



Thursday 9th April 2020

Dear Parents / Carers

Further to my letter of 30th March we are currently continuing to offer childcare to families of key workers at Joseph's Nursery on Rawcliffe Lane.

The trustees have been in regular contact, reviewing the situation and trying to assess how we can achieve the right balance between continuing to offer childcare to the families of key workers who desperately need it whilst protecting and supporting our staff. Consideration has also been given to the sustainability of York Childcare as a charity, both at the present moment and in the months to come.

A meeting was held earlier this week with the manager from each nursery and a plan developed on how we can continue providing a service during the current lockdown situation. Based on the low numbers of children attending, the resulting plan only requires a team of 6 staff per week on a rotational basis.

Along with many other colleagues in the early years sector, we have been awaiting confirmation that we are eligible to apply for the Job Retention Grant which would enable our staff to be placed on furlough, with York Childcare able to claim 80% of salary costs from government funds. Regrettably the information is confusing as HMRC have still not clarified whether early years settings who receive 'public money' in the form of early years funding are excluded from being able to apply for this grant. As we are members of several official organisations representing the early years sector to government (eg the Early Years Alliance and the National Day Nurseries Association) lobbying for clarification has continued. To date, this has still not been forthcoming.

However, in the belief that common sense will prevail, we have this week taken the decision to place a number of our staff on furlough. Some staff have volunteered and a consultation process has been completed with remaining staff to identify which staff will commence furlough straight away and who will continue to work. The plan developed by nursery managers on Tuesday enables those staff wanting to work, to switch between furlough and being on rota to work. Whilst this is not ideal, it would enable all of the staff who do not want to be placed on furlough to be able to work at some point.

We are still in the process of assessing our financial position. Trustees are liaising with landlords to seek rental breaks; we have applied for the Small Business Grants being made available via the council; we are benefitting from the suspension of business rates; payment of early years funding will still be paid to us for the summer term for children who were registered with us by the cut-off date, and we are liaising with our insurer.

Parents are being provided with the opportunity to continue to pay nursery fees. Following the issuing of invoices for April, we have received a number of queries from parents and we apologise for any lack of clarity on this point. Invoices have been issued in order to maintain York Childcare's accounts during this time of disruption. We would like to make it absolutely clear that you are under no obligation to pay invoices for childcare if we are not providing care for your child and that no such child will lose a place at the nursery if no payment is received. However, should you wish to make a financial contribution at this time, any payment towards invoices would be much appreciated. Any such payment you wish to make would be credited against future childcare provision when the nurseries re-open, but would assist us in cash flow terms at this point in time. Any parent wishing to continue to pay their invoices in the normal sum, or at a reduced figure, as a donation to York Childcare (i.e. not to be credited against future childcare), can also do this. Please contact Kate Joicey on the general office email address to discuss this option. We apologise for any lack of clarity on this point.

I need to inform you that, having considered all of the above factors, the Trustees have reached the decision that we will continue with the plan developed by the managers for the next two weeks, but then further review the situation with a view to the possibility of also closing Joseph's Nursery on Friday 24th April. Factors influencing this decision will include whether or not the government announce that re-opening schools and nurseries is imminent, and whether there is a marked increase in demand for childcare, coupled with willingness from staff and trustees to accept some children who are not currently using a York Childcare nursery.

If the decision for complete temporary closure is made, all nursery staff will be placed on furlough with York Childcare claiming the government funding on behalf of eligible staff.

I know that this is news which many of us hope can be avoided and the decision will not be made without full consideration of all the options available.

If you are currently a key worker family and are using Joseph's Nursery for your childcare, please get in touch with your nursery manager who will be able to sign-post you to other childcare options.

We will continue to place updates on the Latest News page of the York Childcare website and to post information on the main York Childcare Facebook page and will send an email to your individual email addresses with further news once the review has taken place in two weeks' time.

Thank you all for your continued support.
Best wishes to you and your families as we commence the Easter weekend.

Kind regards



Karen Mawson
CEO