



Department  
for Education

HM Treasury

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Policy paper

# 2010 to 2015 government policy: childcare and early education

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This is a copy of a document that stated a policy of the 2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government.

The previous URL of this page was

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-quality-and-range-of-education-and-childcare-from-birth-to-5-years>.

Current policies can be found at the GOV.UK [policies list](#).

## Issue

Providing children with good-quality education and care in their earliest years can help them succeed at school and later in life. This contributes to creating a society where opportunities are equal regardless of background.

Affordable and easily accessible childcare is also crucial for working families - it can help create more opportunities for parents who wish, or need, to work and raise children at the same time.

We believe we can improve early education by building a stronger and better-qualified early years workforce. We also aim to provide more good-quality affordable childcare.

## Actions

To extend early education to those who need it most, and to give parents greater choice of childcare, we are:

extending early learning places to around 40% of all 2-year-olds from

September 2014

- helping parents arrange more informal childcare by allowing them to pay a neighbour or relative not registered with Ofsted for up to 3 hours of childcare a day
- introducing new [childminder agencies](#) that will provide rigorous training and match childminders with parents
- encouraging more schools to offer nursery provision and extend provision from 8am to 6pm
- helping schools to offer affordable after-school and holiday care, either alone or working with private or voluntary providers
- reducing unnecessary regulations to help good nurseries expand their business

To help parents with the costs of childcare, we will:

- introduce a new tax-free childcare scheme to support working families from autumn 2015, worth up to £2,000 per child each year
- increase the support available to lower-income families from April 2016, as part of [Universal Credit](#)
- introduce the [early years pupil premium \(EYPP\)](#) in April 2015

To improve the quality of early education and childcare, we are:

- improving qualifications for the early years workforce and introducing [early years educator qualifications](#) in September 2014
- encouraging high-quality entrants to the early years workforce through bursaries for early years apprentices
- introducing [Teach First](#) in the early years
- working with Ofsted to [reform the inspection system](#) and challenge weak providers to improve more quickly
- simplifying registration arrangements for early years providers, while keeping controls to make sure children are safe

## Background

In September 2010 all 3- and 4-year-olds became entitled to 15 hours a week of state-funded early education. As a result, 96% of 3- and 4-year-olds currently receive state-funded education.

From September 2013, we extended the entitlement to 15 hours of free education per week for all looked-after 2-year-olds and 2-year-olds from families who meet the [criteria for free school meals](#) (approximately 130,000 children).

From September 2014 we will extend the number of early learning places for 2-year-olds further, to around 260,000 children.

In January 2013 we published '[More great childcare](#)', which included detail on planned reforms to:

- raise the standard and quality of the early years workforce
- give high-quality providers the freedom to offer more places
- give parents more choice

In July 2013 we published '[More affordable childcare](#)', which sets out our plans to help working parents access the childcare they need when they need it. We also updated [statutory guidance for local authorities on early education and childcare](#).

In the same month, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) published new [criteria for early years educator qualifications](#) and the [Teachers' Standards for early years](#), which provide detail of the standards new early years teachers have to meet.

On 2 August 2013 Ofsted published the response to its [consultation on](#)

[improving inspection of early years providers](#) .

In September 2013 we introduced Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) and [early years teacher training](#). EYTS replaces the Early Years Professional Status programme.

In March 2014 we published a [revised framework for the early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#), which will come into force from September 2014.



## Who we've consulted

In order to extend free early learning to 2-year-olds, we consulted on:

- introducing [free early learning for the 20% most disadvantaged 2-year olds](#) , from November 2011 to February 2012
- extending [free early learning to 40% of 2-year-olds](#) , from 5 July to 15 October 2012

In order to improve the quality and range of early learning, we consulted on:

- the level of qualifications that would enable us to [relax the limits on the number of children each member of staff in a nursery can look after](#) , from January to 25 March 2013
- changing the [role local authorities play in early education and childcare](#) , from 25 March to 6 May 2013
- proposals to introduce a baseline [check for children at the start of their time in reception](#) , from 17 July to 11 October 2013

 In order to make childcare more available and affordable,  we consulted on:

- simplifying [childcare regulations](#) to remove burdens and simplify processes, from 16 July to 30 September 2013

- plans to introduce [tax-free childcare for working families and additional assistance with childcare for parents through Universal Credit](#), from 5 August to 14 September 2013
- changing [planning rules to allow a much wider range of buildings to be converted to nurseries](#), from 6 August to 15 October 2013
- [introducing childminder agencies and changes to the local authority role](#), from 28 March to 22 May 2014

## Bills and legislation

The bills and legislation covering childcare and early education are:

- [The Childcare Act 2006](#)\_\_\_\_, as amended by [The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#)\_\_\_\_ and [The Children and Families Act 2014](#)\_\_\_\_
- [Local Authority \(Duty to Secure Early Years Provision Free of Charge\) Regulations 2012](#)\_\_\_\_
- [The Early Years Foundation Stage \(Learning and Development Requirements\) \(Amendment\) Order 2012](#)\_\_\_\_
- [The Early Years Foundation Stage \(Welfare Requirements\) Regulations 2012](#)\_\_\_\_
- [The Early Years Foundation Stage \(Exemptions from Learning and Development Requirements\) Regulations 2008](#)\_\_\_\_ as amended by [The Early Years Foundation Stage \(Exemptions from Learning and Development Requirements\) \(Amendment\) 2012](#)\_\_\_\_, which came into force on October 2012
- a new [statutory framework for the EYFS](#)\_\_\_\_, which will come into effect from September 2014
- [The Children and Families Act 2014](#)\_\_\_\_

The following regulations cover childminder agencies:



- [The Childcare \(Childminder Agencies\) \(Registration, Inspection and Supply and Disclosure of Information\) Regulations 2014](#)
- [The Childcare \(Childminder Agencies\) \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Regulations 2014](#)
- [The Childcare \(Childminder Agencies\) \(Cancellation etc\) Regulations 2014](#)

## Appendix 1: tax-free childcare scheme

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

We will begin introducing the tax-free childcare scheme from autumn 2015, opening it to almost 2 million families.



The scheme will be available to children under the age of 5 from autumn 2015, and all working parents with children under 12 will be covered within the first year.

Children up to age 16 with disabilities will also be eligible, in line with existing employer supported childcare rules.

The new scheme will be available to working families where:

- both parents are in work
- each parent earns less than £150,000 a year
- parents aren't already receiving support through tax credits or universal credit



For every 80p eligible families pay in, we will contribute 20p up to £10,000 a year per child. Parents will be able to use the vouchers for any Ofsted

regulated childcare in England and the equivalent bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

[Read the consultation on the scheme in full.](#)

## Appendix 2: early years foundation stage

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

The [early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#) sets the statutory standards that all early years providers must meet. This includes all maintained schools, non-maintained schools, independent schools and all providers on the Early Years Register.

The EYFS aims to provide:

- quality and consistency in all early years settings
- a secure foundation for all children for good progress through school and life
- partnerships between different practitioners
- partnerships between parents or carers and practitioners
- equality of opportunity for all children

We published a [revised EYFS](#) on 27 March 2012, which came into force on 1 September 2012. It aims to reduce burdens, including unnecessary regulation and paperwork, so professionals have more time to concentrate on supporting children.

An [updated EYFS](#) will come into effect on 1 September 2014. The changes will include amendments to the safeguarding and welfare requirements.



## EYFS profile

All early years providers must complete an [EYFS profile](#) for each child in the final term of the year in which they turn 5. For most children this is the reception year in primary school.

The main purpose is to provide an accurate assessment of individual children at the end of the EYFS. The profile describes each child's attainment against 17 early learning goals, together with a short narrative about their learning characteristics.

A revised EYFS profile came into effect in September 2012.

## Appendix 3: early years educators

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

We are introducing early years educator qualifications in September 2014. These will be level 3 (A level standard) qualifications that meet the [early years educator criteria](#) set by the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

To make sure the literacy and numeracy of students wishing to become early educators is adequate, all entrants must have GCSEs of grade C or above in English and mathematics.

## Appendix 4: early years teachers

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

Early years teachers are specialists in early childhood development. They are trained to work with babies and young children from birth to 5 years. They support and lead staff in early years settings, including [early years educators](#).

They meet the same [entry requirements and pass the same skills tests](#) as trainee primary school teachers.

We introduced [early years initial teacher training](#) in September 2013.

Those who already hold early years professional status will be recognised as the equivalent of early years teachers.

## Appendix 5: childminder agencies

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

Childminder agencies support childminders with training and business advice while providing parents with easier access to high quality childcare. It is entirely voluntary for childminders to join agencies and for parents to use them.

Agencies cut costs and administrative burdens on individual childminders by matching them with parents, saving them from having to spend time and resources trying to fill their places.

Childminder agencies also bring a number of benefits for parents. They increase choice and make it easier to find help with holiday or sickness cover. Additionally, the agencies will be registered and inspected by Ofsted, so parents can be reassured about their quality.

[Advice for anyone interested in establishing a childminder agency](#) is available.

### **Trial of childminder agencies**

Between summer 2013 and spring 2014, around 22 organisations formed trials to test elements of the childminder agency approach.

You can find more information about childminder agencies, including case studies on some of the trials, on the [Foundation Years website](#).

## **Appendix 6: early years pupil premium**

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

The early years pupil premium (EYPP) gives providers of early years education extra funding to support disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds.

Early years providers are any organisation that offers education for children aged under 5, including nurseries and childminders. [↗](#)

We will introduce the premium in April 2015. In the financial year 2015 to 2016, we will spend £50 million on the EYPP.

Early years providers will have to use this extra funding to improve the

quality of education for disadvantaged children.

Ofsted inspections will report on whether providers spend their EYPP funding effectively.

[More information about the EYPP](#), including details of which children are eligible, is available.

## **Local authorities who are introducing EYPP early**

We are running a trial of the EYPP with 7 local authorities from January to March 2015. Their feedback will help us make sure the EYPP system works before we introduce it fully in April 2015.

The 7 local authority areas, and the funding they have received to trial EYPP, are:

- Blackpool (£76,745)
- Bristol (£197,591)
- Cambridgeshire (£132,979)
- Hackney (191,543)
- Northamptonshire (£201,655)
- North Yorkshire (£100,567)
- Stoke-on-Trent (£137,198)

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