Early Years Noticeboard: 1 March 2018

1. Message from Jill Crosbie, Acting Assistant Director SEND

Welcome to another Early Years Noticeboard. We are still in the consultation period for the Council runday nurseries so please contribute if you have views. The link to the consultation is [https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/council-run-day-nurseries/] and it will close on 23 March.

I hope you are all well prepared for ‘The Beast from the East ’ and that the children enjoy the snow. Be safe.

Best wishes

Jill

Jill Crosbie
Acting Assistant Director SEND
jill.crosbie@birmingham.gov.uk

2. ECS and the EEE Portal User Amendments

The Electronic Eligibility Checking System (ECS) is the online resource available free of charge to all early education entitlement (EEE) funded providers. ECS eligibility confirmation is a funding requirement for providers claiming the following eligibility based EEE funding; 2 year old funded places, Early Years Pupil Premium, Free School Meals or 30 hours extended entitlement. The EEE portal is the online funding claim portal for private and voluntary providers (not nursery schools or nursery classes).

To ensure that the appropriate staff can access the online systems at peak times can you please ensure that changes of access requirements following staff changes are reported to NEF@Birmingham.gov.uk as soon as staff changes take place. Please note that you are also able to request temporary amendments to cover staff leave. Changes to the ECS system can be made using the forms available on Eymis, ECS Change of Details Existing User Form V2 or ECS Remove or Add User Form V2.

[https://www.ted-birmingham.org.uk/cc_guidance_sub_section?subsectionID=09d0912c]

Changes to the PVI EEE Portal system can be made using the forms available on Eymis
[https://www.ted-birmingham.org.uk/cc_guidance_sub_section?subsectionID=5d111eb3]

Please remember that you must not share passwords. If system amendments are required the above forms must be used to protect the sensitive data held in the systems.

CONTACT: NEF Duty Line
EMAIL: nef@birmingham.gov.uk
TEL: 0121 303 0267
3. 2 year old eligibility and EYPP eligibility codes for the summer term – ECS amendments

Birmingham has implemented a manual process to be used when the ECS system does not confirm eligibility for EYPP, Free School Meals or 2 year old funding. A supporting guidance document is available on Eymis using the below link. The document is called ‘Checking System’.
https://www.ted-birmingham.org.uk/cc_guidance_sub_section?subsectionID=09d0912c

Eligibility is often not confirmed because the data entered into the ECS is incorrect. These errors create a lot of additional work for parents, providers and the Local Authority.

To avoid delays and the risk of funding not being paid providers must check that the ECS confirms eligibility for all 2 year old, FSM and EYPP funding claims. If the ECS checks results in a not found or pending outcome but the provider is confident that the parent is eligible, it is likely that the data has incorrectly entered into the ECS system or the benefit application was made in the second parent’s name.

Therefore providers are encouraged to ask parents to provide both parents’ National Insurance numbers and dates of births as this may confirm eligibility using the ECS system. If checking the accuracy of data entered for both parents does not confirm eligibility then the manual process can be used.

To avoid delays during the busy headcount periods, we are requesting that any manual amendments are requested at the beginning of term, this allows time for processing before funding claims are made.

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4. 30 hour eligibility codes for the summer term - Managing the summer term deadline for 30 hours

Thank you for continuing to communicate and support parents to apply and reconfirm eligibility codes in good time. For the summer term the Department for Education is encouraging parents to apply for new eligibility codes now and at the latest by 31 March 2018. This is to ensure they have their 30 hours code before the start of the term.

Please can you share this important information with families. Some parents will need to provide additional evidence to HMRC that they are eligible so it is essential that they apply in good time. During the Autumn and Spring terms late parent applications and reconfirmations have resulted in a number of parents being unable to receive a terms funding as the deadlines for eligibility are final and non-negotiable.

Reconfirmation of 30 hours eligibility
In addition, parents who already have an eligibility code need to reconfirm their eligibility every 3 months to ensure they continue to be eligible. This term some parents believed that they had reconfirmed, when they had not. To avoid this issue, providers should use their ECS system to check validity start date and end dates. If no date is available or the validity end date shows eligibility ceased on 31 March 2018, parents should call HMRC on 0300 123 4097 to check the status of their application.
Temporary Codes
As an additional measure to ensure that parents receive their codes in advance of the 31 March deadline, the childcare service will begin to offer temporary codes to parents who experience technical problems from today, Thursday 1 March.

Please encourage parents who are having difficulties completing their application or reconfirmation online, to contact the helpline on 0300 123 4097 immediately. HMRC will then check eligibility by phone and provide parents with a temporary code if they qualify for 30 hours.

To support as many parents as possible to take up their extended entitlement, Birmingham City Council will be funding a place where the parent can demonstrate that they have applied for an eligibility code by 31 March and have a 30 hours code dated between 1 and 23 April.

For digital codes (beginning ‘500’), providers will need to ask parents to acquire evidence of when they applied. HMRC will be able to issue a standard email or letter with the ‘application date’ to parents who contact the helpline requesting evidence. Temporary codes (beginning ‘11’) will only be issued to parents who applied/attempted to apply by 31 March and so should be accepted as evidence that the parent applied by the deadline.

Validating Eligibility Codes including Temporary Codes
Please remember that you must validate all eligibility codes via the Eligibility Checking System (ECS) for instructions please refer to Eymis using the below link, document ECS Guide for 30 Hours, 2yr Olds, EYPP & FSM;
https://www.ted-birmingham.org.uk/cc_guidance_sub_section?subsectionID=09d0912c

If a parent who has previously received a standard code starting with “500” is issued with a new temporary code starting with “11”, providers must validate the new eligibility code, but in addition the provider must make the previous ECS record inactive to avoid conflicts in the ECS system.

Making a code inactive will not remove the history from your ECS system. To make a code inactive please refer to Eymis using the below link, document named - How to withdraw or make an ECS application inactive.
https://www.ted-birmingham.org.uk/cc_guidance_sub_section?subsectionID=09d0912c

To find the original standard “500” application in the ECS system please search applications by the six digit ECS application reference number or the previous “500” DERN code.

Difficulties validating eligibility codes
During the spring term Birmingham providers were unable to confirm eligibility using the ECS system for more than 600 eligibility codes. These errors created a lot of additional work for providers and families. All of these errors resulted from inaccurate data entry, when providers validated eligibility codes. In majority of cases this was a simple typing error resulting in a transposed eligibility code. In other cases eligibility was not confirmed as the parent had provided incorrect data, usually an incorrect national insurance number.

To avoid delays and the risk of funding not being paid providers must check that the ECS confirms eligibility when they validate a code. If the validation process results in a not found or pending outcome, but the provider is confident that the parent is eligible this means that data has been incorrectly entered. Providers must then double check the data and amend the application to confirm eligibility. If the eligibility (DERN) code has been entered incorrectly then a new validation must be started and the previous application made inactive.

Please refer to Eymis using the below link. The document is called ‘How to withdraw or make an ECS application inactive’. 
https://www.ted-birmingham.org.uk/cc_guidance_sub_section?subsectionID=09d0912c
Validity Start Dates
For summer term funding to be paid validated eligibility codes must have a validity start date on or before 23 April 2018, codes dated after this date will not be funded until the Autumn term. Following validation of eligible codes please check the validity start date so that you can confirm if funding can be claimed for the summer term. Please do not apply for the 30 hours funding if the eligibility code has a validity start date after the 23 April 2018.

30 hours Promotional Materials
We have also combined the parent and stakeholder communications toolkit, renamed the Partner Toolkit, on the provider page of the Childcare Choices website. The aim of the toolkit is to help you and providers to promote the 30 hours offer and Tax-Free Childcare through a range of materials, including FAQs and posters. Please do share the toolkit with providers to enable them to promote the offers at their settings.

5. Universal Credit – Early Years Pupil Premium and 2 year old Early Education places: Amended Eligibility Criteria

The Department for Education has provided an update on the outcomes of the two consultations ran by the government regarding eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), and the free early education entitlement for two-year-olds under Universal Credit.

The Department for Education considered the all responses from the consultation and have decided to proceed with the implementation of the revised thresholds under Universal Credit as proposed. The full Government response to the consultations is set out here.

To implement the proposals the Department for Education have laid two statutory instruments to amend the relevant regulations. For FSM and EYPP, these regulations implement a net earnings threshold of £7,400, for EYPP and FSM eligibility to come into force from 1 April 2018. For the two year old entitlement, regulations are amended to implement a net earnings threshold of £15,400, to come into force from 1 April 2018. To support this amendment the Department has now published revised statutory guidance the statutory guidance can be accessed by following this link.

If a child has turned two and met the eligibility criteria before 1 January 2018, they will still be entitled to take up a place under the ‘old rules’ in the summer term - that is, without applying an earned income threshold to families entitled to Universal Credit. If a child turns two on or after 1st January and wishes to take up a place in the summer term, the ‘new rules’ for eligibility will apply – that is, families entitled to Universal Credit will be subject to the earned income threshold.

This means that any child born after 31 December 2015 who has had their eligibility checked, and wishes to take up a place in the summer term, must be re-checked to ensure they are eligible under the ‘new rules’. Failure to reconfirm eligibility means that if an ineligible child takes up a place in the summer term, EEE funding will not be paid. To check eligibility for 2 year olds, EYPP and FSM providers should continue to use the Electronic Eligibility Checking System (ESC) as normal.

Instructions for using the ECS system are available on Eymis using the below link, document ECS Guide for 30 Hours, 2 year olds, EYPP & FSM; https://www.ted-birmingham.org.uk/cc_guidance_sub_section?subsectionID=09d0912c

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6. Social mobility action plan

An ambitious plan to provide opportunity on every young person’s doorstep and help make Britain a country fit for the future was unveiled (Thursday 14 December) by Education Secretary Justine Greening. In a speech at the inaugural Reform social mobility conference, the Education Secretary pointed to the success of government reforms in raising school standards and creating more opportunities.

You can access the plan here:


The plan Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential will deliver targeted action where it is needed most, focusing £800 million of government investment on overcoming these challenges.

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