

## Written evidence submitted by Mrs Lacey Douglas, Heathers Nursery

When the lock down started, we only had one key worker child who needed care and one vulnerable child. Both children had siblings attending the school that we share a site with so we worked with the school and agreed we would send in one member of our staff team. The days needed by the key worker child were Wednesdays and Fridays. It was agreed with the vulnerable family's social worker that the child would also attend Wednesdays & Fridays so that the youngest children had friends to play with and to reduce the demand on the one member of our staff team.

As we had been advised by Government guidance, NCC guidance and a letter from Vicky Ford MP, that we would receive funding and be able to claim furlough, we furloughed all non-essential staff and kept our manager & SLP (who was the one working with the key worker child and the vulnerable child), our deputy manager who is looking after our online learning system and contacting all families via phone every week, one of our staff who is currently on a government funded apprenticeship scheme for her level 3 qualification and who is running our Facebook page and myself who does all the admin, accounts, payrolls etc. All furloughed staff would have (and will be) paid in full and not at 80%.

As we had furloughed all other staff, we did not have a pool of staff to rota working with the children at the school. Our manager was happy to do this for the agreed days.

The agreed days were not adhered to and the vulnerable family attended school on every day except the agreed days and our manager was called in a short notice each day. The social worker then went into self-isolation and did not respond to emails asking for help with the situation. The school obliged each day because the sibling should have attended school each day regardless of the days the 3yr old sister should have been there. There was also a concern around the children not having enough food.

The school opened during the Easter holidays which we were happy to do as we knew we would have furlough money to cover the overtime worked by the manager. We had to pay overtime because staff are not paid for any work done during holiday periods. If we had been able to share the work during the holidays with the other staff members it would have been fair and we wouldn't have paid overtime as each person is being paid in full and would have only worked a couple of days during the Easter holidays.

Because the vulnerable family attended more than was agreed, our manager ended up working an extra 6 days which has cost us almost £700 in wages, increased NI and pension payments.

On the evening of Friday 17th April, the Government released updated guidance which stated we can furlough up to the value of our private fee paying income from February because to claim furlough and funding would have meant receiving tax payers money twice for staff. At no point ever has the government said the funding was solely to be used to pay for staff. What pays for all other overheads a nursery incurs in its daily operations?

This was a blow because we have now incurred extra costs due to opening during Easter with no ability to get recompense for this.

The sector had repeatedly asked for clarity on funding and furlough and to only receive this clarity 72 hours before the furlough claim scheme opened meant providers had made decisions based on guidance that was changed at the last minute. If we had had clarity

earlier on, we would not have furloughed all staff and would have had a pool of staff to share the rota of work with.

Even with the small amount of furlough money I am legally allowed to claim I am unable to because registered charities don't have a UTR (Unique Taxpayer Reference) number so can't complete the furlough claim process. There is no work around to this yet. HMRC should have been aware of this because charity settings had the exact same issue in 2016 when the Tax-Free Childcare payment system was launched - no UTR, no process to register for payments. It took almost 6 months to get that sorted.

On Tuesday 21st April new guidance for LA's was issued saying LA's could "redistribute" early years funding in a way they see fit. To date providers in Norfolk have had no communication as to how this will affect any of us. We had been assured that we would receive 100% of funding in full.

As we receive charitable rate relief for our business rates, we were assured we would be eligible for a grant. On Wednesday 22nd April new Government guidance was issued and the eligibility criteria for the small business grant had changed to exclude those in receipt of charitable rate relief, further reducing any money we had been told we were eligible for.

We are out of pocket due to decisions made on Government and LA assurances.

We have lost money in fundraising - we are desperate for new tables and chairs and have been fundraising for this for 3 years; the overtime bill has taken 1/4 of that already. We refunded our families who had paid fees for the remainder of the Spring term - that refund total was a further £470.00. We are not charging parents any fees to hold places and won't charge until we are able to open sessions to all children. We are predominately funded, have 40% English as Additional Language, 10% SEND children, 38% of children from deprived backgrounds and are proud to be able to offer completely free childcare. We can only do this by carefully managing staff ratios, overheads and paying staff much less than they are worth.

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