**OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Household Support Fund:** **support for families around the 2024 December and February 25**

**FUNDING AGREEMENT – EARLY YEARS SETTINGS**

The Department for Work and Pensions has announced an extension to the Household Support Fund (HSF), aimed at supporting those in most economic need with the costs of food, utilities, and other essentials. The County Council will fund provision of free school meal equivalent support **at the rate of £15 per child per week** around the **December Holiday (2 weeks) 2024 and February Half Term (1 week) 2025**. Equivalent arrangements are being made for children and young people in schools and if your early years setting is based in a school, you will receive a separate additional agreement to cover those individuals.

This Funding Agreement sets out the terms and conditions on which funding is provided to early years settings and the basis on which the funding may be used. Funding may not be used for any other expenditure, other than for the purposes as set out below.

Support should be provided to families ahead of each holiday period whenever possible.

**By accepting the funding, you are deemed to accept these terms and conditions.**

**Funding**

1. Payment will be made to all early years settings ahead of the **December Holiday (2 weeks) 2024 and February Half Term (1 week) 2025**, based at the level of **£15** per child per week known to attract additional funding through Early Years Pupil Premium or 2 Year Old funding for families in receipt of additional government support, according to our current records. Please note this does not include families claiming the new working family 2 year old funding.
2. A remittance email will be sent detailing the amount you will be paid referenced “HSF Grant” with a date the payment will be made directly into your setting’s bank account. Payments paid to maintained school nurseries will be made via an internal recharge.
3. After each holiday period, we will make a further request for management information and make a balancing payment alongside the payment for the next holiday period, based on this return, which will cover any additional costs incurred, including where we have underestimated the number of eligible children in your setting. A final balancing payment will be made at the end of the scheme.
4. Therefore, please provide support to all those children that you consider eligible according to the criteria set out below. Early years settings should be assured that all valid claims for costs beyond each individual allocation will be met in full.

**Eligibility**

1. All children attracting funding through Pupil Premium or 2 Year Old funding for families in receipt of additional government support are eligible for the Household Support payment. Please note this does not include families claiming the new working family 2 year old funding.
2. Parents do not need to apply and all eligible parents should receive support from Early Years Settings automatically.
3. All eligible children in Oxfordshire early years settings qualify for support, regardless of their home address.
4. Early years settings who identify children and families that they believe to be likely to suffer from food hardship during holiday periods, but are not eligible according to these criteria, should contact CSCHouseholdSupport@Oxfordshire.gov.uk ahead of the holiday period to discuss alternative support available.

**Duplicates**

1. Some qualifying children attend more than one setting. In this circumstance we will provide funding to the provider drawing down the largest element of the relevant funding. We will write to the minority funders to confirm details of the specific children that they should not be funding.
2. Therefore, if you are concerned that you may be a minority provider to individual children you will receive specific instructions from us. If you do not receive these instructions, please provide the support to eligible children.
3. If there is any doubt, please provide support rather than risk no support being delivered and again, please be assured that all valid claims will be met.

**Support options**

1. Early Years Settings have the flexibility to make their own arrangements to ensure support is available that meets local circumstances. Support can comprise of:
* The provision of super-market vouchers through on-line schemes;
* The provision of super-market or local food vouchers through digital or in-person purchasing of vouchers directly from retailers.

**Parallel Schemes**

1. A parallel scheme is in place funding those children in receipt of Free School Meals in schools and colleges.
2. Some schools-based early years settings have a small number of children who qualify for Free School Meals and may therefore be expecting to fund these children through the school scheme already. It is the intention that each child should receive the funding only once (either through the Free School Meals eligibility or the Pupil Premium/2YO eligibility). In these circumstances, please liaise with the school’s administrator for the Free School Meals scheme to ensure support is given only once, through which-ever eligibility makes sense in your setting.

**Record keeping and reporting requirements**

1. Early years settings should maintain records of which children have been supported and should retain these records in-line with local retention schedules. A template is sent with this agreement to support record keeping. **This should be retained by the Early Years Setting and not submitted to the County Council.**
2. Finally, in corresponding with the County Council on this matter, **please do not** **share details of individuals via unsecured emails**. There are very limited circumstances in which this scheme would require any data on individuals that is not already shared within secure Early Years systems.