settings as many of the messages for schools are of considerable interest, and impact on childminders and out of school provisions.

National Guidance

The following Guidance has been updated this week:

[Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings \(opens in new window\)](#)

[National lockdown: Stay at Home \(opens in new window\)](#): Information specific to childminders has been updated: "*Childminders should continue to allow children to attend as normal except for school-aged child. Childminders caring for school-aged children (including reception childcare) should only admit **vulnerable children** and children of **critical workers***". It is our understanding that if you are looking after a school aged child who is eligible to attend, you should be ensuring that they access their remote education.

Useful Information

You may find the following link useful for up-to-date information, [Department for Education blog \(opens in new window\)](#)

Early years foundation stage: coronavirus disapplications

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2/early-years-foundation-stage-coronavirus-disapplications>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): financial support for education, early years and children's social care

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care>

Early Years Attendance Data

You should have recently received a request to submit your Early Years attendance data for the week commencing Monday 4th January. To make it as easy as possible, we have move to an [online form \(opens in new window\)](#), making sure you press **submit** at the end. The form should be submitted by 9am on Tuesday 12th January. A new link will be sent out every Thursday. Please note that this includes schools with nursery provision.

Nursery Education Funding – January Checklist

The following activities must be completed by all settings in receipt of Nursery Education funding:

Task	Where?	Deadline
Early Years Attendance Data – Week commencing 4 th January	Online Form	9am Tuesday 12 th January
Submit Spring Actual Claim	Online Provider Portal – Funding	Friday 22 nd January
Submit 'EY's Census' Form (excluding Maintained/Academy Nursery Classes)	Online Provider Portal – Forms	Friday 29 th January
Submit 'Update your Details' Form	Online Provider Portal – Forms	Friday 29 th January
Submit 'Staffing Support' Form (excluding school-based providers)	Online Provider Portal – Forms	Friday 29 th January
Submit Sufficiency 2021 – Schools Form (for Maintained/Academy Nursery Classes only)	Online Provider Portal – Forms	Friday 29 th January

Nursery Education Funding – Spring Term 2021

You should have recently received an email briefly outlining the NEF plans for the Spring Term 2021. We are now able to provide further details.

Unlike in the Spring/Summer 2020 where the message from Government was to close unless you had children of critical workers or vulnerable children, the decision by Government for this Lockdown (January 2021) is that *“Early years settings (including nurseries and childminders) remain open”*.

There is no expectation that you limit places to children of critical workers or to those considered vulnerable. Early years workers are considered critical workers and therefore children of your staff are eligible for a school place, if required. [Guidance on critical workers \(opens in new window\)](#)

The current guidance for Financial Support for Early Years states that *“In the spring term 2021, local authorities’ funding to providers should return to the normal approach of funding on the number of **entitlement hours delivered**.”* However, Worcestershire has made the decision to fund **booked** funded hours, rather than just those delivered. This means that if a parent/carer chooses to keep their child at home, but still wishes to retain their child’s place, you can continue to claim for the funded hours, even if the child is not in attendance.

To support families who wish to use childcare (whether they are critical workers or not), funding will be moved to an alternative setting if you are unable to meet a family’s requirements. [A copy of the financial guidance \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Closed Settings

Following the current guidance, if you choose to close your setting, you will **not** receive funding for the closed weeks. However, early years practitioners who are identified as ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ are expected to shield, as per the Governments advice. Financial support **may be** available if you are:

- A childminder who is identified as clinically extremely vulnerable, or a member of your household is **or**
- A setting and are unable to open in any capacity (including reduced hours/offer) due to your staff being classed as extremely clinically vulnerable

A copy of the letter advising you/a member of your household to shield will be required to evidence your entitlement to ongoing Nursery Education Funding. Please contact the NEF Team if you wish to discuss this via NEF@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk or 01905 844 441.

For all closed settings, **please submit your Actual Claim as normal**, following the deadlines provided by the Early Years Funding Team and amend your weeks to those you expect to be open during the Spring Term. If the number of weeks change, an adjustment claim can be submitted after half-term.

If you are closed, please complete the EY’s Weekly Attendance Data as requested, indicating that you are closed. If you have already received your Spring Term Estimate Payment, Patrick O’Connor will contact you to discuss arrangements for the remainder of the Term. If you are not available via your normal contact details, please email EYFunding@worcestershire.gov.uk to provide alternative contact information.

Spring Term 2021 Supplementary Payment

Whilst the Department for Education guidance is currently to fund as normal during the Spring Term 2021, we are very aware that take-up of childcare is lower than normal. To support your ongoing sustainability, we will be repeating the Autumn Term Supplementary Payment for the Spring Term for all Early Years settings that remain open for the whole term. Using the same formula, we will calculate the average number of hours you claimed funding for during the Spring Term 2019 and the Spring Term 2020. If that total is higher than your claim for the Spring Term 2021, a supplementary payment will be made to pay the **difference in hours at £4.20 per hour**.

Updates to Guidance

When the Department for Education updates their guidance for the Early Years sector, we will review these decisions and update you accordingly.

Financial Concerns

As previously advised, if you are experiencing financial difficulties, please contact Cath Shotton for support on cshotton@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk or 01905 843 573.

School Based Nursery Provision

We are aware that schools are not clear about whether their pre-school provision should be open to all. The Local Government Association has provided the following clarification:

Q: Should school-based nurseries remain closed or reopen? And what about maintained nursery schools?

A: All early years settings can open for all children. The guidance provides flexibility where for logistical or operational reasons a school-based nursery in a primary school setting needs to follow the primary school arrangements but we would encourage them to open like other EY providers. If any restrictions are deemed necessary these should be for a limited period of time with nurseries reopening for all children as soon as possible. Maintained nursery schools should follow the early years guidance and remain open for all children. We understand a number of maintained nursery schools will have been open throughout December and EY provision should continue as normal in January.

Pre-School Forum – Q5’s and Maintained Provision Monitoring Forms

The pre-school forum routinely requests additional information from mainstream settings on the children with SEND within their settings. This may take the form of:

- Q5
- Maintained provision monitoring forms

If you receive a Q5 from the SEND team or the maintained provision monitoring form from Becky White, Early Years Inclusion Coordinator – please endeavour to complete the forms as fully as possible, in liaison with the child’s parents.

If you are unsure how to complete them or need some advice on a specific section, then please contact the Inclusion team on 01905 843 099.

Both forms should be returned to the SEND team via the Children’s Secure Portal (CPS) or for schools who have secure email correspondence with WCF to SENAssessmentPSF@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

National business support zoom webinar for early years and childcare providers from Hemsall’s

DfE has funded Hemsall’s to deliver a new national webinar for all types of early years and childcare provider. You can book your FREE place(s) today by clicking the links below.

19 January 2021, 9.45am to 12.30pm - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-map-a-national-webinar-for-early-years-and-childcare-providers-tickets-131608780405>

19 January 2021, 6.30pm to 8.45pm <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-map-a-national-webinar-for-early-years-and-childminders-tickets-131614619871>

Managing an early years and childcare setting, whether it be a homebased childminder, out of school club, a small voluntary playgroup, a nursery or a chain, a school or children’s centre, is complex task. It is one of balancing quality, health and safety, with parents’ and children’s needs, funding and fees, and business sustainability.

The webinar will outline steps providers could take to business plan for now, summer term and across 2021. Developed around a six-step Business Map process, the webinar will assist anyone thinking about necessary business decisions to support business change and sustainability, whether they are new to the role or an experienced manager.

James Hemsall OBE, director says: “At Hemsall’s we’ve spent 20 years helping providers to create childcare places, introduce funded early years entitlements for two-, three- and four-year-olds, and manage business sustainability. This year has been no exception and our team has been busy delivering very many online information sessions, online training workshops and one-to-one business support to make sense of the current business needs in early years prompted by COVID-19.

Hempsall's has been asked by DfE to share our approach and some new tools and resources, as well as highlighting all the support that already exists in the sector."

Why is it called Business Map, and what is it aiming to achieve? We know there are a lot of business planning tools out there. We didn't want to duplicate that. We know there is a need for thinking about a whole process of looking at the current and future needs of childcare businesses. The Business Map shows the way.

How has it been developed? Business Map has been developed this year through very many information, training and one-to-one business support sessions. We have listened to the challenges and needs of settings and created something new and different.

What are the six steps? We start by looking at what's changing, then how we find out more about how this affects each setting. After which there is a risk assessment process, this is more about identifying what the pressure points are. Then we explore possible ideas and options, including what has worked for others. After that we help everyone to consider their own plans and decisions. At the end there is a review and the process start again if adaptations are needed.

What is on offer? Webinar attendees will be able to download the FREE Business Map, certificate of attendance, and supporting resources at the end.

NEF update meetings – Cancelled

Due to low numbers and the current lockdown pressures the NEF team have taken the decision to cancel the 15th and 21st January NEF update meetings. A cancellation email will be issued via CPD and the team are looking at sharing this information via an alternative forum / update meeting.

SENCO forum clusters

A reminder to book your place on our forthcoming SENCo forum clusters, which will be held virtually in line with current guidance and ran by our Early Years Inclusion team

Places must be booked via [CPD \(opens in new window\)](#) using your CPD leader login details.

- Bromsgrove and Redditch - 02 February 2021, 6.15pm to 7.45pm, course code: EY/20/108
- Malvern Hills - 03 February 2021, 4pm to 5.30pm, course code: EY/19/335
- Pershore and Evesham - 09 February 2021, 6.15pm to 7.45pm, course code: EY/19/338
- Worcester City and Droitwich - 02 March 2021, 6.15pm to 7.45pm, course code: EY/19/350
- Wyre Forest - 25 March 2021, 4pm to 6pm, course code: EY/20/110

Joining instructions will be attached to your confirmation, if they do not arrive please contact the training team on 01905 844 420 or email workforcesupport@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk and they will be re-sent.

nasen – helping everyone to achieve webinars

nasen is the leading organisation supporting education professionals who work with children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

nasen are offering [a range of specific SEND CPD modules for early years practitioners \(opens in new window\)](#) including free and charged modules:

- Early Years webinar: meeting the needs of every children - free
- An introduction to interoception - charged
- Speech, Language and Communication needs in the Early Years - charged

Introduction to speech and language difficulties

This course offers a valuable introduction to the awareness and understanding of speech and language difficulties and the advice and guidance available to help support children's development.

For SENCO's and all Early Years Practitioners

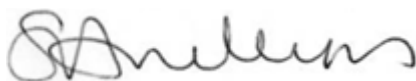
Virtual delivery via Microsoft teams

- Cost: £25 + VAT (£30 inc VAT)
- 28 January 2021, 6.30pm to 8.30pm, course code: EY/20/041
- Joining instructions / link will be issued via CPD as part of your confirmation, if you have not received within 5 days of the training please contact the training team on 01905 844 420

Staffing News

And finally, I am delighted to welcome Ian Morris who joins us this week as our new Early Years Education and Childcare Strategy Manager. Ian joins us with extensive experience of working in early years as a teacher, leader, and consultant and I am sure you will give him a warm welcome into this position.

Best regards,



Sarah Wilkins
Director for Education and Early Help

