

## Pre-School - Fees & Charging Policy

### 1. The Hamlet Charter

Pre-school is part of The Hamlet, providing accessible childcare at an affordable rate to children with disabilities and complex health needs and their non-disabled peers who live in our local community.

Our charges are set at a level to support the provision of a high-quality service that requires specialist resources and highly skilled staff.

### 2. Purpose of this policy and why we have it

- The Hamlet is an approved provider of early education and receives early education funding from Norfolk County Council Children's Services for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. We have a statutory duty to ensure that parents can clearly see from the information we send them that they have been given their entitlement to 15 hours free (funded) childcare.
- We also want parents and carers to understand how we set our charges for early education sessions that are not covered by their free entitlement and how we collect our charges.
- We want to ensure that charges cover the cost of providing our service and that we are efficient in collecting charges.
- This policy provides this information for parents / carers.

### 3. The scope of this policy

- Parents and carers of those children attending or interested in attending our Pre-school.
- Early Years Staff.

### 4. Implementation and monitoring

#### Free Early Education:

- Children aged between 3 and 4 years of age in the term after they are 3 years of age are entitled to a maximum of 15 hours free (funded) early education a week.
- Those children eligible for the 2-year-old funding are also entitled to 15 hours a week.
- This entitlement is 570 hours a year over no fewer than 38 weeks.
- The free entitlements will be delivered consistently so that all children accessing any of the free entitlements will receive the same quality

and access to provision, regardless of whether they opt to pay for optional hours or services.

- It may not always be possible to provide children with their full entitlement.
- Parents may use all or part of their entitlement at The Hamlet.

#### **Paid Sessions:**

- A charge is made for childcare sessions over and above the funded entitlement.
- Charges are regularly reviewed and monitored by the board.

#### **Payment and Invoicing:**

- Government funding is intended to cover the cost to deliver 15 hours a week of free, high quality, flexible childcare only. We do not charge a 'top up' fee to recoup the difference between the amount received from the Local Authority and our hourly rate. There is no payment due from parents / carers for the 15 hours funded entitlement.
- Government funding is not intended to cover the cost of meals, snacks or other consumables and we do not currently charge for these, but this is reviewed periodically.
- We do not ask parents for a deposit or a registration fee to secure their child's place.
- Charges for additional services such as trips, theatre visits will be agreed in advance with families.
- All families will be issued an invoice termly unless the balance equals zero. The invoice will be itemised to provide clear and transparent information concerning the charges as agreed in the parent contract. It will allow parents/carers to see that the entitlement is received completely free of charge and understand additional fees that have been applied.
- Detailed receipts will be issued for all cash and cheque payments.
- Additional hours and services will be charged at the current hourly rate where hours are not funded as Early Education by the Local Authority.
- Accepted current payment methods for invoices are:
  - BACS payment made online
  - Cheque
  - Sage Pay
  - Using childcare vouchers

Advance notice will be given if payment methods change.

#### **Missed sessions:**

- Families are still charged if a privately funded session is missed. There may be exceptional circumstances where a session will not be charged for. This is at the discretion of a Manager.

#### **Missed payments:**

- If a payment has not been received, a reminder will be sent with a copy of the invoice and the amount owed. We reserve the right to cancel a child's place or not take further bookings should a parent/carer not pay monies owed and /or persistently pay late. This is because the administration involved impacts on the overall cost of providing the service.

#### **Changes to Attendance / Removal of child from Pre-school:**

- We require written notice of 1 term for the discontinuation of attendance.
- We require 6 weeks' notice to request changes / additions to sessions.
- Fees will be payable, or grant claimed by us during any notice period whether or not the child attends during this time.
- If a child is absent from session for two weeks or more and the parent/carer has failed to notify us of the reasons, we reserve the right to cancel the space and will write to inform the parent/carer of this.
- Fees will still be payable for children who leave without giving the required notice (privately funded places only).
- Parents are not charged a late payment fee.

#### **Additional information:**

- The parent/carer claim form must be completed to enable The Hamlet to claim funding for each child. The form enables eligibility checks to be completed by the Local Authority for additional funding.

#### **Complaints**

Where parents/carers are not satisfied that their child is receiving their free entitlement in the correct way (as set out in their funding agreement and in Early Education and Childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities) a complaint can be submitted directly to the Senior Manager.

#### **5. Legal References**

- Early Years Statutory Framework (latest version)
- Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (latest version)
- Early years Entitlements: Operational Guidance for Local Authorities and Providers (latest version)

**This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant Hamlet policies and accompanying procedures.**

**Date approved by the Board:** September 2020

**Date of next review:** 2022

**Post holder(s) responsible for this policy:** Senior Manager Children's Services

**Signed by Chair of the Board of Trustees:**