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| **Important information for childcare providers: June****2020** |

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| **THIS INFORMATION IS CORRECT AS OF MONDAY 15 JUNE**

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**Employers For Childcare is working on your behalf**Throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we have been working remotely, and are continuing to provide all of our services, including our charity's Family Benefits Advice Service and the processing of Childcare Vouchers on behalf of parents, employers and childcare providers.Our Family Benefits Advice Service helpline has been extremely busy over the past number of months, answering calls from parents, employers and childcare providers including on issues around the support available to the childcare sector at this challenging time.The team has been engaged to provide advice and guidance on the Approved Home Childcarer scheme which has enabled some childcare workers in daycare and school age childcare facilities, endorsed by the Health and Social Care Trust, to be matched to families to provide care in the children's own homes. If your setting has been facilitating this scheme, and you would like assistance with the application process for financial support, call us on 0800 028 3008. |

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**Financial support for childcare providers**In April, the Ministers for Education and Health announced a £12 million package of measures to support the childcare sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. The intention of the scheme is to ensure that key worker parents and vulnerable children can access the childcare they need at this time. The measures have also been designed to support the sustainability of providers who have had to close as a result of the pandemic, so that they can reopen in the future, and continue to provide their services, which are a vital part of our economic infrastructure.This support package will help to safeguard the future of our vital childcare infrastructure, which is so essential in the pathway to economic recovery.There are four key strands to the scheme, offering support to childminders, to settings that remain closed, to those that are open but at reduced capacity, and to those facilitating the bespoke Approved Home Childcare scheme. Any provider who is entitled to apply for support should have received an application form by now, issued from the Business Services Organisation (BSO). For further information, visit our [website](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001OdbRGtNXgxygdaF7KTopAxUMXn_NL8N3D5hFEMTdvmYol8tTyNEhcpCej8j_ST1QHq-5L7mi3z3HyWk5hqXs1QcsujG9z6Na1OPB7abFhTt28SgYWbNnGqqyLaPYG-faVHazgLQ0NluscmXsp5S26RCC8kRvybGyhtaryvSa3XpvIuThskowpzgwIdU-n2ylDrsnQkpYz1XNAGCWVfDeO4yWEn-WR5-aEVP0twTFnYI8IvLwCimCcxv5cRwKvMYIFmvkxrAo-Iyhw8uQAaDAxu5KsMDtA-eY4T2_hnFVk8CJvLr-2-7YfF7fJHPegB--1bSsAbmPNdo=&c=lecJw64Ncy4xBZuW82jjokMnRTZ_XXqXBLThra2Awr63ElRxAW4h8Q==&ch=T1v5Us-DRDqdsQEylMTRqtaFm292UC8XoNlPG6HxUdIoUbpR29fK9w==) or contact our Family Benefits Advice Service on 0800 028 3008.At present, the support scheme runs until the end of June however we are continuing to advocate for further support for the sector beyond that date, to help safeguard the ongoing and future sustainability of the sector. |

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**Childcare Vouchers**We know some parents may have reduced the amount they pay into their Childcare Voucher account during this time. As more people begin to return to work, we would encourage childcare providers to remind parents using Childcare Vouchers to pay for their service, that they can save money on their childcare costs, now or in the future, by increasing the proportion of their salary they pay into Childcare Vouchers (up to the maximum allowed according to the applicable tax band).For advice and guidance on any aspect of Childcare Vouchers, call our Customer Service team on 028 9267 8200. |

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**Guidance on childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic**Like every other aspect of society, the childcare sector is having to adjust to things being very different as a result of COVID-19 and is faced with many challenges such as reduced numbers (and therefore income), implementing social distancing, enhanced cleaning and hygiene, managing their own staff who may have childcare issues as schools remain closed. The [Family Support NI website](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001OdbRGtNXgxygdaF7KTopAxUMXn_NL8N3D5hFEMTdvmYol8tTyNEhcpCej8j_ST1QUp4-VWlzHtdKK_mJqlAWaKC4RtXpK6fk3IdmOOMK3-Yy91apjk-xxZC76RQUgrcCRuGwsAQY8wxkP94GRQdyCLWLqFuDb1miftdqYLjung493bYInBSlDUX55lDZu3vumS3Y6uV3uwHilNMPbNk2WQ3e9IM79l_zG1apVDJ4Dfae1vQMAdfhXHBxrBjyQmcNFbsoz__eMBXZrY8dk_HkAw==&c=lecJw64Ncy4xBZuW82jjokMnRTZ_XXqXBLThra2Awr63ElRxAW4h8Q==&ch=T1v5Us-DRDqdsQEylMTRqtaFm292UC8XoNlPG6HxUdIoUbpR29fK9w==) is a useful source of information for childcare providers, including on issues such as infection prevention and control, as settings look towards reopening. The website also contains the most up to date definition of a key worker, for childcare purposes and sets out the guidance for childminders in terms of the number of children and families they can provide care for. We would advise all childcare providers, whether you have continued to operate or as you move towards reopening, review the information on the website and ensure your details on the Family Support NI directory are up to date, so those seeking childcare can access your contact information.**Online training through the Childcare Partnerships**The Childcare Partnerships have developed online training resources to assist childcare providers during the COVID19 pandemic on areas such as infection prevention and control. Visit their [website](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001OdbRGtNXgxygdaF7KTopAxUMXn_NL8N3D5hFEMTdvmYol8tTyNEhcpCej8j_ST1QkKwvKZAqApCwGBCAc9hqikkyWDd48ERiVDxf0HWda_ZrvKCjdbKZYqQXUZiH1eOzraxdPY_E3lsr4RP_BQNd5xdJ5YuKP_tSj8p0RQrJDmgMQyuo9oLq8lcnMClgBcH0&c=lecJw64Ncy4xBZuW82jjokMnRTZ_XXqXBLThra2Awr63ElRxAW4h8Q==&ch=T1v5Us-DRDqdsQEylMTRqtaFm292UC8XoNlPG6HxUdIoUbpR29fK9w==)to find out more. |

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**Financial support for childminders**As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many childminders have seen a significant decline in their income, with many having no option but to close temporarily.As childminders are typically self-employed, most have been unable to access the Government's furlough scheme, but instead can apply for support through the [Self-Employed Income Support Scheme](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001OdbRGtNXgxygdaF7KTopAxUMXn_NL8N3D5hFEMTdvmYol8tTyNEhcpCej8j_ST1Q8iODnFIgnDNDo5_xFWIZSAEhPvcNWTLmLArK4xOHwt0i1bouzVMheCprcL3SqDuOclcWIIw7P3MvbKD3X13_6nDKCM5nvD4jE9ieFjg7n8Xv0DlY4hVYArYEdBLeQoS-dpaYccBy9xf53cRkSiC3qj_hQ2o76AedS5fuuhY26fxdFUd7KKeH7oyOYx01J6hLiYrID4siVGJjm-3O9t9pAo_Vxlqj06wONbPWIvrlvVU=&c=lecJw64Ncy4xBZuW82jjokMnRTZ_XXqXBLThra2Awr63ElRxAW4h8Q==&ch=T1v5Us-DRDqdsQEylMTRqtaFm292UC8XoNlPG6HxUdIoUbpR29fK9w==). Some childminders will also be eligible for support through Tax Credits or Universal Credit at this time. In combination with the COVID-19 Childcare Support Package in Northern Ireland, this is a complex picture, so if you are unsure about what support is available to you, please contact our Family Benefits Advice Service on 0800 028 3008, and we can help you work it out.More information is also available on our [website](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001OdbRGtNXgxygdaF7KTopAxUMXn_NL8N3D5hFEMTdvmYol8tTyNEhcpCej8j_ST1QSI0pka32_acuBbd-1_HtUFmVduUJY1ri8rcBkKVSq4lBAni0TIGiC6eEOzewKzxCVGKd_4iClPj3cvctu2Gde53o5eJ8-Kz2wGpxPnlttY1zbhDD1dDzw1jOSR0J04Ubo2Pznub5-qwmqnwBaohJA1LDwfIiH4JX0sU0ycV5mY1bDZ6ykRYr1QTIAfCOW6R9zL92s7eMFw2Y9hfayZykJaCUwI98KgP-43gg1k53YjyY7WGoi-kyDHsalFbSBuFo&c=lecJw64Ncy4xBZuW82jjokMnRTZ_XXqXBLThra2Awr63ElRxAW4h8Q==&ch=T1v5Us-DRDqdsQEylMTRqtaFm292UC8XoNlPG6HxUdIoUbpR29fK9w==). |

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**Engagement with key stakeholders**Employers For Childcare has been working hard throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure the needs of parents, employers and childcare providers have been central to the decision-making process within the Government departments and wider public sector. We have shared feedback, provided insights and made recommendations with Government Departments, always with the best interests of the childcare sector, parents and society more broadly to the forefront.We look forward to providing the Secretariat for the newly established All Party Group on Early Education Childcare at the Assembly and look forward to continuing this constructive engagement with our elected representatives and other key decision-makers in coming months. |

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**Changes to furlough scheme** Several important changes have been announced to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme under which employees are 'furloughed', and 80% of their wages (up to a cap) are met by the Government. For example:* Furlough can be more 'flexible' from 1 July, with employees able to work part time and be furloughed part time
* From August, and increasing monthly through to October, employers will be required to contribute financially to the cost of furlough.

Note that, if an employee has not previously been furloughed for a minimum of three weeks before the end of June, they can no longer be put on furlough, unless they are returning from a period of statutory maternity or paternity leave to an employer who has previously furloughed other employees. Full details are available on the UK Government's [website](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001OdbRGtNXgxygdaF7KTopAxUMXn_NL8N3D5hFEMTdvmYol8tTyNEhcpCej8j_ST1QD8yEd-c7tKawTQM4jnF-PbArnYwicNCrFRS9jiqhiRCZ-ptE3ZyTcy-MdXQrqyrlZDv_dJT0BQ4DGBi8MitvC3w1mtZIzh0OrYkpghudS94rtKhNHJPFyp8_e6-WBZcxtL-49lvQ55iuqjkqUxviyVlplXroyDxnE0YXnywjGakTc3EWg_ExXyfuNag-b7DkOqB29asx-GEYGS0S9_04iDHNPHUnvFV7Znfosu9g8xaLNTkcTCrJVMfREl0g4hqynNX6GtM5uuk=&c=lecJw64Ncy4xBZuW82jjokMnRTZ_XXqXBLThra2Awr63ElRxAW4h8Q==&ch=T1v5Us-DRDqdsQEylMTRqtaFm292UC8XoNlPG6HxUdIoUbpR29fK9w==).  If you would like to find out more, you can speak to one of our Family Benefits Advice Service on 0800 028 3008 who will be able to signpost you to further information. |

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**Employers For Childcare summer closure**Our team are taking a break and will not be working from Monday 13 July to Friday 17 July (inclusive). **No Childcare Voucher payments will be processed on these dates**. We will reopen from Monday 20 July. |

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