

## Payment Policy

**North Halifax Partnership Sure Start Children's Centres is a not for profit organisation and is reliant on fee income for funding. It cannot accept, or withstand non payment of childcare fees and requires prompt payment of such fees for the services which parents/carers and children have received. It is necessary for all parents/carers to be aware that by signing the Registration Contract you are taking up a contract agreeing to pay your fees in full and will remain responsible for the payment of those fees until such time as full payment has been received.**

Childcare fee invoices will be raised and distributed by the 15th of each month in advance for the following month. Full payment of the invoice is required in advance, on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. When children take up a place part way through a month an invoice will be raised and payment is required in advance to the end of that month; this must be paid prior to a child starting nursery. Subsequent invoices will be payable in advance in the usual way. When the payment date falls within a weekend fees are payable on or before the last working day of the month prior to the start of the new month.

### Payments can be made in the following ways:

- Part payments are accepted and will be receipted accordingly and paid off against individual records of accounts, subject to the invoice being paid in full by 1<sup>st</sup> of the month.
- Payments can be made at the main office by cash, debit card (in the centre or over the phone) or cheque.
- For those parents who want to pay directly from their bank account; we accept standing orders and bill payments via the internet, please ask at the office if you wish to pay in this way so a reference can be given to ensure payments received are allocated against the correct account. These must be set up to ensure full payment reaches in advance on or before 1<sup>st</sup> of each month.
- We accept a range of childcare vouchers issued to parents/carers from their work place. As these schemes operate different procedures please ask at the office for the appropriate procedure for the scheme which you are in.
- Where childcare fees are being paid by an external agency on behalf of a parent/carer the person signing the child's registration form will remain responsible for unpaid fees **not** the agency.
- You may build up credit on your account this will be recorded and you can ask for an account update at any time; any credit on your account can only be used as payment for childcare fees.

### When fees remain unpaid on 1st of the month:

- Where our accounts show that childcare fees remain outstanding on 1<sup>st</sup> of the month we reserve the right to **suspend your childcare place immediately**. Where a child's place is suspended due to non payment of fees the ongoing fees will **continue to accumulate** irrespective of the child's non attendance due to suspension to a maximum of one month from the date of suspension which is equal to a one month notice period.
- Where childcare fees remain outstanding Nursery Practitioners will be instructed not to admit children until fees are settled in full.
- Where a child's place is suspended due to outstanding childcare fees we **cannot guarantee** there will be a childcare place available once outstanding fees are paid.
- We reserve the right to defer from the payment policy taking into account individual circumstances.

### **What happens if a childcare place is suspended?**

The parent/carer will be contacted by a member of the Senior Management Team to explain the next steps and a letter stating the reasons for suspension will be sent to the parent/carer.

### **Where outstanding childcare fees remain unpaid:**

We will pursue outstanding fees rigorously and use a variety of methods to recover outstanding debt; these could include any or all the following methods:

- Written communication
- Telephone calls
- Making a record of outstanding fees on Children's Centre Manager database which is shared with other Children's Centres in the group
- Debt recovery agency – this will include debtor personal details including home/ workplace addresses and contact details being passed to the appropriate debt agency. As a result of this debtors may receive any, or all of the following: letters, telephones calls, home visits and workplace visits to collect outstanding debt
- Use of Halifax County Court procedures which could result in County Court Judgment, bailiffs or orders giving attachment of earnings.
- These are not exclusive methods of debt recovery and may change subject to individual circumstances.
- Where outstanding debt has to be pursued any costs of pursuing such debt will be passed on to the debtor. This may include, but is not limited to; administrative costs, costs incurred through debt recovery agencies, County Court costs and any other costs associated with recovering the original debt.
- The centre reserves the right to add interest charges to any outstanding debt at the rate applicable to judgment debts.
- Parents/carers should note that failure to pay childcare fees can result in an adverse credit rating.

### **Non attendance**

- If a childcare place is booked and your child/ren do not attend due to absence for any reason full fees will be charged. If the reason for absence is due to illness and is likely to be longer term, (over 2 weeks or in cases of hospitalisation) reductions in the level of fee payment will be considered on an individual basis by the Children's Centre Manager if requested in writing. The centre reserves the right to use discretionary powers to reduce or waive fee payments following such consideration.

### **Extra sessions**

- Where possible extra sessions can be booked when there is availability within your child's room. To do this you must speak to a member of the Senior Management Team. Please be aware that any additional sessions booked must be paid for in advance or on the day the child attends regardless of attendance.

## **Swapping sessions**

- It is not practice of the setting to swap your child's session. If you do require your child to attend on a different day or time from the pre-booked session please follow the extra session request process. These sessions are payable at the current rate.

## **Shift patterns**

- Where possible the nursery will try to accommodate the childcare needs of parents/carers with differing shift patterns however there may be some circumstances where the nursery will not be able to do this. Individual requests will be discussed and agreed with parents/carers when a childcare place is booked.

## **Notice Period**

- To terminate or change a childcare place a one month notice period is required. Notice must be given in writing. If children do not attend during that one month notice period full fees for the period will still be payable.

## **Collection of children**

- It is required that all children are collected promptly after each session. If parents/carers are unavoidably delayed and are unable to collect a child by the end of the session you must contact the centre and inform a member of the nursery staff. The centre reserves the right to charge a fee where children are not collected promptly at the end of their session at a rate of £15.00 for the first half hour. Each further fifteen minute period will be charged at £10.00 per period.

## **Information sharing with partners and other agencies**

- All parents/carers must be aware that debt information will be recorded on the Children's Centre Manager database and will be shared with other Children's Centres in Calderdale so that it will not be possible to use a nursery at a different Centre while the fees are outstanding.

## **Closure days**

- The nursery will close for Bank Holidays, from December 23<sup>rd</sup> to the first working day after 1<sup>st</sup> January, and for four staff training days each year. Full details of these dates can be found on our website at any time [www.surestartchildrenscentresnhp.org.uk](http://www.surestartchildrenscentresnhp.org.uk). No charge is made for closure days.