



Nadhim Zahawi MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT

21<sup>st</sup> November 2018

Dear Mr Zahawi,

**RE: Childcare Business Grant Scheme**

I'm writing in regards to your recent decision to close the Childcare Business Grant Scheme from next April.

PACEY was deeply disappointed to learn of the scheme's impending closure, and we believe this will only serve to accelerate the drop in the number of registered childminders in England. As you are aware, there has been a decline of 27 per cent since 2012.

The Childcare Business Grant Scheme – the only national dedicated funding for childminding – currently provides a lifeline for new childminders, many of whom are on low incomes and are returning to work for the first time after having children. There are numerous upfront costs involved in establishing a childminding business – for example for registration, training, and resources – which many new childminders would struggle to meet without support.

Your Department claims the decision was “based largely on a decrease in the number of applications received for the CBGS”. However, it has always been our understanding that applications have been steady, with all of the designated funding used up.

That said, we are aware that the registration process for childminders has been seriously delayed in the past year due to the implementation of Ofsted's new IT system. This has meant that it has been taking six months on average for a new childminder to register, and longer if there are delays associated with DBS checks. If there has indeed been a drop in demand for the grants, it could be down to the fact that fewer new childminders are managing to register in the first place. A number of prospective childminders who are awaiting confirmation of registration have told us that they are concerned it will not come through until the grant scheme has closed, leaving them seriously out of pocket and jeopardising their business.

We are therefore asking you to reconsider your decision to end the grant scheme. Your Department's ongoing commitments to promote childminding as a quality form of childcare for families to access their funded early education place, and to encourage a rich home learning environment for young children will both be undermined by this decision, as childminders are particularly skilled at developing



strong partnerships with parents. All new home-based early years providers will be negatively impacted, affecting their ability to provide the flexible, community-based childcare that supports so many families, especially those working atypical hours.

At the very least, would you consider extending the deadline for the scheme's closure so that prospective childminders who have already paid for pre-registration training and checks don't lose out simply because Ofsted is taking longer than usual to register them?

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Bayram". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Liz Bayram**

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years