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Nadhim Zahawi MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Liz Bayram
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years

By email: liz.bayram@pacey.org.uk

2nd April 2019

Thank you for your email of 25 January, following my recent visit to Bromley, about childminders.

I very much enjoyed meeting local children and a local childminder, Vicky Walsh, with PACEY during my recent visit to Bromley. I was very impressed by Ms Walsh's business, Sticky Fingers Childminding, and its 'outstanding' Ofsted rating. It was wonderful to see first-hand the excellent work you are doing with childminders. Thank you again for taking the time to meet me and for the warm welcome I received.

The government greatly values the contributions childminders make to providing flexible, high-quality and affordable home-based childcare. Many parents like a mix of provision, for example, combining school nurseries with childminding to give them the flexibility to manage their working patterns. We know from the 2018 survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers that, 77% of childminders are offering 30 hours free childcare entitlement places for 3- and 4-year-olds.

We plan to spend around £3.5 billion on early education childcare entitlements this year alone – more than any other government. Our funding rates for 3- and 4-year-olds continue to be higher than the average cost of delivering a childcare place, which the 2018 Early Years Provider Costs report found to be £3.98 an hour.

Earlier this year, we also allocated £7.7 million to 147 local authorities through our Delivery Support Fund (DSF) to support their work with local early years providers, ensuring sustainable delivery of 30 hours free childcare entitlements. This funding included specific business support for childminders.

Additionally, we have already taken a number of steps to support the childminding sector. Childminders can now spend up to half of their time working from non-domestic premises, which could help increase parental awareness. We have set the expectation that all local authorities should pay childminders monthly for all funded hours from September 2018, and we have worked with the early years sector to provide resources and support to help childcare providers to develop their businesses and remain sustainable.

With regards to related children, provision from a relative, even if they are a registered provider, is not defined as childcare. The definition of childcare in the Childcare Act (2006) specifically excludes care provided for a child by a parent, step-parent, or other relative. The government does not believe it is appropriate to use public funds to pay an individual to look after a relative.

As you may be aware, the government's funded free childcare entitlements are not the only way we support parents with childcare costs. The eligibility criteria for Tax Free Childcare (TFC) is different in this area, because parents who use relatives who are registered childminders to care for their children outside their home may be able to claim TFC.

I note your concerns about the closing of the Childcare Business Grant Scheme from 31 March 2019. We are keeping our policy on childminders under review, and I will keep your comments in mind going forward.

Thank you for writing on this important matter. I hope you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Zahawi', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nadhim Zahawi MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families