

## Free childcare offers to continue during coronavirus closures

Funding for the government's early years entitlements will continue during any periods of nursery, preschool or childminder closures, or where children cannot attend due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Chancellor has today (Tuesday 17 March) confirmed the Government will continue to pay funding to local authorities for the free entitlements for two, three and four-year-olds, providing reassurance for early years settings in light of coronavirus.

The Department for Education has set out its expectation that local authorities should follow its position and continue to pass on the government funding it receives for these entitlements to providers, in the event that any are advised to close by Public Health England or children are not able to attend due to coronavirus, to minimise short-term disruption.

To provide maximum clarity and stability to the early years sector during this time of rapidly changing circumstances, the government has also confirmed today that there will be no rise in the fees paid by early years and childcare providers to register with Ofsted in 2020-21. This follows a recent consultation with the sector, which took on responses on fees for the Early Years Register.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Millions of parents rely on childcare and the vital service provided by nurseries, childminders and preschools. Making sure that young children can be cared for safely so that their parents are able to work where required is of the utmost importance now more than ever.

In recognition of this, we will continue to pay for all free early years entitlements places, even in the event that settings are closed on the advice of Public Health England, or children are not able to attend due to coronavirus, and we will not be asking for funding back from local authorities.

The advice from Public Health England continues to be that all educational settings, including nurseries, preschools and childminders, should remain open unless advised otherwise. The Department for Education is providing daily updates to local authorities and early years sector organisations.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

I want to thank all the early years practitioners who day-in and

day-out do such an excellent job. I know these must be difficult times and I hope these announcements show that we are listening to their concerns and taking urgent action. I particularly want to thank the Early Years Alliance, the National Day Nurseries Association, and the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years for their engagement at this critical time.

The Department for Education also [confirmed](#) today that Ofsted is to temporarily suspend routine inspections of schools, colleges, early years settings, children's social care providers and local authorities to reduce the burden on staff who are providing vital services to the nation in response to coronavirus.