



# **Blackburne House Nursery**

## **Optional Charges for Parents (including FAQs) Policy**

### **Contents**

1. Purpose .....	1
2. Scope .....	1
3. Definitions .....	1
4. Permitted Optional Charges .....	1
5. Parent Rights .....	2
6. Transparency Requirements .....	2
7. Invoicing Standards .....	2
8. Opt-Out Procedures .....	2
9. Compliance with Liverpool City Council .....	2
Frequently Asked Questions .....	3



## 1. Purpose

This policy outlines the rules and expectations for early years providers regarding optional charges to parents. It ensures transparency, fairness, and compliance with Liverpool City Council's Early Years Funding Agreement.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all early years providers delivering funded childcare places under the Liverpool Early Years Funding Agreement.

## 3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Funded Hours	Childcare hours paid for by the government (15 or 30 hours per week)
Optional Charges	Charges for items or services not covered by funded hours, which parents may choose to pay for
Consumables	Items such as meals and snacks, nappies, wipes, sun cream
Additional Activities	Non-essential activities such as music classes and trips
Additional Hours	Childcare hours beyond the funded entitlement

## 4. Permitted Optional Charges

Providers may charge for the following, provided they are optional and clearly communicated:

- Meals and snacks
- Consumables (e.g. nappies, wipes, sun cream)
- Additional activities (e.g. music, trips)
- Additional hours beyond the funded entitlement



## **5. Parent Rights**

Parents have the right to:

- Access funded hours free of charge
- Opt out of optional charges
- Provide their own meals, consumables, or decline participation in extra activities
- Receive equal quality of care regardless of payment for optional extras

## **6. Transparency Requirements**

Providers must:

- Publish a clear charging policy on their website or via the local authority
- Clearly distinguish between funded and paid services
- Ensure all optional charges are itemised and explained

## **7. Invoicing Standards**

Invoices must:

- Clearly separate funded hours from paid hours
- Itemise charges for meals, consumables, and activities
- Be issued regularly and in a format understandable to parents

## **8. Opt-Out Procedures**

Providers must:

- Allow parents to opt out of optional charges
- Offer alternatives (e.g. bring own meals or items)
- Ensure no child is excluded or treated differently due to non-payment

## **9. Compliance with Liverpool City Council**

Providers must comply with the Liverpool Early Years Funding Agreement and any updates issued by the local authority. Non-compliance may result in funding withdrawal or other actions.



## Frequently Asked Questions

This is a list of Frequently Asked Questions regarding Early Years Optional Charges and helps parents understand what is included in the free childcare funding and what optional charges may apply.

All charges must be optional, and providers must offer alternatives.

### Is childcare really free?

Yes! The government pays for 15 or 30 hours per week of childcare for eligible children.

These hours must be free of charge. However, providers can offer optional extras that parents may choose to pay for.

### What can providers charge for?

Item	Can they charge?	Is it optional?	What happens if I opt out?
Meals & snacks	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Optional	You may need to provide packed meals/snacks.
Consumables (e.g. nappies, wipes, sun cream)	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Optional	You can bring your own items from home.
Extra activities (e.g. music, languages, trips)	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Optional	Your child won't take part in these activities.
Additional hours (outside funded hours)	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Optional	You only get the funded hours unless you pay for more.

### Can providers make me pay for these extras?

No. Providers cannot make these charges mandatory. You must be given the choice to opt out or provide alternatives.

### Will my child be treated differently if I don't pay?

No. All children must receive the same quality of care and education during their funded hours, whether or not you pay for extras.



### **Will I get a clear breakdown of costs?**

Yes. By January 2026, providers must give you:

- A clear charging policy (on their website or via the council).
- Itemised invoices showing:
  - Free funded hours
  - Chargeable hours
  - Food charges
  - Consumables
  - Activities

### **What should I do if I'm unsure or feel pressured?**

Ask your provider for their charging policy.

You can also contact the Liverpool Early Years Funding Team:

✉ EYFunding@Liverpool.gov.uk

☎ 0151 351 0549



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