

Snacks, Meals and Consumables Charges

From April 2025, the Government have updated their guidance regarding parents paying meal and consumable charges. This review has come following data that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are not able to access a funded childcare place due to parents being unable to afford the meals and consumable costs.

The Government have changed their wording to state that that providers **can** charge parents for the following extras in connection with the free hours, but these charges must be voluntary for the parent:

- consumables to be used by the child – snacks, wipes, suncream, wetsuits and wellies, spare clothes, Famly App, music licenses, trips, etc. This is not an exhaustive list.
- meals and snacks consumed by the child throughout the day – breakfast, snack, lunch, snack, tea, snack.
- extra optional activities such as events, celebrations, specialist tuition or other activities that are not related or necessary for the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework – pancake day, ice cream man, picnics, etc.

Providers can charge parents for any additional, private paid hours according to their usual terms and conditions, provided taking up private paid hours is not a condition of accessing a free place.

Due to the nature of Moorwell Miracles' business offer, we have always been unable to accommodate a pack-up option, avoiding the meal and consumable costs, for quite a few different factors:

- Being unable to consistently accommodate this for every child attending each day due to the size of the setting.
- Having to physically store packed-meals safely (potentially 78 pack-ups, twice for lunch and tea, on our busiest days, plus breakfast and 2/3 snacks per day).
- Daily management of which children are entitled to what meal/snack, on which day, depending whether they are on a funded session, and whether parents have paid or not.
- Children missing out on key extended activities which are not necessary for the effective delivery of the EYFS, such as baking, pancake day, ice cream man visit, etc.
- To manage and coordinate the kitchen requirements for those requiring meals provided by the nursery, which would vary day to day.
- The value placed on the importance of children accessing a healthy, balanced hot meal in the middle of the day to reach their full potential by supporting growth, concentration, connection with peers and brain development; all to build brighter futures.
- A good food provision in Early Years has been shown to lead not only to healthier children, but to improved attainment. We hope to create a generation of children who enjoy food that makes them healthier, more successful and most importantly happier.
- We recognise that our current offer is tailored to our current demographic of working families, meaning the additional pressure of providing all meals, snacks and consumables daily is taken away from parents with busy working lives.

Moorwell Miracles ensures that the funding offer for free-funded hours, along with the meal and consumable costs are clear, up-to-date and upfront to parents prior to taking up a funded place. They are easily accessible to parents published on the nursery website, shared with the Local Authority for the Family Information Service and are enclosed in our new starter welcome packs.

To give consideration to the Government changes in regard to disadvantaged children – all children attending Moorwell Miracles who access, or have previously accessed, 2 year-funding (non-working parent), or are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium, the meals and consumable costs will be waived. The meal and consumable costs will be covered by the additional funding the setting receives to support those children.

Given the above information, Moorwell Miracles would appreciate the support from our parents with the current established offer, even with meal and consumable costs being voluntary. We would like to stress that whilst many early years settings are places of education, they are also businesses and need to ensure they have money available to cover their costs and make a profit to ensure they are viable for the future. We feel that the costs we apply are competitive, fair, and reasonable for the length of the sessions we offer, the high-quality care children receive and the excellent quality meals, snacks and consumables the children in our care are provided with.

Should parents wish to opt-out of our snack, meal and consumable charges it would be expected that it is parents' responsibility to provide a healthy pack-up for both lunch and tea, provide all snacks required for their child's session, arrange for a pack-up to be dropped off should they forget, ensure pack-ups do not contain any hot food for safe storage and preparation guidelines, ensure your child has had breakfast at home before arriving at nursery. It would also be parents' responsibility to provide all consumables needed such as nappies, baby wipes, nappy creams, suncream, milk, changes of clothes, raincoats, wellies etc. Further policy and guidance would be shared around what is considered a 'healthy packed lunch' to comply with the Healthier Families initiative, allergy considerations of other children in the setting and creating a culture and ethos of healthy eating.

If any parents have any questions, complaints or concerns about our stance around meal and consumable charges, are facing financial difficulty, have children unable to access their funded place, or wish to opt-out of our current offer of snacks, meals and consumables, we urge you to come forward and discuss this directly with the Nursery Manager as soon as possible so we can reach a reasonable agreement to support our families from September 2025.

Thank you as always for your support and understanding.

