

FAQs: Afghan Resettlement Scheme – Bridging Hotels only

The purpose of this guidance is to help local childcare providers understand in more detail the Department for Education's (DfE) expectations about how the free entitlements for 2, 3 and 4 year olds should be delivered to those families who have arrived in England under the Afghan Resettlement Scheme. And more specifically, how this will be implemented in West Sussex.

Early years and childcare settings can play a crucial role in helping these children and their families to feel welcome and a part of their local community. This is of course in addition to preparing children for school followed by progression into education and eventually employment.

ABOUT THE FAMILIES

Who are these families and why are they here?

The guidance refers to children who are currently housed in bridging hotels and been in the UK since August 2021. This is where they will stay until they are offered permanent accommodation. There are no set time frames on how long this would be for.

These are families who were evacuated from Afghanistan including:

- those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law
- vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+)

Anyone who is resettled through the schemes will receive indefinite leave to enter or remain (ILR) in the UK and will be able to apply for British citizenship after 5 years in the UK under existing rules.

How many children are there?

Initially we have identified that there are 170 children aged under 5, however this can be a changing picture. We are working with the families to better understand what their childcare needs are/might be as not all will want to take up a place and there may be differing needs depending on the individual family's situation.

The families we are referring to are located north of the county.

How will places for these children be prioritised?

Under normal circumstances, we would share information with families about local provision and they would then be able to use this to find childcare that meets their needs themselves. Due to the volume of children, we will be

supporting this process, in the first instance, in order to manage the expectations of families and to support providers to manage this increased demand.

As much as possible, we will prioritise places as follows:

1. children who will be starting school in September 2022
2. families where parents have already found employment
3. vulnerable families
4. children who are eligible for the Free Entitlement
5. all other children

What language(s) do the families speak?

The families predominantly speak Pashto, and Dari. Some of the families can speak English and, where needed, additional support can be given by translators to help with completing forms and understanding what they will expect when their child attends your setting.

As part of the schools admissions process, some of the Afghan adults who speak good English supported those who were less fluent. We would anticipate similar support for those accessing Early Years places.

What support do the families have?

The bridging hotels have permanent support staff including the Family Liaison team made up of Liaison Officers, and West Sussex County Council (WSCC) officers primarily from the Refugee Resettlement team. The Liaison Officers and WSCC officers have helped families settle in, supporting their needs when applying for school admissions and financial services, and setting up other services including English classes and bus passes, etc. There are also interpreters at both hotels who can translate documents and assist in conversations.

FUNDING AND ADDITIONAL SERVICES/CHARGES

Is there additional funding for providers offering these places?

Providers will be paid at the same rate for the Free Entitlement hours and can charge families their usual rates for anything outside of this.

Should you directly incur any additional costs in order to accommodate these children, we may be able to work with you to secure additional funding where this would support a significant number of children. Any additional costs would need to be agreed in advance and be able to evidence value for money.

Do we have to offer places to these children?

As with any child eligible for Free Entitlement, as per the Provider Declaration the follow points would stand:

“2.4. The EYFS provides an inclusive framework that supports the individual needs of all children. WSCC is committed to effectively implementing this framework, therefore all providers in receipt of FE **must**:

2.5. ensure that no child is refused admission when space is available.”

Are we expected to prioritise places for these children?

We would not expect you to prioritise places outside of your usual admissions policies, however we do recognise the importance of ensuring these children have access to good quality early years provision to provide them with opportunities to experience stability, safety, build relationships with adults, friendships with peers and meaningful play experiences.

How do we claim for the funding?

These children should be claimed for using the Post Headcount Exceptional Payment (PHEP) process and not added to headcount or the Online Provider Portal. The form is available [here](#).

What ID can we expect to see for proof of age?

For some of the children, on arrival in the UK, their parents were unable to confirm their date of birth (DOB) or provide a passport however there is [guidance](#) for local authorities on how to determine the age of the child which will have been used.

All families will have a Home Office Border Force pass, which will state the date of birth of the family, should they not be able to present a passport or other acceptable ID. You are able to accept this as proof of age for this group of children.

What happens around deposits/consumables charges?

We would expect that you would follow your normal processes and invoice families for any additional charges. Any charges should be clear and transparent at the point of signing up and be within the terms of the [Free Entitlement Provider Declaration](#), including but not limited to:

- No registration/administration fee, payment up front or non-refundable deposits.
- No requirement for a child to access additional hours on top of the free hours.
- No requirement for the child to access additional weeks on top of the funded weeks.
- It **must not** be compulsory for parents/carers to pay for a lunch provided by the provider).
- It **must not** be compulsory for parents/carers to pay for consumables such as nappies or sun cream and for services such as trips and yoga.

These charges **must** be voluntary. Parents/carers **must** be given the option to supply their own consumables instead.

- Voluntary contributions are acceptable but **must not** be included in any invoice totals or added as a condition of access.
- No deposits required for funded 2 year olds, either refundable or non-refundable. However, reasonable refundable deposits are acceptable for eligible 3 and 4 year olds (Universal and Extended) which **must** be re-paid to the parent shortly after Headcount.

What happens if children only stay for a short period of time?

We know how much time and effort goes into a good settling in period and it is expected that most children will attend for a prolonged period of time, although there will be cases where families get relocated out of area. In these cases, the funding for that child will be honoured until the next half term, or a minimum of 4 weeks (whichever is longer). Please contact the Free Entitlement team to discuss if this arises.

We hope this will alleviate any concerns about potential loss of income if a child moves out of the area and into permanent accommodation.

Do families have National Insurance numbers for checking eligibility? E.g. for Early Years Pupil Premium, 2 year FE, Extended FE?

Yes, they have been allocated with a National Insurance number and normal processes would be followed around eligibility.

I don't offer Free Entitlement places, how do I sign up?

If you are not already signed up to offer Free Entitlement funded places and would like to consider joining the scheme, information can be [found here](#).

SUPPORT AND HELP

Is there any training available to help us?

The [training programme](#) already offers the following courses:

- Working with Children who have English as an Additional Language (Half day webinar)
- Communication friendly early years setting (Taster webinar)
- Introduction to speech and language development for early years settings (Taster webinar)
- Talking clearly - supporting the development of children's speech sounds (Taster webinar)
- Diversity, Identity and Culture (Half day webinar)

If there was an evidenced need for training we don't already offer then we would look in to this.

We will also hold a webinar for providers offering places to these families to share more information, network and answer any questions.

Where do we go if we need help or we are worried about a child?

You will continue to be supported by the Early Years and Childcare Team, and can request Targeted Setting Support, as you would normally.

If there is a safeguarding concern, you should continue to follow your safeguarding policies and procedures, as well as letting the Family Liaison Team who are working with the families know. It is our intention to provide you with a named Liaison Worker who will be supporting these families.

OTHER

Will the children have all the required clothing including wellies/wet weather gear?

Yes, children will be provided with suitable clothing and footwear.

Will the families be able to provide lunches/snacks?

These families are currently in hotel accommodation, however there is potential for packed lunches to be provided. It would be ensured that these would meet healthy eating policies and are compliant around allergies. Where your setting provides a hot meal, there may be scope for the families to pay for these where they are unable to provide a packed lunch.

The family may have specific requirements, with many following a Halal diet.

How will the children get to us?

In an ideal situation, children and their families will be able to walk to settings, however where this is not possible families also have access to bus passes for the local area.

Should the available places be further away, transport could be made available, and parents would accompany children to and from the setting. We would of course need to take into consideration what would be a reasonable distance for families to travel with young children and also the implications should a child take ill or need collecting unexpectedly.