

North Yorkshire Council

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE

June 2024

OUTDOOR LEARNING SERVICE FEES AND CHARGES April 2025 and beyond

Report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To gain approval to introduce a new fees and charges structure in April 2025. Which offers a greater range of seasonal fees and charges; higher fees will exist in months which are popular and more affordable options will be used outside of these months. Additional fees and charges for weekend residentials, which are more affordable than residentials held the week, are also being proposed.
- 1.2 To gain approval to set the next three years of fees and charges for NYOLS. Following the agreement of fee and charges for 2025/2026 the service requires approval to increase its fees and charges for 2026/2027 by inflation and in 2027/2028 again by inflation. Enabling customers to have confidence in our pricing structure and for the service to communicate its fees and charges ahead of the yearly booking cycle.
- 1.3 To gain approval to offer an incentive for loyal school customers to secure their residential bookings for 2026/2027 at the previous year's fee; If school customers book their residential for 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 by the end of September 2024, they will be offered the agreed fees and charges for 2025/2026.
- 1.4 To gain approval to offer school customers a discounted fee if they make a single booking for a residential for 60 young people or more.

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2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Fees and charges for school residentials and day bookings for the 2024/2025 financial year was approved at the Executive Member meeting on the 19th of September 2023. It was agreed that residential fees would remain consistent with 2023/2024 fees, in recognition of an earlier fee increase of 21% in 2022-23.
- 2.2 Executive members also agreed a pilot scheme to offer a 20% discount to new customers and to those customers that have not used the service in the last three years. This discount was also available for customers making last minute bookings. These discounts only applied during low and mid-season months: November to February. A number of schools accessed this discount however it was felt that 20% didn't go far enough in terms of making the cost affordable.

- 2.3 Schools pass on charges for residential and day visits and associated transport costs to parents and/or carers. Schools vary in their financial support for visits.
- 2.4 The service has seen a reduction in the number of young people attending residentials this year, this is a pressure that the wider outdoor learning industry has acknowledged. Additionally, the service has seen schools choose to visit other providers who are offering residentials at a more affordable price. Appendix A Competitor pricing.
- 2.5 The service is actively marketing and engaging with potential customers through NYES, its own Business Support team and the NY Communication team. In these engagements a substantial proportion of school customers are citing that NYOLS fees combined with transport costs are prohibitive for families. Appendix B NYOLS participant numbers.
- 2.6 Schools leaders typically book residentials one year in advance. This enables them to discuss payment plans with parents/carers.
- 2.7 NYOLS has the potential to increase its residential customer numbers. The service has a number of vacancies between September and May, in which school residentials could take place. In order to support the ongoing development of the service it is imperative that these vacancies are filled.
- 2.8 NY Fees and Charges policy states that the Council objective is to maximise income. Equally it states that benchmarking against other relevant competitors should be undertaken, when appropriate. Annual reviews of fee and charges should also consider demand and sensitivity to price changes. These are factors that were considered when proposing these fees and charges.

The Council's Fees and Charges Policy sets out instructions and guidance for the implementation and administration of charging schemes for Council services.

The objectives of the Policy are to:

- a) Maximise consistency across services*
- b) Ensure Fees and Charges are robust and up to date*
- c) Ensure that Fees and Charges are clearly understood*
- d) **Maximise Council income***

Fees and Charges should be benchmarked against other local authorities to help identify potential best practice. When appropriate to the Fee and Charge in question, benchmarking against other relevant competitors in the market should also be undertaken.

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Annual reviews should consider the following factors:

- Inflationary pressures, and when a flat rate uplift might not be the most appropriate option due to specific changes to the cost-of-service delivery;*
- Service-level budget targets, with the context of council-wide targets and advice from lead Finance Business Partners;*
- Cost of administration;*
- Scope for new charging areas, this might be entirely new discretionary service to deliver, or existing services that are currently not charged for;*
- **Demand/volume and sensitivity to price changes;***
- Use stakeholder engagement and comparative data, where appropriate, to ensure that charges do not adversely affect the take up of services or restrict access to services (other than where this is a desirable outcome)..*

3.0 DETAILED PRESENTATION OF THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE

Fees and Charges structure for 2025/2026

- 3.1 Seasonal pricing is widely used within the Outdoor Learning industry and has the benefit of encouraging customers to visit at times of the year which are more affordable. The service has previously used low, mid, and high season fees and this has proved to be positive in encouraging residential groups to visit throughout the year. However, it is felt that this can be developed further, offering a greater range of fee's, in a move to entice residential bookings in quieter times.

It is therefore proposed that there are five bands of fees, linked to months throughout the year. The more popular months of June and July will have the highest fee, and the more difficult to fill months of December and January will have the lowest fee.

- 3.2 Alongside seasonal variations it is also suggested that fees and charges are adjusted, from those approved for 2024/2025, so that there are more affordable options for schools to visit the centres. Proposed fees and charges for 2025/2026 are shown in Appendix C
- 3.3 It is proposed that we have a set of agreed fees and charges for weekend residential. Previously weekend residential have been charged at a comparable fee for 3-day residential taking place Monday to Friday. However, to encourage schools to book weekend residential NYOLS fees need to be attractive and competitive. Proposed fees and charges for weekend residential 2025/2026 are shown in Appendix C
- 3.4 All proposed fees and charges considered a number of factors:
- Market forces, what parents/carers and schools can afford
 - Competitor pricing, (NYOLS offers high quality outdoor learning, accessing the natural environment away from the centre grounds, for enhanced learning. This is unique, therefore NYOLS fees can reflect this but at the same time NYOLS fees need to be affordable and close to our competitors' prices).
 - Meeting, as a minimum, our variable costs of delivery.

Fees and charges for NYOLS for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028

- 3.5 It is proposed that fees and charges are agreed for 2025/2026, at the same time we are seeking agreement that 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 fees and charges will reflect national inflation rates. National Inflation rates in April will be used to confirm fees and charges for the following financial year.

Fees and Charges policy states,

All fees and charges are to be reviewed on an annual basis. Whilst it is acknowledged that a full review of each fee and charge implemented by the Council is not practicable each financial year, it is considered that as a minimum the fees and charges already charged by the Council are to be adjusted in line with inflation each year. This will ensure that any inflationary change to the costs of providing a service will be matched by a corresponding change to the charge made for the service. The inflation rate to be applied each year will be notified by the Corporate Director of Resources as part of the budget setting process.

It is requested that NYOLS fees and charges amendments are made in line with national inflation rates (taken in April for the following years fees and charges), as opposed to the inflation rate notified by the Corporate Director of Resources, during budget setting process. Using national inflation rates allows the service to build relationships with schools and encourage advance bookings, as the service can communicate fees and charges in advance of Corporate decisions. As schools book residential at least a year in advance it is helpful to communicate our fees and charges at the time of booking. This enables schools to communicate payment plans to parents and ensure they get their commitment early. Schools are also reassured when fees are consistent and fee increases reflect the wider financial climate.

Loyalty offer for schools booking 2026/2027 residentials

- 3.6 It is proposed that our loyal school customers (those who have booked a residential for 2025/2026) are rewarded with an offer to book their residential for 2026/2027 at the agreed price of the 2025/2026 fees, if they book by the end of September 2024. This financial incentive will encourage school customers to book early for 2026/2027 which will enable the service to identify gaps early on and market accordingly.

Discounted fee for school groups, if they bring along 60 or more young people on a residential.

- 3.7 The service would like to encourage academy chains / federations / small schools to work together to access affordable residential. Larger school bookings require less management and organisation by NYOLS staff; therefore, the service would like to incentivise schools to work together to make a single book for 60 young people or more. It is proposed that reduced fees and charges are available to those who bring 60 or more young people, as a single booking, to the centres. Proposed fees and charges for large group bookings are shown in Appendix C

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Service could continue to hold its current rate of fees and charges for 2024/2025 into 2025/2026. However, given the feedback the service has received from customers and the movement of some schools away from NYOLS to cheaper providers it is felt that this decision would result in, potentially, no new customers. The financial impact of this decision is presented in Appendix D, table 1.
- 4.2 The Service could increase its fees and charges in line with the inflation rate agreed through the Corporate budget setting process (6% increase). If the service sustained their current level of customer bookings the financial situation might improve by £110k. See Appendix D, table 2. However, it is felt that if fees were increased by inflation, then the current customer base would reduce, as evidence has demonstrated that parents/carers are increasingly challenged by NYOLS fees.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The service currently has 52 provisional bookings for residential in 2025/2026. The financial impact of the proposed new fees & charges versus this year's fees and charges is shown in Appendix D, table 3. The reduced income created by the proposed fees and charges for 2025/2026 could be recovered by 3 additional bookings for a 3 night/2 day residential* (*based on average group size of 51 young people).
- 5.2 Furthermore of those 52 provisional bookings only 6 bookings are bringing more than 60 young people. The financial impact of the proposed discount for bringing a group of young

people of 60 or more, equates to a reduced income of £15k. This could be recovered by 2 additional bookings for a 3 night/2 day residential* (*based on average group size of 51 young people)

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Fees and Charges policy states that the Council objective is to maximise income, benchmark against other relevant competitors and annual reviews of fee and charges should also consider demand and sensitivity to price changes. These are factors that have been considered when proposing these fees and charges.
- 6.2 It is proposed that Fees and Charges for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 will be increased by national inflation rates. Thus, enabling early communication with schools to secure bookings. Whilst this is a deviation from the policy which states the *inflation rate to be applied each year will be notified by the Corporate Director of Resources as part of the budget setting process*. Using national inflation rates will ensure that the service is matching the cost of providing the service with a corresponding change to its Fees and Charges.

7.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Initial equality impact assessment screening form in Appendix E.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Initial Climate Change Impact Assessment form in Appendix F.

9.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Establishing fees and charges which are achievable for families and schools, within the current financial climate, ensuring all young people of North Yorkshire can access high quality outdoor learning.
- 9.2 Creating new incentives to generate further income.

21.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

i) Approve recommended new fees and charges structure for April 2025. Along with fees and charges for weekend residentials. OFFICIAL

ii) Approve the next three years of fees and charges for NYOLS; Following the agreement of fee and charges for 2025/2026 the service will amend its fees and charges for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 by national inflation rates.

iii) Approve an incentive for loyal school customers to secure their residential bookings for 2026/2027 at the previous year's fee.

iv) Approve a discounted fee offer to school customers if they book a residential for 60 young people or more.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Competitors residential prices – Confidential Report

Appendix B - NYOLS participants numbers - Confidential Report
Appendix C – Proposed Fees and Charges for 2025/2026 - Confidential Report
Appendix D - Potential financial impact of Alternative options - Confidential Report
Appendix E – Equality Impact Assessment screening form
Appendix F - Climate Change Impact Assessment

STUART CARLTON
CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S SERVICE
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Northallerton

Report Author – Teresa Thorp, Head of Outdoor Learning Service
Presenter of Report – Teresa Thorp, Head of Outdoor Learning Service

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE THAT IF ANY REPORTS / APPENDICES INCLUDE SIGNATURES THESE MUST BE REMOVED / DELETED PRIOR TO SENDING REPORTS / APPENDICES TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES. Appendices should include an Equality Impact Assessment and a Climate Impact Assessment where appropriate

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Appendix E

Initial equality impact assessment screening form

This form records an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.

Directorate	Children's and Young Peoples Service
Service area	Outdoor Learning
Proposal being screened	To gain approval of a fees and charges structure for Outdoor Learning for April 2025 and beyond
Officer(s) carrying out screening	
What are you proposing to do?	
Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?	
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources? Please give details.	No

Impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYC's additional agreed characteristics

As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions:

- To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics?
- Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important?
- Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to?

If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be an adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate. You are advised to speak to your directorate representative for advice if you are in any doubt.

Protected characteristic	Potential for adverse impact		Don't know/No info available
	Yes	No	
Age		✓	
Disability		✓	
Sex		✓	
Race		✓	
Sexual orientation		✓	
Gender reassignment		✓	
Religion or belief		✓	
Pregnancy or maternity		✓	
Marriage or civil partnership		✓	
People in rural areas		✓	
People on a low income		✓	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		✓	
Are from the Armed Forces Community		✓	
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable impacts (for example, disabled people's access to public transport)? Please give details.	No		

<p>Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (for example, partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics? Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.</p>	<p>No</p>			
<p>Decision (Please tick one option)</p>	<p>EIA not relevant or proportionate:</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Continue to full EIA:</p>	
<p>Reason for decision</p>				
<p>Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)</p>				
<p>Date</p>				

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Appendix F

Initial Climate Change Impact Assessment (Form created August 2021)

The intention of this document is to help the council to gain an initial understanding of the impact of a project or decision on the environment. This document should be completed in consultation with the supporting guidance. Dependent on this initial assessment you may need to go on to complete a full Climate Change Impact Assessment. The final document will be published as part of the decision-making process.

If you have any additional queries, which are not covered by the guidance please email climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk

Title of proposal	OUTDOOR LEARNING SERVICE CHARGES AND FEES APRIL 2025 AND BEYOND
Brief description of proposal	To gain approval of a fees and charges structure for Outdoor Learning for April 2025 and beyond
Directorate	Children's and Young Peoples Service
Service area	Outdoor Learning
Lead officer	Teresa Thorp
Names and roles of other people involved in carrying out the impact assessment	

The chart below contains the main environmental factors to consider in your initial assessment – choose the appropriate option from the drop-down list for each one.

Remember to think about the following;

- Travel
- Construction
- Data storage
- Use of buildings
- Change of land use
- Opportunities for recycling and reuse

Environmental factor to consider	For the council	For the county	Overall
Greenhouse gas emissions	No effect on emissions	No Effect on emissions	No effect on emissions
Waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste
Water use	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage
Pollution (air, land, water, noise, light)	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution
Resilience to adverse weather/climate events (flooding, drought etc)	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience
Ecological effects (biodiversity, loss of habitat etc)	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology
Heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape

If any of these factors are likely to result in a negative or positive environmental impact then a full climate change impact assessment will be required. It is important that we capture information about both positive and negative impacts to aid the council in calculating its carbon footprint and environmental impact.

Decision (Please tick one option)	Full CCIA not relevant or proportionate:		Continue to full CCIA:	
Reason for decision				
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)				
Date				