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Epsom County Councillor win for childminders

12 July 2024



Surrey County Council (SCC) has announced a significant change in the payment system for childminders, following a successful campaign led by Residents' Association County Councillor **Eber Kington** (Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington). The new system, which will see childminders receiving monthly payments, comes as a response to overwhelming feedback from the childminding community.

Currently, childminders in Surrey receive 60% of their term's funding upfront at the start of each term, with the remaining 40% plus any necessary adjustments paid by mid-term. This staggered payment system has been identified as a barrier by nearly half of the respondents in the 2024 Early Years Provider Survey. Additionally, SCC's in-person consultation revealed that 95% of childminders favored a shift to monthly payments.

Councillor Kington highlighted the discrepancy in SCC's public messaging, which he argued favored larger group providers over individual childminders. He was approached by a childminder from his division, expressing the need for a spokesperson to advocate for a payment system that supports their financial stability and professional efficacy.

The childminder stated, "It would be good to finally have a spokesperson who can support us in calling for a change and enabling us to make a choice in how we are paid, so we are able to continue doing our jobs to the best of our ability, without worrying how or when we will be able to pay our mortgages."

Councillor Kington emphasized the importance of this change, especially in light of the upcoming expansion of early years entitlement, which will require more childcare places. He argued that ensuring a reliable payment system is crucial for recruiting and retaining childminders.

After lobbying the Council, Councillor Kington raised the issue at the July Council Meeting. In response, Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families, and Lifelong Learning, confirmed that SCC is transitioning to a new software system for early education payments. This system, set to be implemented in September 2024, will include the option for monthly payments.

Following the meeting, Councillor Kington expressed his satisfaction with the outcome. "This is excellent news, but it is a shame that childminders have had to work hard to get the change despite the clear evidence of need shown in SCC's own consultation results," he said.

The move to monthly payments aligns SCC with other local authorities, such as the London Borough of Sutton, which already offer this option to their childminders. This change is expected to provide greater financial stability and support for childminders, enabling them to focus on delivering high-quality care without the added stress of managing inconsistent payment schedules.

Image from www.childcare.co.uk

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