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31/03/25

Dear Honeycroft Families

We are writing to you about the impact of the Government's updated guidance for funded childcare places and what this means for early years providers like us and you as families.

You may have seen the reports on the new guidance about charging parents for meals, snacks and consumables. These charges relate to things like meals, snacks and consumables which are explicitly not included in the amount the Government pays us for delivering your child's high-quality funded place. As you know, we have not made any charges a mandatory requirement for being able to take up a funded place at our setting, instead offering an alternative session pattern to prevent having to pay for lunches.

In its new guidance the Government states:

Government funding is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional hours or additional services.

However, the guidance emphasises the voluntary nature of the charges for all the things that go alongside your child's funded place. Essentially the Government is offering funded childcare sessions but not paying for all that this entail.

This puts providers like Honeycroft in a very difficult position. Recent research by the National Day Nurseries Association found that 92% of nurseries in England do not believe the current funding rates cover our operating costs. The average staffing costs for nurseries is going to increase by 15% from April this year and for context the average funding rate will increase by a maximum of just 3.6% for the same period.

We employ a chef to prepare fresh, nutritious meals and snacks for your child each day they are with us. We have to charge you for this service because otherwise we wouldn't be able to pay the chef wages or buy the food they prepare.

We want what's best for your child while they are at nursery but nutritious meals and snacks do come at a cost. We do not accept packed lunches or snacks from home for individual children because:

- Nurseries like ours are inspected by Ofsted against providing nutritional balanced meals and snacks for all the children at our settings
- Some children are in nursery for long days, from breakfast to teatime so freshly preparing nutritious meals throughout the day is essential for these children's nutritional development
- We would struggle to store and keep food at the temperature required for 32 plus children for all the meals
- We have worked very hard to develop a menu that offers a nutritious, balanced diet and to develop mealtimes that support the development of social and independent skills with all children sitting together consistently to share the same meal



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- We would have less control over the food brought into nursery and the allergens they contain. We have a number of children with severe food allergies at the setting and we carefully monitor and cater for their dietary requirements.

The Government is requiring us to be open and transparent about these charges and ask you to agree to paying these. Any additional charges, cost of lunch or additional hours required outside of your funded hours, are always discussed at the point of registration, or becoming entitled to funded hours. In addition, our charges are clearly laid out on our website and in our parent pack. We also send out invoices at the beginning of each month which clearly shows your funded hours and any additional charges, so you know in advance the total cost, and no payments are requested up front or before services have been delivered. However, we ask you to please speak with us if you are genuinely going to struggle to pay the daily lunch charge.

We hope this helps you understand the reasons for and the benefits to you and your child, of the current lunch charge we have in place. If you would like to discuss this with us and discuss what it would mean to opt-out of, please let us know and we can discuss this further with you.

Yours sincerely

Natasha Silsby

Centre Manager

Honeycroft

St Barnabas Hall - Sackville Road – Hove - BN3 3WF

01273 220 323

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