

Appendix 1

Charging Policy for Early Years Places within the maintained sector

This policy outlines Lincolnshire County Council's arrangements for charging for early year's places above statutory entitlement including Maintained Nursery Schools

1. INTRODUCTION

Lincolnshire County Council is committed to the delivery of high quality education and childcare; and to ensuring that those in greatest need are supported through the fair and transparent allocation of early year's places.

The Government funds LAs to ensure a free part-time early education place is available for every 3 and 4 year old in settings that have been *registered* by Ofsted, and found to be of at least satisfactory in quality through the LA accreditation process (in England). Free places can be provided by a variety of providers in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors including registered childminder networks

From 1 September 2010 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to free Early Year's education, comprising 15 hrs per week for 38 weeks of the year. Parents do not contribute towards this minimum entitlement but may be charged fees for any services or childcare additional to the free place.

Any provision over and above the statutory entitlement cannot be met from the Dedicated School Budget. Provision above the entitlement is considered to be an aspect of an extended school and funding for it must be separated from the school's delegated budget.

School may adopt this charging policy but this is a recommendation not a requirement as school governors make the final decision.

2 ELIGIBILITY

All children are entitled to up to 2 years of free early education before reaching statutory school age (i.e. the term following their fifth birthday) from 1 September, 1 January or 1 April following their 3rd birthday. Depending on local arrangements for admissions to schools, many children start full-time education in school Reception classes before reaching compulsory school age.

Children born between 1 April and 31 August (inclusive) will be eligible to a free place from 1 September following their third birthday.

Children born between 1 September and 31 December (inclusive) will be eligible to a free place 1 January following their third birthday.

Children born between 1 January and 31 March (inclusive) will be eligible to a free place 1 April following their third birthday.

The private, voluntary and independent sector are able to charge fees for a provision or service to families and carers delivered in addition to the statutory 15 hours. The private, voluntary and independent sector decide on their individual charging arrangements and make details of charges to families public.

This guidance outlines arrangements for the maintained sector to charge fees for any services additional to the statutory provision of 15 hrs as outlined above.

3 CHARGING

Due to the current legal position, Lincolnshire County Council governs the charging policy and any fee for early year's provision over and above the statutory entitlement

3a General

- This charging policy is applicable to all admissions after *1st September 2010*.
- A part-time place (maximum of 15 hours per week) must be offered free. This can be taken up by any provider who is registered with Ofsted and who is delivering early education accredited by the LA. Eligibility is outlined in the above paragraph.
- The Local Authority will no longer fund full time places from Sept 2011. Subsidised early year's places can only be accessed through the Team Around the Child plan and funding arrangements will be agreed on an individual basis.
- A full-time place (core day 9.30 – 3.30 TTO) may be offered free the term following child's 4th birthday if space is available.
- School must charge fees to the level that they receive funding – This is through AWPU and Nursery Pupil weighting – This is £3.99 per hour per child for 2010/11

3b Arrangements at School level for fees

Lincolnshire County Council operates a 'no arrears' policy.

- The purpose of this decision is to protect the centre budgets and prevent parents building up arrears which they then have difficulty meeting.
- This policy must be followed by all Maintained settings as the Council may not equalise shortfall of income where a robust procedure has not been in place.
- Council employees are reminded that the code of conduct makes clear that employees of this, or any other council, must make proper arrangements to keep payments up to date.
- The Council will require schools to take legal action if necessary to pursue any outstanding arrears, following the withdrawal of the place.
- Schools are required to have a procedure in place for administering fees and late payments
- If the child is accessing their statutory entitlement at a different provider, parents/carers should be given a one week settling in period free of charge

All maintained settings are expected to raise awareness of working family tax credits and other benefits and to have close working arrangements with Job Centre Plus

3c Managing Demand

Schools must prioritise the allocation of all places for children aged 3 and 4 years in line with their Planned Admission Number

A child who applies to the school for statutory provision must take priority to the school offering extended provision

4 Crèches/ Sectional Care

Schools may provide occasional care for children under eight. They need to be registered where they run for more than two hours a day, even where individual children attend for shorter periods. Where two sessions are offered in any one day, there must be a break between sessions with no children in the care of the provider. Crèches or sessional care tend to be provided so parents can engage in particular activities, e.g. training or adult learning.

5 Review and Monitoring

The policy will be formally monitored and reviewed annually and individual arrangements will be reviewed as part of the ongoing financial management and reporting to governors.