



Robert Goodwill MP
Minister of State for Children and Families
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

20th October 2017

Dear Mr Goodwill,

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with us the other day. We wanted to follow up on a few issues that were raised during our meeting on 11th October.

Firstly, we look forward to hearing more about the Government's plans to improve the recruitment and retention of early years specialist graduates, particularly in the PVI sector. There is increasing evidence that this issue requires urgent attention. We also hope to work with your officials on the issue of accessible, affordable pathways between Level 3 to Level 6, particularly for those in full-time employment.

As you are aware, only a third of childminders were delivering funded places at last count. It is clear from PACEY research that childminders could deliver substantially more funded places if three key barriers were removed: the low hourly rate; delayed/uncertain payments; and red tape.

For example, recent DfE research found it costs £4.77 on average to deliver a childminding place to a three- or four-year-old, but the average base rate is £4.28 and 29% of LAs have a base rate under £4. Whilst the statutory and operational guidance has been improved, PACEY is still hearing regular reports of delayed payments and excessive red tape associated with the administration of the entitlement. Enclosed is a list of recent examples which is by no means exhaustive. It is clear that we need a long term sustainable funding plan and improved enforcement of the statutory guidance.

Thank you for committing to keep the issue of the ban on childminders providing funded places to related children under review. Attached please find further information on this issue, as requested by your staff. As you know, other important forms of childcare support in England do permit parents to use related childminders, as long as they are Ofsted-registered and caring for the child outside the child's home. Similarly, in Scotland and Wales, registered childminders can deliver funded places to relatives outside the child's home.

In the context of falling numbers of registered childminders and an underrepresentation of childminders in delivering funded places, the ban is another factor contributing to a decline in childminder morale and sustainability. It is forcing many parents to take their child out of a relative's setting, regardless of the best interests of the child and the wider family, including the interests of siblings and parents' work. It is also perceived by childminders as deeply unjust, as it does not affect staff in non-domestic settings such as pre-schools and nurseries.



The registration and inspection process with Ofsted is sufficiently rigorous that a person would be extremely unlikely to be motivated and able to pass through it if they were not a genuine childminder. Indeed, there is no indication that this is happening in relation to tax credits, which provides a much greater degree of financial support over a longer period of time. There is also no evidence of any such abuse of the system in Scotland and Wales.

We are asking you to harmonise at the earliest opportunity the criteria for using childcare provided by relatives, so that parents in England can use related childminders for the early education and childcare entitlements, just as they can for Tax-Free Childcare, childcare vouchers, and the childcare element of Working Tax Credit/Universal Credit – as long as the childminder is registered with Ofsted and the care is being provided outside the child's home.

If you were to amend this policy, it would send a very strong message of support to registered childminders. It would be a clear demonstration that the Government views childminders as professionals who are providing the same quality of care and education as nursery and preschool settings.

We look forward to hearing from you and your team.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Bayram and Susanna Kalitowski
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years