

Policy for the allocation of a Sponsored Nursery Priority

Introduction

This policy is designed to outline the Department of Paediatrics' approach to managing its sponsored nursery priority places, and to give guidance on how the priority places will be advertised and how applications can be made.

The policy is non-contractual and the department reserves the right to amend it at any time.

Background

The University has a number of [nurseries in Oxford](#), as well as a number of places at other nurseries in and around Oxford. Demand is exceptionally high, and places are provided for students and employees of the University.

The University currently allocates places according to the following priorities:

1. Parents or children with a disability;
2. Those with a sibling already using University nursery provision;
3. Those who have been nominated under the sponsored priority scheme (**including those sponsored by the Department of Paediatrics**);
4. Parent of child is an Oxford University student (except students who are also University employees);
5. Applicants who do not fall into one of the above categories.

The University has a scheme that enables colleges and departments to nominate staff for a priority on the nursery waiting list (called a "sponsored priority"). A Paediatrics "sponsored priority" therefore moves the child of an employee from category 5 to category 3 within the University's prioritisation process. A sponsored priority does not guarantee a nursery place, and recipients of a sponsored priority will be liable to pay all nursery fees.

Within each of the above categories, priority is given to those who have been on the University's nursery waiting list for the longest period of time.

Paediatrics sponsored nursery priority places

Paediatrics has four sponsored priority places which can be allocated. This enables the department to nominate a current member of staff for a priority place on the nursery waiting list, thereby elevating them to a higher point on the waiting list.

It is, however, important to note the following in relation to the department's sponsored priority places:

- a. Should the beneficiary parent be granted a sponsored priority by the department, and therefore be nominated to the priority list in category 3, this does not guarantee them a place within a University Nursery;
- b. In addition, should the beneficiary parent subsequently achieve a place within the University Nursery, they will be liable to pay all nursery fees;

The following general points are also relevant:

1. The department's sponsored priority will not normally be offered to students (except students who are University employees), as students who are non-employees and are parents of a child are already prioritised under the University's criteria.
2. Should a sponsored priority be given to an individual who subsequently leaves the department's employment (for whatever reason), the individual must inform University Childcare Services of their change in circumstances. The sponsored priority will then be automatically made re-available to the department, so that it can be offered to another individual.

For more detail about the circumstances in which this may occur, please refer to the Appendix.

3. Applications for a Paediatrics sponsored priority can be made at any point after an individual knows that they (or their partner) are pregnant, or have received confirmation that their legal adoption of a child has been approved. This is on the proviso that the parents have already applied to Childcare Services to join the waiting list for University nursery provision.
4. The sponsored priority is not linked to a specific University nursery placement – they are instead linked to the applicant's position on the University's waiting list.
5. Subject to the provision in point (2) above, a sponsored priority, once allocated, normally remains with a child until they leave the University nursery system (whether withdrawing from the University nursery provision, or waiting list). This can often mean a period of up to 4 years (i.e. until the child reaches school age).
6. Individuals cannot hold more than one sponsored priority at any one time.

Advertising of sponsored priority scheme

The department will draw to the attention of employees the existence of the sponsored priority scheme by using appropriate media such as the intranet, noticeboards, periodic emails, information provided to parents who are expecting a baby, or who are prospective adoptive parents, etc.

How to apply for a sponsored priority

When a sponsored nursery priority place becomes available, a Sponsored Nursery Priority Panel will be convened to consider all current applications. Applications should be made by completing the attached form and sending it to the HR Team hr@paediatrics.ox.ac.uk. Applications will normally be held on file until the employee informs the department that they no longer require a sponsored priority.

Sponsored priority will only be allocated to those who have submitted an application form for a sponsored nursery priority. In the event that an employee has not formally applied for a department sponsored priority (regardless of whether they are on the University's waiting list) and one becomes available, the employee will not be considered, and the sponsored priority will instead be offered to someone who has formally applied and is already in the department's waiting 'pool'.

Once an employee has formally applied for a Paediatrics sponsored priority, their application will be considered to have been received within two weeks from the date on which it was received by the Departmental Administrator.

Eligibility for a sponsored nursery priority

The department will only allocate a “sponsored priority” to those parents who are, at the time of application, employees of the department, or who have signed a contract to take up employment. In the event that applications exceed vacancies (which is likely), applicants will be placed in a waiting ‘pool’ and will be automatically re-considered (alongside any other applicants also in the waiting pool) when a “sponsored priority” becomes available once more.

In order to apply for a sponsored priority, the employee must have already applied to use University nursery provision with Oxford University Childcare Services.

The following factors may increase the likelihood of a Paediatrics sponsored priority being offered:

- a. the employee’s child has already been born (such individuals will typically be given priority over employees whose child has not yet been born);
- b. the other parent is also an employee of the department, and therefore does not have access to another sponsored priority or other workplace nursery scheme;
- c. the employee already has other significant caring responsibilities at home (e.g. elderly relative);
- d. the employee has other personal circumstances which make it extremely difficult for them to return to work at the department without a nursery place for their child;
- e. extenuating circumstances which mean that an employee (or prospective employee) did not join the University’s nursery waiting list earlier, and that their position on the University’s nursery waiting list therefore makes it unlikely that they will be able to return to, or take up, employment with the department when the time comes (e.g. those who are coming newly to Oxford to take up employment or those whose intended childcare arrangements are no longer tenable, for example, due to the death of a parent);
- f. the length of time the employee has been on the University’s nursery waiting list;
- g. the employee is on the waiting list for one or more of the University nurseries (Bradmore Road, Jack Straws Lane, Mansion House, Woodstock Road, The Triangle);
- h. the employee explored alternative options but was unsuccessful in obtaining a sponsored or subsidised nursery place.

Due to the limited number of Department-sponsored nursery places, applicants for these places are encouraged to actively explore all alternative options for securing a sponsored or subsidised nursery place (such as assistance from the employer of the child’s other parent) before applying for a Paediatrics sponsored nursery priority.

Applicants who have not explored alternative options will typically be given lower priority than those who have explored alternative options but have been unsuccessful in obtaining a sponsored or subsidised nursery place.

Accordingly, the department reserves the right to consider other factors when assessing applications, including (but not limited to):

- i. applicant would already be prioritised by other established criteria (see ‘Background’ above);
- j. employee is holding a joint-appointment between Paediatrics and another department or college within the University which has a sponsored priority or other workplace nursery scheme;
- k. the child’s other parent is an employee of the University of Oxford (but not employed by Paediatrics) in a department or college that has a sponsored priority place or other workplace nursery scheme;
- l. the child’s other parent is not employed by the University but has access to a workplace nursery scheme with their employer.

If any situation arises that does not fall within one of the above criteria, it should be raised with the Departmental Administrator in writing at the time of application (or as soon as possible thereafter) so that the matter can be considered accordingly.

If one of the department's sponsored priority places becomes available, the Departmental Administrator will present current applications to the Paediatrics sponsored nursery priority panel* for evaluation as appropriate. There will be no right of appeal against the panel's decisions.

In line with its strategic objectives at the time, the department reserves the right to keep one of its sponsored places vacant, whether or not there have been applications, and whether or not there are employees in the waiting 'pool'.

Changes of circumstance

If you hold a sponsored priority, you must let both the Departmental Administrator and University Childcare Services know immediately if your circumstances change such that you no longer need the sponsored priority. The department can then reallocate it accordingly.

***Membership of Paediatrics' Sponsored Nursery Priority Panel**

This will consist of four members from the Athena SWAN SAT. It will include both administrative staff and teaching or research staff, with at least one member of each gender. A fifth person will be available in the event that (a) the committee cannot reach an agreement; or (b) a member of the committee is applying for childcare.

APPENDIX

List of circumstances where a sponsored priority may no longer be available to an individual if they leave the employment of Paediatrics:

1. If an employee is allocated a sponsored priority and the child already has a University nursery placement, but the employee then leaves the employment of the department and University completely, they will no longer be eligible to use University nursery provision (regardless of whether the child is already in the Nursery). As such, we would be able to reclaim the sponsored priority and allocate it to another employee;
2. If an employee is allocated a sponsored priority and the child already has a University nursery placement, but the employee then leaves the employment of the department but stays within the University (i.e. employed by another department, college or the central University), their child will - at the discretion of Childcare Services – normally remain within the nursery. However, the employee must advise Childcare Services of their change in circumstances, who will then release the sponsored priority back to Paediatrics so that it can be allocated to another employee;
3. If an employee is allocated a sponsored priority but the child has not yet secured a University nursery placement (i.e. they are still on the University's nursery waiting list), in the event that the employee leaves the employment of the department but stays within the University (i.e. employed by another department, college or the central University), it will be for their new department/college to make an application for them to have a sponsored priority from their own allocation. Otherwise, the individual will revert back to being on the University's nursery waiting list (i.e. without a priority).

The employee must also advise Childcare Services of their change in circumstances, who will then release the sponsored priority back to Paediatrics so that it can be allocated to another employee;

4. If an employee is allocated a sponsored priority but the child has not yet secured a University nursery placement (i.e. they are still on the University's nursery waiting list), in the event that the employee leaves the employment of the department and University completely, they will no longer be eligible to use University nursery provision. As such, we would be able to reclaim the sponsored priority and allocate it to another employee.