

Dear Parents,

Further to my email of March 31st I would like to expand on details of the new fee structure from September. As mentioned in the NDNA letters that I attached in March, we now have to make our consumables charges voluntary for parents accessing the Early Education Funding. To this end, I will be sending out an opting in/out form for you to sign and return to me. This will be with your August invoice next week.

The last few months have been very stressful for childcare owners as the Government is dictating to us how much we can charge for our services, in that they say that the funding that they give us covers all our costs (it doesn't!!!). All we can charge extra for is:

- Food
- consumables such as nappies and suncream (which is not part of our offer as you all provide it yourselves)
- extra activities - ie anything brought in such as our duckling experience, Zoolab visits plus football/music/french tuition (which we don't offer)
- additional hours - any hours attended beyond the 11 or 22 received as funding - we can set our own charges for these

As well as a National campaign to show solidarity of the childcare sector against the Government's use of the word 'Free' Nursery Places and all that entails, we have been meeting regularly on a local level to try and support each other and create one voice to tackle the issues that we face. This has involved meetings with 2 local MPs. Unfortunately, we currently feel that we have no option but to sign the Provider Agreement with the council, otherwise we will not receive any funding in September.

Having spent many hours calculating future charges and in order to remain within the constraints of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's Provider Agreement, I believe that the only charge I can make is for food. I have decided to charge £1.50 per funded hour for food for all children for the morning session and 60p per funded hour in the afternoon session. This will be charged as £1.08 per hour for those attending all day. This covers all snacks, the hot meal produced by Alex's Good Food for lunch, food for tea and Deby's wages to prepare tea and serve/clear up after lunch. It will also cover the purchase of additional food for food tasting and cooking activities. This is an increase in charges for children under 3 years old and a reduction in charges for those over 3 years. I have always interpreted the word 'consumables' as meaning things that are used and therefore need replacing e.g. paint, paper, toilet roll, wipes, kitchen roll, food. If there is any change in the control around what we can charge for, then I will need to review my charges at that point.

As mentioned, these charges for food are not mandatory and you have the choice to opt out and to provide your own food for your child's day at nursery. As detailed in the previous NDNA communication, this would not be our preference for many reasons:

1. We currently provide nutritional balanced meals and snacks throughout the day. Any food provided from home would need to adhere to a set of healthy food guidelines.
2. Mealtimes are a great learning and social experience for the children. They often eat better amongst their peers and are more willing to try new/unfamiliar foods.
3. We have several children with food allergies. The food that we provide within nursery is carefully monitored to meet those dietary requirements. With food being brought in from home we would have less control over the allergens they contain.

4. Packed lunches will need to be refrigerated. We have limited space for this and would therefore struggle to maintain the required temperatures as per Environmental Health requirements.

Some settings have created very complex arrangements around what hours within a day the funding can be claimed, creating the need for wrap-around care which can be charged for. I will continue to offer funded sessions throughout the nursery day, therefore if you are in receipt of 30 hours funding (22 stretched) and attending for 2 whole days or 4 half days you will just be paying for the food costs. (unless you choose to opt out). The morning session is 5 hours and the afternoon 4.75 hours.

I do not wish to implement any charges for extra activities as this creates a 2-tier system of those who can afford to pay extra and those who can't. I have no intention of restricting access to any child for these experiences.

The format of your invoices will look different from September. It will be broken down into:

- Funded hours attended
- Consumables charged for each funded hour
- Non funded hours attended

For those who attend for additional non-funded hours, your monthly invoice should not be different to the amount that you pay now, it will just include the above break-down i.e. the non-funded hourly rate will be reduced by the hourly consumables rate. For those who do not receive funding - your invoice will remain as currently.

Additionally, future invoices will be calculated on the basis of being open for 51 weeks of the year, divided by 12 months so that the same amount will be paid each month, regardless of the number of nursery days each month. Bank holidays will be deducted in the months to which they relate.

If notice of absence is given (by the Friday prior to the period of absence in order for food orders to be amended) then the consumables charge will be removed for that period and an adjustment made on the following month's invoice.

May I remind everyone that BCP council state in their Information to Parents literature that I give you with your initial funding form, that your child is only allowed to take 3 weeks holiday during the 51 week period. If your child is absent for additional weeks then the council has the right to claim back the funding from me and I then have to charge you the full daily/session rate for the period to recoup this loss. (we may be audited and have to advise the council of absences on request)

I hope that this lengthy explanation is not too confusing. Please feel free to contact me for any clarification you require. Hopefully it will be clearer when you receive your invoice in September.

For those newer parents who did not receive the email of March 31st, I will email it to you separately.

Apologies again for the lengthy read.

Best wishes

Alison