Aunty Helen's Childminding Service

FUNDING POLICY Version 5 Amended

This policy will be regularly reviewed and is subject to changes, where amendments are made you will be notified.

This policy takes into account the recent government changes made to the funding support scheme and are set out in the governments statutory guidance entitled, Early Education and Childcare (applies from 1st April 2024)
This policy also takes into account the recent updates set out by the DfE in regard to revised funding fee policies that was announced on 21st February 2025 in particular how a setting can or cannot make additional charges and is effective as of 1st April 2025

Further Reading
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare--2/early-education-and-childcare-applies-from-1-april-2024#:~:text=the%20introduction%20of%20new%20entitlements,months%20of%20eligible%20working%20parents

Alongside the current and pre existing funding scheme that has been in place, providing financial support to families of 3 and 4 year olds with 15 hours universal and 15 hours extended funded places, a new government scheme was introduced as of 1st April 2024 where eligible working families of 2 year olds have been able to apply to receive 15 hours funding per week from the term following their child's second birthday.

As of from September 2024 this was also extended to include children aged from 9 months old. Eligible working parents can apply for 15 hours funding per week from the term following their child turning 9 months old.

Find out more how to apply here **https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk**

Parents should also be aware that there is also additional funding available for disadvantaged children in the form of Early years pupil premium (EYPP) and Disability access fund (DAF) that you may be entitled to, please click here for further information on this
https://www.gov.uk/get-extra-early-years-funding

As an Ofsted Registered Early Years Educator and Childcare Provider (childminder) I am signed up with the local authority (Dorset Council) as a funded provider to be able to offer funded places to the families that I work with and I have agreed to the terms and conditions of the 'funding agreement' as set out by the local authority, who also must work within the statutory guidelines and stipulations.

This funding agreement will set out how I can deliver those funded hours in my setting and a 'Parental Funding Agreement' should be issued to each family that will be taking up a funded place for their child.

I have been offering funded places to 2 year olds in my setting since April 2024 and then as of from 1 September 2024 I also introduced and rolled out funded places to include children from 9 months old.

Please note that offering funding is not compulsory, childcare providers are not obliged to offer funded places to the children that they provide care and early years education to. It is completely voluntary and at the discretion of the setting if they choose to become a part of this government scheme to help support families with their childcare costs.

Terms and Conditions……..

- I, Helen Klotz-Thomas, of Aunty Helen's Childminding Service, as a 'baby focused setting' providing childcare for children between the ages of 9 months old and 3 years old **offer funded places for all eligible children aged between 9 months and 36 months,** thereafter, children are encouraged to transition onto pre school from the term after the child turns 3 years old.

- If, however, you and I both believe that **it is in the best interest of the child that they remain in my care beyond the age of 3 years then I am happy to discuss this further on a one to one basis** as how we can best accommodate this request and is **subject to availability.** Should we agree a '3 year old wind down arrangement' with a plan to transition out of the setting then **your child may be accepted onto a private contract as I only offer funded places up to the term after they turn 3 years old.**

- Due to childminder ratios governed by Ofsted that I must work within, **Funded places are limited.** Therefore the available spaces open to children to receive a funded place at my setting is **no more than four children per day across the operating hours of Monday to Thursday and between the opening hours of 0800 to 1700.** If a funded place is not available there may be the option to discuss a fully private space but again this is dependent on ratios, ages of children and numbers of children on role.

- **Registration Fees** are **not** charged to any child across the setting regardless of contract type or placement.

- **Retainer Fees** are **not** charged to hold a space for any child across the setting.

- **Deposits are taken at point of entry into the setting and charged at £150 per child**. Invoices for payment of deposits are issued when contracts are ready to sign and should be paid within 7 days from date of invoice. This is to secure your child's placement. The deposit is **fully refunded at the end of your first funded term unless you fail to attend any agreed settle in sessions or you fail to attend your contracted start date, or you cancel or decline the place without giving the contractual notice of 4 weeks in writing, should this be the case then the deposit is non refundable and held as a cancellation fee.**

- **No** funded place will be charged any **'top-up' fees** (which is the difference, or shortfall between my private hourly rate and the rate that I receive from the LA for the child's funded hours)

- **The Free Funded hours are intended to pay for the childcare hours only in order to deliver children with a curriculum set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework and it does not cover additional services and resources such as the following:**

    - Meals - food & drinks lunch and or snacks
    - Trips and Outings to attend any groups or classes or go out on visits including entrance fees, fuel and parking or public transport
    - Nappies
    - Baby Wipes
    - Nappy Sacks
    - Nappy Rash Cream
    - Sun Cream

Terms and conditions continued……..

Therefore you may be requested to pay for the above extra additional costs and this is known as the **'consumable charges'** which is intended to cover the cost of these items mentioned above, so **childcare providers may or may not choose to charge this as an additional 'opt-out' voluntary charge on parents invoices** as extra services and from January 2026 these items will need to be clearly broken down on invoices under the following categories; meals, non food consumables and trips or outings.

- I have **never charged a consumable fee** to any child across my setting and following a review of my funding policy and looking into all the recent changes and restrictions imposed by the DfE, I have decided that currently **I will continue not to make these additional charges.**

- Therefore, to confirm **I will continue to provide non food item consumables such as; nappies, wipes, nappy sacks, nappy rash cream and sun cream at no extra cost to the parents.**

- Also, **I will continue to take children on outings, trips and visits and to attend any regular groups and or classes at no extra cost to the parents.**

- However, **I do not provide any snacks or food (or drinks other than water) for any child, so parents will need to supply their child with a morning snack, a packed lunch and an afternoon snack.** Their food items need to be clearly labelled with their name, any food allergies that they have and which items are intended for morning snack and which items are intended for afternoon snacks. Meals need to encourage self feeding, able to be offered without re heating and **must be healthy options.** If any parent should on occasion, forget a snack or meal for their child then I will do my best to offer an alternative which I may have at my setting but this will be invoiced for at an additional cost.

- Parents do not have to reserve their funded place each term but a **'Parental Agreement Form'** will be issued and **must** be completed and signed by both parties at the start of **every academic year** that we are claiming a funded place for your child, a copy of the most recent policy will accompany it and will need to be signed by all.

- If an **'Eligibility Code'** is required in order to claim for your child's funded place then that is **the whole responsibility of the parent to apply, obtain, submit to me (within my deadline date that you are given) and that it has been re confirmed every 3 months.** Failure to do so may result in you not being able to receive a funded place for your child during that term and therefore you would be invoiced for the total contracted hours as per my normal private hourly rate until the following funded term starts.

- **Term Dates are:**
    - Autumn Term 1st September
    - Spring Term 1st January
    - Summer Term 1st April

- Although my setting is **currently** open all year around (47 weeks per year) I am, however, as you have all been informed in writing, beginning to start transitioning to a **term time only setting as of from September 2026.** I do not offer to 'stretch' funded hours across the year therefore **funding hours at my setting are delivered 'Term Time Only' (38 weeks per academic year) and are not delivered during the school holidays and or half terms.** Any hours that your child attends during the school holidays and or half term are charged for as additional hours at my normal private hourly rate according to our contract.

Terms and Conditions continued…..

- As from **September 2026** any new children joining the setting will be placed onto a **'Term Time Only Contract'** as I am now starting to transition away from operating the setting all year round. Any existing families who are currently on an 'all year round' contract, this arrangement can remain in place and unchanged if you are not in a position to switch to term time only, however if you are able to make this switch by September 2026 then please discuss with me so that we can issue an amended contract.

- **I do not offer 'shared care'** meaning that **I do not offer to split the funded hours between myself and another setting ie Nursery**. Parents can either choose to accept a funded place here and use **all** their entitled funded hours with me ie 15 hours per week or 30 hours per week, if eligible (subject to availability) **or** you can choose to use them all at another setting and decline a funded placement here and continue to pay me privately for any childcare hours on a private contract at my private basic hourly rate.

- **15 Hours Funding is delivered across 2 days per week at 7.5 hours each day**, my minimum booking requirements are also 7.5 hours per day at 2 days per week, so **there is no obligation to purchase additional hours** for those who need a Fully Funded place. However, for either private or funded **contracts are agreed for no less than 15 hours per week.**

- **The first 7.5 hours of the day where your child attends will be used as their 'free funded hours'** and then the **remaining hours in attendance** (if any) **will be invoiced for as additional hours at my normal private hourly rate** and as per our contracted hours for example:

  If your child is contracted to attend from 0800 to 1700 then the free funded hours will be offered from 0800 to1530 (7.5 hours) and then the remaining hours from 1530 to 1700 (1.5 hours) will be charged for at my normal private hourly rate as per contract.

- If you are entitled to **30 Hours Funded this will be delivered across 4 days per week at 7.5 hours each day (provided space is available) and the remaining hours** (if any) **are charged for at my normal private hourly rate as additional hours.**

- If your child is entitled to **30 hours funding but attends** (as per their contracted hours) **for less than 30 hours** ie they attend 9 hours per day at 3 days per week = 27 hours per week, then **I can only claim for the actual hours that they attend** and therefore there **will be no additional hours added to your invoice** at the private rate **during term time when funding is delivered.**

- The **fees for free funded hours** are itemised on all monthly invoices that get submitted to you digitally through my system, (Baby's Days), as per normal, so you will be able to see how many free funded hours you had in that month and how many are remaining for that term, but those **free funded hours** will show up on monthly invoices as **Funded Rate at £0.00**

- If your child attends **additional hours** beyond their funded hours, they will be **charged for at my normal hourly rate** please refer to our contract for your current private rate.

- Any other **additional hours, or charges** (if any), **will be categorised on your invoices** so you will know exactly **what is and what is not covered as part of the free hours,** funded scheme and **how much you still need to pay for each month as additional hours or services.**

- If your **invoice shows a total to pay of £0.00 you will still receive an invoice for our records** and for the purposes of audits which will be conducted by the Local Authority.

Terms and Conditions continued……..

- **Late payments are subject to a late payment fee** as outlined in our contract and will be added to your next invoice and care may be refused until all outstanding payments are made in full. Persistent late payments may result in termination of care.

- **Important Update…Attendance,** from September 2025 we must track all non attendance, we will log and record all absences making a note on our register as to the reason for the absence, ie sickness, holiday, other or no contact from parents. The reason why the DofE expect us to track absences (not only for the purposes of Local Authority Funding Audits) but it is a safeguarding issue and this will highlight any areas of safeguarding concerns and if we feel that there are concerns we will need to follow our safeguarding policy, therefore **you must report any absence to me as soon as is possible stating the reason for the absence.**

- **Important Update….Child Holidays** from funded hours, our Local Authority allow **each child to take a maximum of 2 weeks holiday during each funded term**, therefore if you have a contract of 2 days per week then your holiday entitlement is 4 days over the funded term, if your contract is 3 days per week then your holiday allowance is 6 days over the term etc and **you will need to give me prior notice in writing to use these holiday entitlements** and they will be marked on our attendance record and logged on our absence tracker as holiday. If you wish to take more than your funded holiday allowance then please speak to me as we will need to make adjustments to the Local Authority and these hours will need to be paid back to them as an over claim. Local Authority conduct regular audits to check that we are following correct procedure and not making over claims so **this is very important. If this should be the case where I need to return that money to the Local Authority, then you will be invoiced for those hours on your next invoice and before the end of that current term in which you took additional holiday hours.** ie if your holiday allowance is 6 days but you have taken 10 days holiday then 4 days will be added to you invoice **charged for at my normal hourly rate.**

- **Late collection fees may also be added to your next invoice** should you be late to collect your child from my setting please refer to our contract for further details.

- Although Funded Hours that are claimed for are paid to me monthly in advance by the local authority, **I will, where I can still aim to invoice all my families in arrears of childcare provided** as per previously delivered. Please note that this condition may change in the future should any payment issues arise due to late payments or non payment in full of monthly invoices. (you will be correctly notified giving the contractual notice period if this is the case, should I make the decision to change to payment in advance).

- **If your child does <u>not</u> attend my setting** on a contracted day (or days) due to sickness or an occasional unplanned family day (or days) off then your child **will lose those funded hours** for that day (or days) of absence and no refund, credit, or alternative day(s) will be offered. **The funded hours already claimed will remain with the setting.**

- **If your child does not attend my setting for up to 2 weeks** due to taking annual leave for a planned holiday or time off with family for example, then those **funded hours will be lost** and no refunds, credits or alternative dates offered. **The funded hours already claimed will remain with the setting.**

- **If your child does not attend for more than 2 weeks**, ie a longer planned family holiday or personal circumstances that makes it very difficult for the child to attend, then **I will seek further consult from my local authority Early Years Education Funding Team Dorset Council, for advice on those funded hours already claimed for and will respond to you appropriately once advised. Any money due to be returned or paid back to the LA as an adjustment will be charged on your next invoice as stated above.**

- The local authority operates certain deadlines “cut off points’ and if funding is ‘paused’ due to the above absence reasons then **you will be liable to pay the childcare fees for your child’s contracted hours as per our contract at my normal hourly rate,** regardless if the child attends or not.

- For **prolonged periods of absence**, the **local authorities may decided to cease funding** for your child at my setting all together and should this be the case then it may result in our contract being terminated and you will be liable for the payment of fees for all those contracted days / hours and may result in legal action being taken to recoup lost earnings if not paid.

- **If my setting should close for one or for a few days** due to sickness of myself or a family member or to attend a medical appointment or training sessions then **your child will be offered their funded hours on a suitable alternative day** (or days) subject to availability. If it is not possible to offer an alternative day within the same term, then I will endeavour to re offer it during the school holidays and before the next term should start.

- It will **not** however be carried forward into the next term. If there is no space available and a reasonable alternative can’t be found, then the funded hours will be forfeited. Any additional payments made by parents for additional hours or services, for that day will be redeemed against the following invoice or refunded.

- Should a suitable **alternative date be offered** to you **but you decline to use it then those funded hours will be lost and are not refunded** or carried forward to the next term and further alternative dates will not be re offered.

- Should I need to **close my setting for planned annual leave**, you will be given at least 4 weeks notice in writing and **funded hours will not have been claimed for. I do not charge fees when my setting is closed for holidays** and where possible I do try my best to take my annual leave outside of normal school term dates so this should not be an issue regarding funded hours. However **should I decide to take annual leave during term dates** then any **funded hours that may have already be claimed for will be owed back and offered to you to use at another alternative date.**

- **If my setting has to close for prolonged periods of time**, due to illness of myself or family member, or a family emergency for example, then **I will seek further advise from my local authority Early Years Education Funding Team regarding those funded hours.** Any additional payments that may have already been made by parents for additional hours or consumables charges will be redeemed against your next invoice or refunded.

- **Termination of a funded place is 4 weeks notice in writing** as per our contract and the local authority allows me to retain the funded hours already claimed for your child during this notice period.

- Should your **child leave my setting part way through the term**, this may result in me having to return or repay any already claimed and paid for funding hours back to my local authority (as they pay me pro rata, on a monthly basis, despite the fact that actual funded hours are calculated per term) should this happen, **you may be liable to recover this loss to me, particularly if you have not provided the correct termination notice,** regardless of the situation and in this instance, **I will seek further advise from my local authority Early Years Education Funding Team and respond appropriately to you once I have been advised as to how to proceed.**

- If your child was to leave before a funding payment was received and the local authority consequently did not pay it to me, then **you would be liable to cover the cost of care during this time.**

- If there is a **change in circumstances** which meant that your child was **no longer eligible** for a funded place, **you will be liable to cover the cost of their childcare** during that time at my private rate.

It is your responsibility to check your codes are correct, confirmed and in place and it is not my responsibility to chase this up. Please always check your codes and that you have not fallen into grace period. If you need help with this please speak to me.

Policy First Written	1st September 2024	Version 1
Policy Amended Dated:	31st January 2025	Version 2 (was not implemented)
Policy Amended Dated:	12th March 2025	Version 3
Policy Amended Dated:	25th June 2025	Version 4
Policy Amended Dated:	1st July 2026	Version 5

Signed by Childminder:
Name:
Date:

Signed by parent 1:
Name:
Date:

Signed by parent 2:
Name:
Date: