



Department  
for Education

# **Early years entitlements: operational guidance**

**For local authorities and providers**

**April 2017**

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## Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to help local authorities and providers understand in more detail the Department of Education's expectations about how the free entitlements should be delivered. We would like to thank the many providers, local authorities and sector organisations that have supported the production of this guidance and especially those who contributed examples and suggestions in a very short space of time.

We will continue to gather further case studies from the early rollout of 30 hours free childcare (the extended entitlement), and intend to update this guidance with more detail in due course.

## Summary

This publication provides operational guidance from the Department for Education. Local authorities must have regard to this guidance when discharging their duties to secure free early years provision. They should not depart from it unless they have good reason to do so.

The operational guidance also includes examples of practice which do not constitute guidance but which might assist local authorities in setting up appropriate arrangements to meet their legal duties related to the free early years provision.

## Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- Local authorities
- Early years providers who are delivering the free entitlement these are referred to as 'providers' throughout the document and include:
  - early years providers and childminders registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register;
  - childminders registered with a childminder agency that is registered with Ofsted
  - schools taking children age two and over and which are exempt from registration with Ofsted as an early years provider.

## Main points

This guidance seeks to assist local authorities and providers through case studies of how the free entitlements are being delivered, and supports greater consistency across the country by making clear:

- what local authorities should do to fulfil their statutory responsibilities
- what providers should do to fulfil their agreement with the local authority
- what local authorities and providers may wish to do to support parents and children

## Applying for and reserving a 30 hours place

### What is the difference between the universal 15 hours entitlement and the extended 30 hours entitlement?

- The application process for receiving the extended entitlement is through the digital childcare service. Further details below.
- However, providers delivering both the first and second 15 hours are required to follow the EYFS. Ofsted will not differentiate their inspections between the first and second 15 hours. We expect local authorities to fund providers at the same rate for both the first and second 15 hours.

### How will parents know what to do?

Parents can check whether they could be eligible for a range of government childcare offers, including 30 hours, via Childcare Choices at: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk> or the Childcare Calculator at: <https://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator>. Those who could be eligible for 30 hours and/or Tax-Free Childcare (see page 18) will be directed to the digital childcare service to apply.

The eligibility criteria for 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare are broadly aligned. For a more detailed guide to the 30 hours eligibility criteria see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility>. Parents will be able to apply for both 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare at the same time by entering their details once. HMRC will check parents' eligibility for both schemes at the same time.

Parents will be able to apply for Tax-Free Childcare and the extended entitlement through the digital childcare service.

**Parents will not need to apply through the digital childcare service if they only want to claim the universal 15 hours entitlement for three and four year olds.**

### What can local authorities and/or providers do to help?

- Direct parents to Childcare Choices and the Childcare Calculator to learn more about which offers might be best for them, whether they're likely to be eligible, and how to apply.
- Use our 30 Hours Eligibility Guide to help parents understand if they're eligible. You can download a copy at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility>.
- Direct parents to the Childcare Choices website if they're not sure where to apply for 30 hours.

- Reassure parents who don't want to use Tax-Free Childcare that they should still apply via the digital childcare service (they can choose to apply for the extended entitlement only). If they are receiving financial support through tax credits and only want to take up 30 hours, they can choose not to apply for Tax-Free Childcare (and keep their tax credits) as part of the application.
- Tell parents they do not need to apply via the digital service if they only want the universal 15 hours entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

## How will parents apply for 30 hours?

As part of the application process, parents will be asked to enter personal details including their name, address and National Insurance number and the same details for their partner (if they have one). They will also be asked whether they expect to meet the income requirements over the coming three months and whether they are in receipt of any relevant benefits. This information will help HMRC decide whether the parent (and their child) are eligible for 30 hours. At the start of the application process, parents will create a Government Gateway account if they don't already have one. If parents encounter any problems with the application process or accessing the childcare account, they should direct their queries to the childcare service Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 123 4097.

At the end of the application process, parents will have a childcare service account. In the "secure messages" section of their account, parents will receive messages regarding their eligibility. If parents are eligible for 30 hours, they will be given an 11 digit 'eligibility code' for their child. They will be asked to take this code (along with their National Insurance number and child's date of birth) to their provider to claim their 30 hours place. These codes normally start with '5000'. However, there are a small number of cases where parents might have a temporary code starting with '11'.

Parents can find their eligibility code in the '30 hours free childcare' section of their childcare service account (see Image A) and in their secure messages (see image B).

Image A – Viewing your 30 hours code in parent’s childcare service account

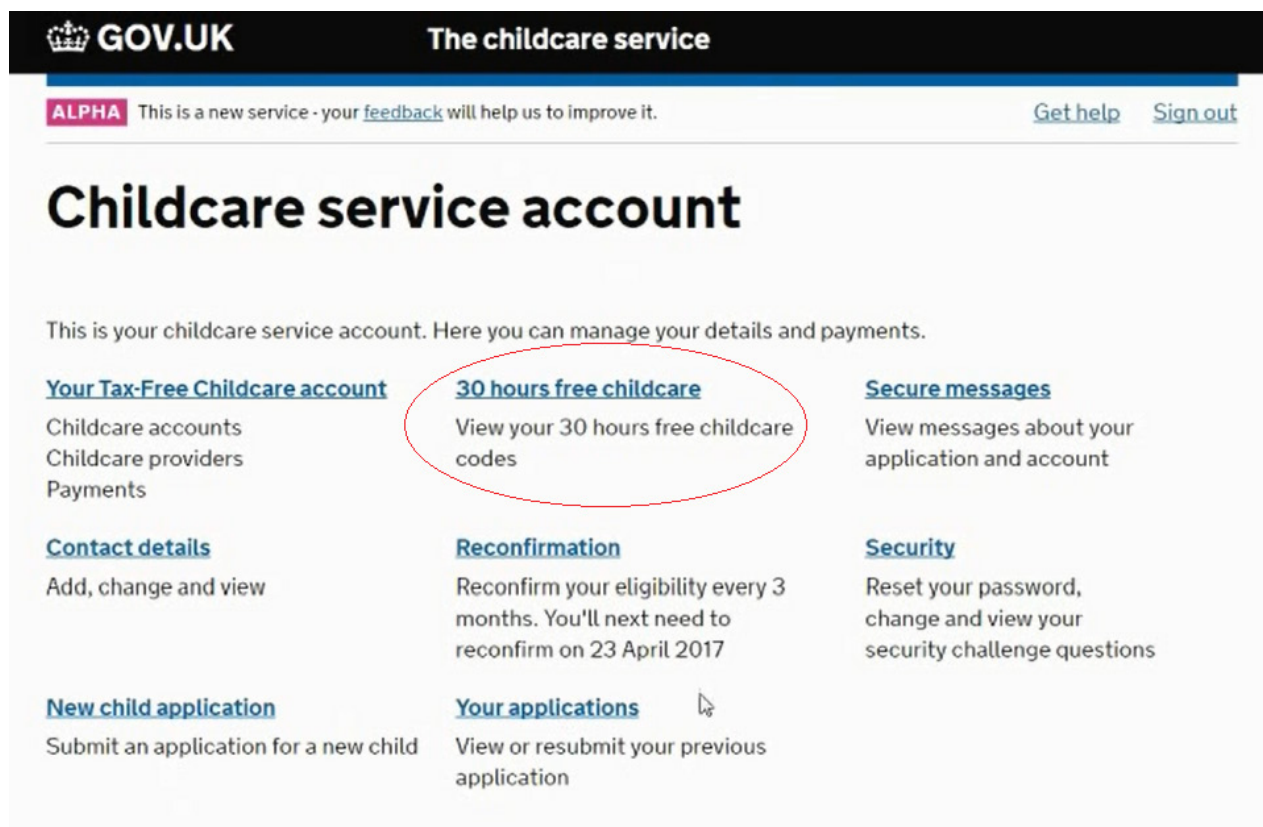
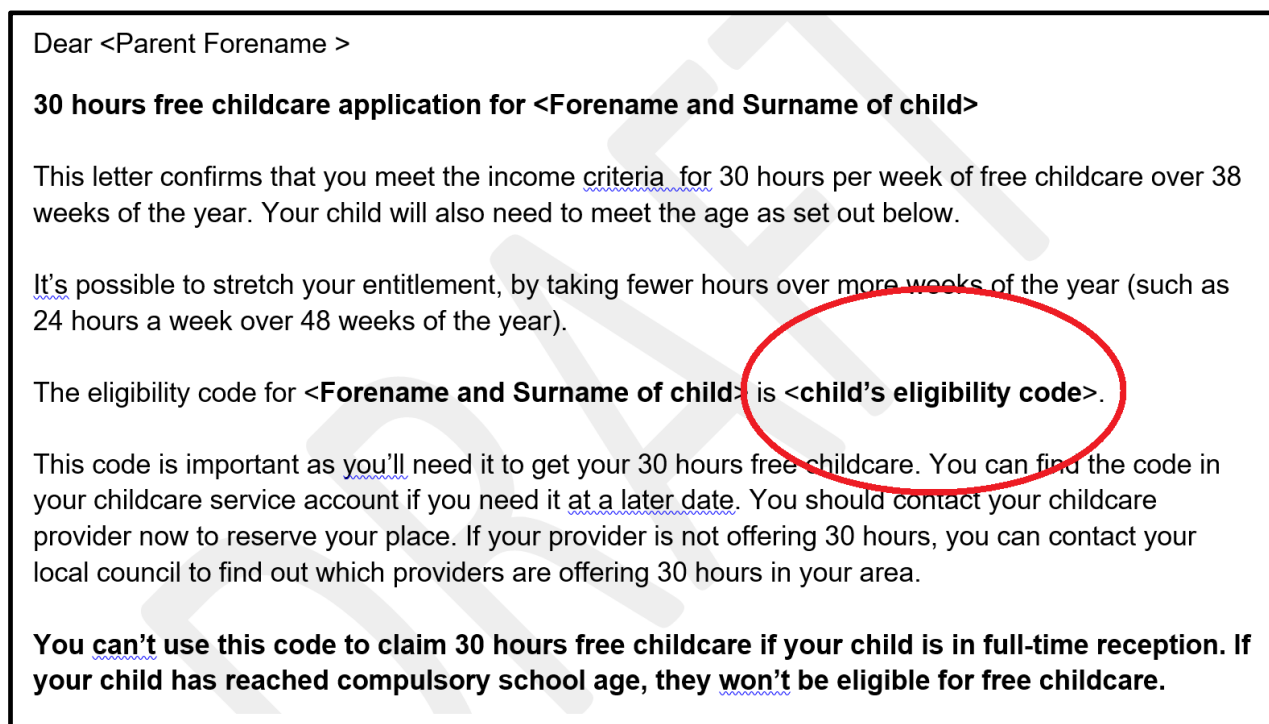


Image B – Eligibility Code on Secure Message



Parents will be prompted every three months to reconfirm the details they entered on their application are still accurate. This is to check that they are still eligible. They will be prompted, via text message and/or email, four weeks before their reconfirmation deadline and again two weeks before the deadline if they still haven't reconfirmed. If their circumstances have changed, they will log into their childcare service account, amend their details and then resubmit their details. If their circumstances have not changed, they only need to reconfirm their details.

If parents miss the reconfirmation deadline, they will receive a message telling them that their eligibility has lapsed. Although they are no longer eligible, they may be able to retain their childcare place for a short period; this is known as a grace period. Parents are directed to speak to their childcare provider about this - see Image C below.

Further guidance on how local authorities and providers should administer the grace period is provided on page 16.

### **What can childcare providers do to help?**

- Remind parents to bring their eligibility code, along with their National Insurance number and child's date of birth, otherwise you won't be able to verify their code and offer a place.
- Remind parents that they need to reconfirm when prompted by HMRC.

### *Image C – Message where parent is no longer eligible on reconfirmation*

Dear <Parent Forename >

**Important: 30 hours free childcare will be stopped for <Forename and Surname of child>**

Unfortunately, our checks have shown that you're no longer eligible for 30 hours free childcare for <Forename and Surname of child> because:

- <eligibility code response>

However, you may still be able to access 30 hours free childcare for a short period, known as a grace period. You can check what your grace period arrangements are with your childcare provider or local authority.

You can still access the 15 hour universal early education entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

## The link between eligibility and claiming 30 hours

Parents must apply for the extended entitlement through the digital childcare service (not through their local authority or provider). HMRC is responsible for checking whether a parent is eligible and issuing an eligibility code. Providers and local authorities are responsible for verifying (or confirming) eligibility by checking that the parent's code is valid. Local authorities and providers will use the Department for Education's Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) to verify the code (see the graphic on page 8 – 'Provider guide to checking validity of 30 hours eligibility codes').

In contrast to the universal entitlement (which only has an age criterion), parents also need to meet a set of eligibility requirements (i.e. income requirements). A parent can only claim 30 hours once both of these conditions are met, i.e. the term following the child's third birthday and the term following receipt of their eligibility code from HMRC (whichever is the later). Parents should be encouraged to apply the term before their child meets the age criterion to ensure they can access a place at the start of the term after their child turns three. If not, they will need to wait until the following term to access their 30 hours place.

Once a code has been successfully verified, a parent can reserve a place for their child with their provider. The graphic on the next page sets out the code validation process.

Parents who need assistance to apply (or who do not have access to the internet) can call the childcare service Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 123 4097 and apply over the phone. Parents that complete their original application over the phone will need to phone the Customer Interaction Centre to reconfirm their eligibility.



## Provider guide to checking validity of 30 hours eligibility codes



Parents will apply for 30 hours free childcare through the digital **childcare service**. Parents will give you their **30 hours eligibility code** to take up their 30 hours place.

You will need to **validate the code** with your local authority using the DfE Eligibility Checking System (ECS). To do this, you need:

**1**

30 hours code  
(5000xxxxxxx)

**2**

Parent's National  
Insurance Number

**3**

Child's Date of  
Birth

### Contact your LA to validate code

Your LA will have their  
own process for this



OR

### Validate code yourself

Your LA will have their own  
online portal for you to  
use



**Inform parent their code is valid  
and secure 30 hours place**



**Your LA will let you know when a parent is no longer eligible for 30 hours** and tell you when their grace period ends. A parent may also let you know when they are no longer eligible. You only need to take action once **your LA** tells you which parents are no longer eligible.



When parents bring their eligibility code to their provider, they should also bring their child's date of birth and the National Insurance number of the parent who made the application. A partner who is listed on the application may come in place of the applicant and should bring their own National Insurance number. In either case, providers should verify the code.

Before providers verify the code, they will need to get the written consent of the parent or partner. The Department has provided a draft declaration form at Annex A of the Model Agreement, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-early-years-provision-and-childcare-model-agreement>.

Parents may receive eligibility codes before their child is three but they can only start claiming their 30 hours place the term following the child's third birthday or the term following the date the eligibility code was issued (whichever is the later).

If a child is taking up their universal 15 hours entitlement and a parent becomes eligible for 30 hours part-way through the term, the parent can start claiming their additional hours the term following the date on which they received their code. **Parents should be encouraged to apply for the extended entitlement the term before they wish to claim their place.**

Parents cannot claim 30 hours free childcare once their child has reached compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday). Due to the three monthly cycles of reconfirmation, and to allow for those children who do not reach compulsory school age until a while after their child turns five, some parents may still have a code after their child reaches compulsory school age. It is therefore important that providers check the age of the child as well as the code.

Parents cannot claim their 30 hours in addition to a full time reception place in a maintained school or academy. Therefore, parents cannot use their eligibility code to claim their 30 hours if their child is in a full-time reception place.

Here are some illustrative examples.

### **Two and three year olds**

Example 1: Child is two years old, but will be three before next term

The parent's code was issued on 7<sup>th</sup> February and the child's birthday is on 11<sup>th</sup> March. The child can claim their place from 1<sup>st</sup> April.

Example 2: Child is two years old, will be three before next term but parent needs to reconfirm

The parent's code was issued on 20<sup>th</sup> March and the child's birthday is on 10<sup>th</sup> May. The parent will need to reconfirm their eligibility in June (because parents are required to reconfirm eligibility every 3 months). Unless the parent loses their eligibility at reconfirmation, the child can claim their place from 1<sup>st</sup> September.

### **Four year olds**

Example 1: Child will be four years old before next term and will be starting reception

The parent's code was issued on 7<sup>th</sup> April and the child's fourth birthday is on 7<sup>th</sup> May. The provider should ask the parent whether their child will be starting full-time reception in a maintained school or academy from September. If they are, the child will not be able to claim 30 hours with that provider from September as they cannot claim 30 hours in addition to reception.

Example 2: Child will be four years old before next term and will not be starting reception

The parent's code was issued on 10<sup>th</sup> January and child's fourth birthday is on 11<sup>th</sup> March. The child will be able to claim their 30 hours place from 1<sup>st</sup> April. Once, they start reception, the child will not be able to claim free childcare in addition to a full-time reception place in a maintained school or academy.

### **Four and five year olds**

Example 1: Child is in reception

The child's fourth birthday was on 10<sup>th</sup> May (2017) and the parent's code was issued on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2017. If the child is in full-time reception in a maintained school or academy when the code is issued, the child will not be able to claim 30 hours with that provider from September.

Example 2: Child is five but is not of compulsory school age

The parent's code was issued on 18<sup>th</sup> November (2017) and the child's fifth birthday was on 1<sup>st</sup> November of the same year. Whilst they have an eligibility code, the child will reach compulsory school age from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 so they will not be able to claim 30 hours. If the parent had applied the term before their child's fifth birthday (i.e. between April and August 2017) the child would be able to claim 30 hours for one term (September-December) until they reached compulsory school age.

### **What should childcare providers do?**

- Make sure you have obtained written consent from the parent so that you can verify the code.
- Ask parents if their child is already or will be in reception or starting school as they will not be able to claim 30 hours at the same time.

## **What should childcare providers and local authorities do?**

- Encourage parents not to leave it too late to apply – if the parent has a child who will be three before the next term but forgets to apply, they will have to wait until the following term to claim their place.

## Validity checking

Parents wishing to book a 30 hours free childcare place will present the childcare provider with their 30 hours eligibility code. The parent's eligibility code will be 11 digits long and begin with the number '5000'. There might be some circumstances where a parent's code will begin with '11'. These are temporary codes that will allow parents to claim 30 hours for a short period until they can apply through the digital childcare service.

### **What providers will need to verify a parent's 30 hours eligibility code:**

- A 30 hours eligibility code
- The parent's National Insurance number
- The child's date of birth
- The written consent of the parent

The Department for Education provides an Eligibility Checking Service (the ECS) that currently checks eligibility for Free School Meals, Early Years Pupil Premium and the entitlement to early learning for two-year-olds; the ECS has now been adapted to allow local authorities to verify eligibility of children for 30 hours free childcare.

The ECS provides the facility for providers in some areas to check individual records online and a facility to check batches of records.

## Summary of the end to end application process

1. Parents apply through the digital childcare service, or in some circumstances, via the Customer Interaction Centre. If their application is successful, they are given an 11-digit eligibility code (beginning '5000').
2. Parents take their eligibility code to a provider together with their National Insurance number and child's date of birth.
3. The provider verifies the code through their local authority – either by phone or email, or through a provider portal linked to the local authority system. The local authority verifies the code through the ECS.
4. Local authorities should audit the eligibility codes at 6 points in the year to identify children who have fallen out of eligibility (see Table 1, page 17).

The ECS supports the verification of codes as follows:

- A. Every successful application through the childcare service generates an eligibility code which is transmitted, instantaneously, to the ECS. Temporary codes will take one full working day to reach the ECS.

B. ECS checks the validity of codes supplied by local authorities by matching them to codes held in the ECS database.

## ECS Services: Using the ECS to verify codes

Local authorities and providers will need to verify the eligibility codes presented to them by a parent using the ECS. The ECS provides two methods that local authorities can use to verify eligibility codes:

- Web browser
- Web services

The method a provider will use to check the validity of an eligibility code will depend on the method the local authority has in place.

**Web browser** access to the ECS is available through a standard web browser. Checks can be made individually or by bulk upload of a file which lists all the codes with the necessary additional information.

A parent will present their eligibility code, child's date of birth and their National Insurance number to their provider. The provider will get the written consent of the parent to use this information to verify the code. The provider will contact their local authority and submit the code that needs to be checked against the ECS. The local authority staff must perform the check and communicate the outcome to providers.

The ECS **web services** interface allows local authorities to connect local systems to the ECS. The local system provides a portal allowing providers to check codes without needing to contact the local authority.

The provider logs into the portal, enters the eligibility code and receives the earliest start date for the child. They can then add the child to their headcount. The provider should then log in again to update their headcount and enter the number of hours each child has claimed and the payments that are due to them.

Once an eligibility code has been successfully verified, the provider can offer the parent a place and agree a start date.

## When a parent loses eligibility

### The grace period

The grace period enables parents to retain their childcare place for a short period if they become ineligible for 30 hours. The updated statutory guidance (which comes into force from September) outlines the specific grace period cut-off dates.

Parents reconfirm their eligibility around every three months depending on when they first applied for 30 hours. There will be three dates attached to each code (only the local authority and provider sees these dates).

The 'validity start date' is the date on which the parent has applied and been issued a code. The 'validity end date' is the parent's 'deadline' for reconfirming. Their 'grace period' date is the last date on which they should receive their 30 hours place.

The ECS will automatically assign grace period end dates to every eligibility code. When local authorities undertake their audits (see next section), they will inform providers which children are in their grace period (and for how long).

#### Example:

- Child turns three on 3<sup>rd</sup> March; parent successfully applies for 30 hours on 15<sup>th</sup> March (can take up a place from 1<sup>st</sup> April). Parent is issued a code with a validity start date of 15<sup>th</sup> March and end date of 15<sup>th</sup> June.
- Parent is able to reconfirm their eligibility for 30 hours up to four weeks before their validity end date (i.e. from 15<sup>th</sup> May). The parent reconfirms on this date but their circumstances have changed (e.g. job loss) and they are no longer eligible. Therefore, the parent's eligibility ends on 15<sup>th</sup> June.
- The grace period will apply from 16<sup>th</sup> June until 31<sup>st</sup> December.

A grace period will not continue beyond the age that a child has achieved compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday).

### Using the ECS to determine the Grace Period

Local authorities should complete an audit of eligibility codes at a minimum of six fixed points in the year, both at half-term and at the end of term across the year (specific dates are listed in Table 1).

Local authorities will be expected to undertake a batch check of all eligibility codes on or around 22<sup>nd</sup> October. Those local authorities using the ECS web browser will be able to

upload a spreadsheet of all eligibility codes checked to the ECS. The ECS will return which codes are still eligible and those that are no longer eligible, as well as the grace period end date, for all specified codes. Local authorities will need to keep a record of codes checked and remove codes for children who have become ineligible to receive the 30 hours free childcare.

**Table 1 - Grace period dates**

<b>Validity end date:</b>	<b>LA audit date:</b>	<b>Grace Period End date:</b>
1 Jan – 10 February	11 February	31 March
11 Feb – 31 March	1 April	31 August
1 April – 26 May	27 May	31 August
27 May – 31 August	1 September	31 December
1 September – 21 October	22 October	31 December
22 October – 31 December	1 January	31 March

For each individual code, those local authorities who have a local system (a web services interface) will be able to run an automatic check against all known eligibility codes and again, see which codes are still eligible and those that are no longer eligible; and see the grace period end date. They may choose to audit more frequently in order to provide the most up to date picture of eligibility to providers.

## **Further information on the ECS**

The ECS Service desk will supply a copy of the ECS Implementer’s Toolkit on request. This includes the following documentation:

- The ECS User Guide describes the process for local authorities to gain access to the ECS and a complete description of the services provided by the ECS web browser interface and the user’s responsibilities
- The ECS Reference Guide provides answers to a wide range of frequently asked questions regarding the use of the ECS for eligibility checking



## Further information on Tax-Free Childcare

Parents will also be able to apply for Tax-Free Childcare through the digital childcare service. Working parents of children aged under 12 can use Tax-Free Childcare, through the childcare service account, to pay for registered childcare. The Government will top-up the money that parents pay into the account. For every £8 parents pay in, the Government will add an extra £2. Parents can receive £2,000 per child per year, or £4,000 if disabled.

The eligibility criteria for Tax-Free Childcare are broadly aligned with 30 hours free childcare. The main differences are that Tax-Free Childcare is available for children under 12, and is not available to parents in receipt of tax credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers. Parents in receipt of these can choose, as part of the childcare service application, whether they want to keep these benefits and apply for the extended entitlement only, or leave these and apply for Tax-Free Childcare as well as the extended entitlement

To receive Tax-Free Childcare payments, childcare providers need to sign-up. All providers registered with a regulator (e.g. Ofsted) will have received an invitation to apply, and reminder letters. Providers who need assistance with the sign-up process should contact the childcare service Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 123 4097.

# Delivery models and flexibility

## Summary

We recognise that there is no 'one size fits all' approach, and that demand for different types of childcare will vary from area to area and from parent to parent. We encourage local authorities to work closely with their providers to understand demand and develop models of delivery that support the needs of working parents.

Local authorities should encourage providers to deliver flexible packages of free hours within the parameters set out in the statutory guidance, these are:

- no session to be longer than 10 hours
- no minimum session length (subject to the requirements of registration on the Ofsted Early Years Register)
- not before 6.00am or after 8.00pm
- a maximum of two sites in a single day

There will be many delivery models for both the universal and extended entitlements and this guidance does **not** cover all of these. It sets out some options and additional guidance on issues raised by providers. Local authorities and providers are reminded that this guidance does not address how providers operate their private businesses over and above a child's free hours. This is a matter solely between the provider and the parent, providing it does not affect the parent's ability to take-up their child's free place.

## Two sites

Continuity of care is important for the child so local authorities and providers should bear in mind the impact that multiple providers may have on a child's learning, development and wellbeing. Parents can split their free entitlement between multiple providers, though no more than two sites in one day. A child may attend a breakfast club and nursery setting based on one site, but with separate Ofsted registration and this would be defined as one site. The child could also attend a PVI on a different site in the afternoon.

## Partnership working

This section sets out different ways in which providers in different sectors can work in partnership to deliver the entitlements. There are many reasons why providers may choose to work in partnership to deliver free places. Some want to meet the demand amongst their parents for a pattern of free places that they cannot – or do not want to provide. Some want to build a local network of contacts to help them improve their offer to parents. Others want to create new opportunities by joining up with local providers to create a joint offer that is appealing to parents.

### **A partnership between a primary academy Teaching School, a stay and play group offering sensory play, a network of childminders and a university**

This partnership was supported by the Family and Childcare Trust. It was initiated by the school which already had relationships with the others and involves, the stay and play group providing sensory activities for children aged 0 - four years, the childminders regularly bringing and collecting children from the school and the university which delivers teacher training.

The school wants to offer around two-thirds of its nursery places as full time once the 30 hour entitlement begins and wanted to give some additional flexibility for parents. For children, they wanted opportunities within a full day to have sensory, open-ended experiences that enhance the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). For parents, they wanted to coordinate a network of local childminders in order to offer evening and weekend care. For school staff in the nursery, pre-school and holiday provision, they wanted extra support from the university's students on placement and access to new training being developed.

The stay and play group is an emerging local business, created and delivered by one of the parents at the school. The partnership gives her business valuable exposure, more delivery opportunities and the endorsement of a well-respected school. For the childminders, it provides more opportunities and the endorsement of their service by the school. Moreover, the university will benefit from high quality, longer placements for their Early Childhood Studies students.

Schools may want to work with other providers, not only to offer the entitlements in a flexible way, but also to ensure continuity of education and support as children move from early years provision into the reception year. Childminders may be interested in learning from other providers and becoming part of a local network or childminder agency in order to avoid operating in isolation.

### **The Play Den, Swindon – Saturday provision**

The Play Den is a family-owned nursery in Swindon. As an Early Implementer, the nursery is already offering 30 hours free childcare for certain families and is adapting to meet its challenges.

Play Den have held Saturday sessions since January, and families have already shown a lot of interest in receiving this as part of their extended entitlement. Provisionally they will offer a session running from 8am to 2pm. If a parent wants an additional hour outside of a fixed session, the nursery will then charge for the additional hour.

## What are the key features of a partnership?

There is no single model of partnership working that is right for everyone, but there are some common features amongst the partnerships that work well:

- they have children's wellbeing and development at their heart, with the delivery of high quality services as a common focus
- trust between partners is vital - strong working relationships need significant investment of time to establish them
- they share learning and good practice to the benefit of the partnership as a whole
- they involve parents in their development and delivery, to ensure that the offer meets – and continues to meet – their needs
- they use a pool of locally available staff to ensure efficient delivery
- they allow partners to maximise the use of buildings and space across the day and the year

### **The DragonFishers Hub, York**

The DragonFishers Hub is a partnership of two primary schools, a nursery, and 'FunFishers' a breakfast, day and afterschool provider attached to one of the primary schools. The parents of children attending either primary school can drop off and/or collect their children at FunFishers. The children are transferred between the different settings by FunFishers staff throughout the day.

For some parents, this arrangement has enabled them to resume full-time working hours. The close relationship between the providers is important to parents - knowing that their child or children are familiar with the settings, their staff, and the other children gives them the peace of mind to leave them in their joint care throughout the day:

"It has made a big difference to us. Previously my wife only worked part-time and having the facility here has allowed us to both continue in full-time jobs" (Parent using DragonFishers).

York Council said: This type of working has been key to our success in offering 30 hours places and one of the main reasons we have now enabled almost 2,000 children to take up places. Our 'Shared Foundation Partnership' model encourages all providers (school, childminders, day nurseries, playgroups and out of school clubs) in a local area to meet on a regular basis to assess supply and demand, as well as improve quality by sharing good practice. As there are relationships in place they often signpost families to each other when they have vacancies or share hours across 2 or 3 providers. The close geographical proximity of the providers was identified by local stakeholders as a key enabler of blended childcare in practice.

## Establishing a partnership

Often, providers that are interested in partnership working do not know how to get a partnership off the ground or get involved in an existing one. To help with this, in 2016 the Family and Childcare Trust supported a number of new and existing partnerships, and from this developed a practical toolkit that provides advice, templates and examples to help providers to establish and run partnerships. Sections of the toolkit are aimed at different kinds of providers. It has the 30 hours entitlement as its focus, but the principles and guidance are suitable for a wide range of partnerships.

In any partnership, there are challenges and practicalities to address, but the many examples of successful existing partnerships show that they can be overcome and managed.

### **Shared Foundation Partnerships, City of York**

City of York's award winning and well researched 'Shared Foundation Partnerships' model underpins the successful delivery of 30 hours in York. Shared Foundation Partnerships are local networks made up of early years providers – schools, childminders, day nurseries, playgroups, out of school clubs and Local Area Teams. They each meet regularly to work in partnership on three key themes - improving quality for young children, increasing the availability of places and providing flexibility to meet demand from local parents/carers. In total, there are 28 well-established partnerships - meaning every area of the City of York is covered by one of these local networks.

The Shared Foundation Partnerships follow some basic principles on seamless transition, quality of provision, sharing of information and best practice and supporting vulnerability. For the partnerships to perform well there needs to be equal participation, with no single sector dominating and with all interests reflected in local agendas and action planning.

Each partnership is supported by the local authority which offers a bi-annual information focusing on the key themes which helps them complete an annual action plan. In addition, each partnership meeting has a key topic that is reviewed or a practice area, for example; speech and language, moderation and transitions.

Members of the partnerships have identified a wide range of benefits arising from joint working, including sharing good practice, developing relationships, peer to peer support, professional development, improved communications and information sharing, improved support for children with SEND, improved transitions and flexible wraparound care to meet the needs of local families.

As a first step, a provider should talk to the local authority. They should have a good understanding of the pattern of supply and demand for childcare in the local area, and details of any existing partnerships that could be joined. Some will also support and facilitate the creation of new partnerships.

The toolkit can be found at: <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/dfes-30-hour-mixed-model-partnership-toolkit>

We are now building on the aims of the toolkit by offering further support for partnership working, run by Action for Children. The aims of this support are two-fold:

- to develop effective partnerships between childminders and schools to deliver the 30 hours entitlement
- to demonstrate how partnership working can support children's learning and development, high-quality provision and parents' need for flexible provision

The support comprises events and hands-on support and more information will be published shortly on Foundation Years [website](#).

## Full day care delivery models

The model below shows how full day care providers offering 10 hours a day, including schools with wraparound care, can offer the free entitlements in term time only in a sustainable way that works for some parents and maximises provider occupancy. Parents may choose to buy additional hours beyond the 38 weeks at the provider rate (if the provider is open beyond 38 weeks). Using places this way allows a provider to offer five families 30 hours over three days a week instead of three families accessing 30 hours as five 6-hour days. Income from funding increases as there are now five families accessing their 1,140 hours in the three places instead of just three.

### Table key

	Family 1
	Family 2
	Family 3
	Family 4
	Family 5

Places	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10 hour day x 3 days a week					
1					
2					
3					

## Sessional delivery models

This model below illustrates how a parent can use a term time universal session and their extended entitlement flexibly, including provision to stretch across the holidays. This allows the term time provider the option to charge for additional hours in a week whilst ensuring that parents are able to benefit from longer days in term time and across the year through a stretched offer by wraparound care. Table key

	Free entitlement hours
	Parent paid hours
	Mix of free hours and parent paid

8.00 – 9.00	5 hours per week (Mon-Fri)
9.00 – 12.00	15 hours claimed each week for 38 weeks. Parent receives the maximum entitlement across the year of 570 hours.
12.00 – 15.00	Parent has option to pay for additional hours each week for 38 weeks and can benefit from TFC, Universal credit or employee voucher scheme to reduce the costs across any paid for hours.
15.00 – 18.00	12 hours claimed for 47.5 weeks offering a stretched entitlement across the holidays. The out of school provider/childminder is open for more than 38 weeks to provide some free entitlement hours during school holidays and the parent receives the maximum entitlement across the year of 570 hours.
15.00 – 18.00	Parent pays for any additional hours required, over and above the 12 hours claimed and can benefit from TFC, Universal credit or employee voucher scheme to reduce the costs across any paid for hours.

## Childminders

Childminders are a valuable part of the childcare sector and we want to see them play a full role in delivering all of the free entitlements.

Childminders can deliver all of the extended entitlement if that is what suits particular parents. In this case, the childminder can offer the free entitlement at times between



6am and 8pm for a maximum of 10 hours per day, on days to suit both them and the parents. As with all other providers, they should avoid artificial breaks in the day wherever possible. Guidance on stretching the offer, covering weekends or shift work and charging for additional services is set out in later sections. Childminders can also deliver the extended entitlement in partnership with other providers.

### **The Northumberland Church of England Academy Childminder Agency.**

The school serves the community of Ashington and surrounding rural villages in the east of Northumberland and they have been involved in Early Implementation of 30 hours.

They are an all-through academy, with five primary campuses offering provision for children aged two to eleven, a secondary campus, and a special school. They wanted to provide high quality care and learning from birth for the families in their school community. Setting up full day care on any of the five sites was not financially viable due to low numbers. The governors saw the opportunity of a Childminder Agency to provide a service for the families with younger children that reflected the ethos of the Academy and offered the reassurance of high quality early years provision.

“We now have five registered childminders who each offer a bespoke service to the parents in their own communities. Their services include: respite care; full day care for under twos; wraparound care for primary age children and shared provision for children eligible for 30 hours attending our nursery classes.

As there was no capacity to extend our nursery provision to deliver 30 hours, two of our registered childminders are providing the additional fifteen hours for these children in one of our villages. This is a small ex-mining community where the childminders were born and brought up. They heard about the CMA through school and were supported through their training and legislation by the Academy. They are now studying for Early Years Professional qualification. As neither can drive, both of the childminders admit that it would have been very unlikely that they would have found employment or had the confidence to set up their own business without the support of the Academy and the CMA. They are delighted to be offering a service to the community in which they grew up.

There will be several services that childminders can offer as part of a broader package alongside the free hours they are delivering. These will be optional extras that parents can choose to pay for, and, as such, are a matter for the childminder and the parent.

These services could include offering to pick up or deliver children to nursery classes or playgroups outside the free hours, and covering the remaining time that the parent is at work. In addition, childminders may offer an on-call service as part of their offer to parents while the child is at school and needs to be collected unexpectedly. This is a clear additional service that some parents may feel is worth paying for. An example of how this could work is shown below.

<p><b>Before 9am</b> Childminder charges for care, transfer to nursery or playgroup and on-call services</p>	<p><b>9am-12pm</b> Free hours at nursery class or playgroup</p>	<p><b>12pm-3pm</b> Childminder picks up and provides free hours</p>	<p><b>After 3pm</b> Childminder charges for any additional hours needed</p>
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## Schools

Schools are able to deliver the free entitlements in the following ways:

Setting up nursey provision:

- As a community or charitable service (either Section 27 of the Education Act 2002, community powers or charitable objectives in Grant Funding Agreement). These powers allow schools to provide any facilities or services whose provision furthers any charitable purpose for the benefit of families of pupils at the school, or their families or people who live or work in the locality in which the school is situated. Children attending this provision are not usually registered as pupils
- As pupils – schools can register the children as pupils, providing they are within the published age range of the school

Working in partnership with other providers (please see the section on partnership working earlier in the chapter) including:

- childminders registered with Ofsted or a CMA on the Early Years Register
- private or voluntary providers, either on or off-site
- an out-of-school club registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register

As local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure sufficient childcare places, schools should discuss their plans with their local authority. There may be local issues or processes that may influence a governing body's decision.

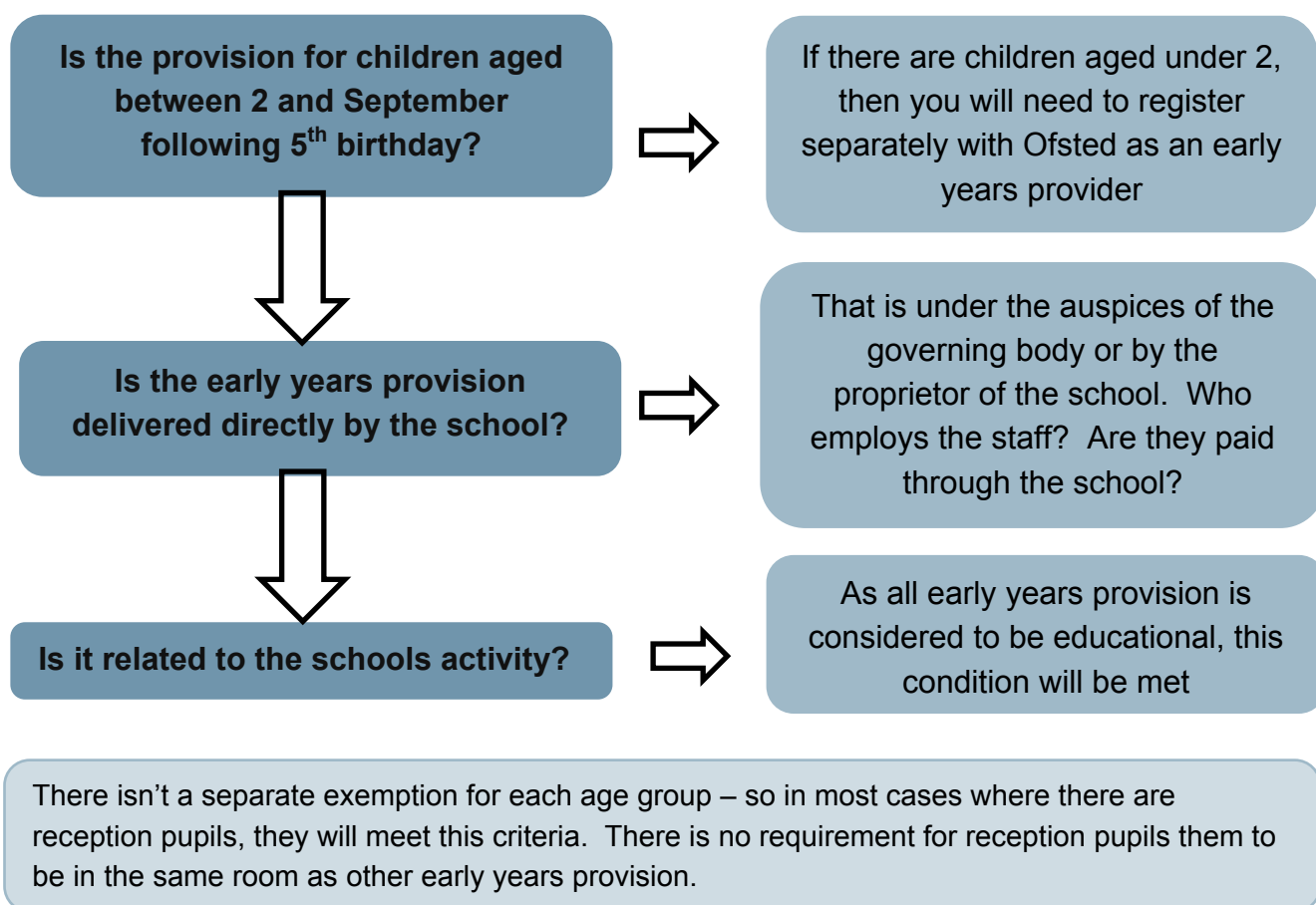
## Does early years provision in a school need to be registered with Ofsted?

If early years provision is set up for pupils, or under a school's community or charitable powers, it is likely that the provision will not need to be separately registered with Ofsted.

In order for a school's early years provision to be exempt from registering their provision separately with Ofsted, it must:

- be delivered directly by the school (that is under the auspices of the governing body)
- be related to the schools' activity
- have all children two or older and
- if it is for more than one child, at least one of the children attending the early years provision must be a pupil of the school. The child does not need to be in the same room as the other early years provision, such as the reception class

If a school's early years provision meets the criteria for exemption from registration with Ofsted, it should not be registered on the Early Years Register. The criteria for a school's exemption from registration are set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and you can find more details in this [document](#) from Ofsted. However, in summary, the process is:



	<b>Maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in maintained schools</b>	<b>Maintained school governor-run (s27) provision</b>	<b>Academies, Free schools and Independent schools</b>
<b>Delivery of EYFS to receive funding</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes*
<b>Inspection</b>	Ofsted	Ofsted (as part of the main school inspection)	Ofsted
<b>Ratios and qualifications</b>	<p><b>Ratio 1:13</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One member of staff must be 'school teacher'***</li> <li>• At least one other member of staff must have L3</li> <li>• Qualifications of additional staff left to provider</li> </ul>	<p>If <b>no</b> registered pupils are present and QTS, EYPS or EYT or other suitable L6 working directly with children then: <b>ratio 1:13</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One member holding relevant L6</li> <li>• At least one other member of staff must have L3</li> </ul> <p>If no listed L6 present, then <b>ratio 1:8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One member holding relevant L3</li> <li>• At least half of all other staff must hold relevant L2</li> </ul>	<p>If QTS, EYPS or EYT or other suitable L6 working directly with children then <b>ratio 1:13</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One member holding relevant L6</li> <li>• At least one other member of staff must have L3</li> </ul> <p>If no listed L6 present, then <b>ratio 1:8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One member holding relevant L3</li> <li>• At least half of all other staff must hold relevant L2</li> </ul>
<b>Census</b>	School census	School census - registered pupils Early years census - children who are not registered pupils	School census – academies and free schools Early years census – independent school

\* Some independent schools may have exemptions from some or all of the EYFS Learning and Development (L & D) requirements because of a direction made by the Secretary of State. Providers with exemptions from the L & D requirements should be funded to deliver free places if they meet the quality requirements and any local authority requirements. There are no exemptions from the EYFS welfare requirements.

\*\* Schools may wish to consider dropping to a ratio of 1:8 with at least one member of staff holding a full and relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff holding a full and relevant level 2 qualification for provision in nursery classes delivered outside the standard two session school day.

### **Maintained schools: Governor-run nurseries**

Where provision is set up under Section 27 of the Education Act (community powers) then the governing body can use the ratios and qualification requirements set out for early years providers. In this case they can use either 1:8 or 1:13 ratio staffed appropriately, but must deliver the learning and development part of the EYFS at all times.

This flexibility (to operate with a Level 3 leading provision) will only apply where the children are not registered pupils – so it will only apply to community provision. Schools will be able to choose which staffing model is most appropriate to their situation. Once a child is a registered pupil, then that is their status. For example, it is not possible for a child to be a pupil in the morning and a non-pupil in the afternoon.

We expect that as the governor-run early years provision is part of the school, and will be inspected as part of the school, that the head and governing body will ensure that the provision is adequately supervised and run, even if a school teacher is not working directly with the children.

# Charging models

## Summary

The purpose of this section is to further clarify what is in statutory guidance and to provide information on different charging models which providers may want to consider. Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that all eligible children can take up their free entitlement place completely free of charge and that providers' charging policies enable this.

Government funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of free, high quality, flexible childcare. It is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional hours or optional activities. Providers can charge for meals and snacks, consumables and optional activities as part of the free entitlement delivery, as long as parents are not required to pay as a condition of taking up their child's free entitlement place. Where parents choose to purchase additional hours of provision or optional activities, this is a private matter between the provider and the parent.

## Access to free places

Private, voluntary and independent providers are free to set their own criteria for the admission of children, providing they comply with relevant equalities and non-discriminatory legislation. However, all parents should have the same rights to access a free entitlement place, regardless of whether they choose to pay for additional hours of provision, optional activities or meals. Parents should also not have to reserve a place each term.

Providers should ensure that their admissions information is clear and accessible for parents, for example, by publishing the number of standalone 15 and 30 hours places they offer to enable parents to make an informed decision on where to access their entitlement. Providers should ensure that they are completely clear and transparent about which hours / sessions can be taken as free provision and this should be consistent for all parents taking up free hours. Providers should also ensure they have clear invoicing structure in place for parents.

## Written agreement

Providers should have a written agreement with all parents that take up a free entitlement place. Annex A in the model agreement is an example of a written agreement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-early-years-provision-and-childcare-model-agreement>. Providers may choose to have a separate agreement for those parents who also choose to pay for additional hours, meals and/or optional activities. To

ensure that parents can make informed decisions on their choice of childcare, providers should publish a statement of how they deliver the free entitlement and any additional charges for optional activities outside of the entitlement. Charges should be set out clearly for parents who pay for meals and/or optional activities. A parent signature on the agreement demonstrates the optional nature of the additional charges. Providers can also set out in the agreement the hours during which they will offer the free entitlements and their charges for hours outside of this.

## Lunch

Children should be able to take up their free hours as part of continuous provision and providers should avoid artificial breaks in the day wherever possible. For example, the lunch time hour/session should form part of the free provision where the child is attending a morning and afternoon session. Providers may wish to offer additional hours around the free provision hours, as set out in the model below.

Providers can charge for meals and snacks as part of their delivery of the free entitlement as long as parents are not required to pay as a condition of taking up their child’s free entitlement place. Providers may give parents other options including waiving or reducing the cost of meals and snacks, or allowing parents to bring in a packed lunch. (Please also see the ratio and qualifications requirements for schools on page 30.)

## Sessional provider example

This model ensures that a child can access their free entitlement across the core day whilst lunch, optional activities and additional hours can still be charged for without a break in the middle of the day.

Paid for childcare					
Am	3 hours	3 hours	3 hours	3 hours	3 hours
Pm	3 hours	3 hours	3 hours	3 hours	3 hours
Paid for childcare					

### **30 hours stretched over 51 weeks - ABC Day Nursery – Telford**

ABC Day Nursery Ltd is a small chain of four nurseries based in Telford offering a stretched model of 22.3 hours over 51 weeks, Monday – Friday which can be taken between 7.30am and 6pm.

The nursery looked at children currently taking the 15 hours universal entitlement who were also paying for additional hours, and consulted with parents to develop a stretched offer.

This stretched model allows working parents to take up their free provision across the full year, whilst providers can also charge parents for additional hours each week to enable parents to work full time.

Working parents wanting 30 hours childcare a week are able to access their entitlement over 3 x 10 hour days, 22.3 hours of which are funded and 7.7 hours which are paid for each week over 51 weeks, making school holidays affordable and accessible. Parents are happy to pay for additional hours per week, as the ability to stretch places less strain on family finances, and allows their child to access continuous provision in a high-quality setting.

## **Deposits**

Providers can charge a refundable deposit to parents accessing the free entitlements for two-, three- and four-year olds, for both the universal entitlement and the extended entitlement. The purpose of the deposit is to give providers certainty that a parent will take up the place. Local authorities should work with providers to determine a reasonable timescale for refunding deposits to parents. Local authorities and providers should make clear to parents that if a parent fails to take up their place, the provider is not obliged to refund the deposit. Local authorities can use their discretion to determine if charging a deposit will prevent take-up, for example, for the two-year-old entitlement for disadvantaged families.

## **On-call services**

As set out on page 27, childminders may offer an on-call service as part of their offer to parents while the child is in a setting and needs to be collected unexpectedly, if the parent wants to take their free hours this way.



## SEND

The Government is committed to promoting equality and inclusion for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) by removing barriers which prevent children from accessing free places and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential.

Local authorities and providers must ensure that they meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010<sup>1</sup> and take full account of the SEND Code of Practice 0-25<sup>2</sup> when securing and providing free places.

We want all early years staff to feel confident that they can support a child with SEND to access and enjoy their early years setting. Our recently published workforce strategy<sup>3</sup> sets out how we will support staff to offer good quality provision to children with SEND.

This includes:

- Funding a range of training and development opportunities through VCS grants including development of training and online resources
- Working with organisations specialising in SEND to develop a qualification for early years staff who want to specialize in SEND. We will work within the context of the Sainsbury Review of technical education and aim to deliver a new qualification in 2018.

There are good examples up and down the country of providers and local authorities working with children, parents, health and social work professionals, and others to ensure that children with SEND are able to access and get the best from their free place. We have highlighted some examples in the section below, including from 30 hours Early Innovator local authorities.

To put providers and local authorities in a stronger position to deliver 30 hours, we have announced and consulted on two new models for allocating additional funding to support children with SEND:

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<sup>1</sup> See legal annex to 30 hours statutory guidance - [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/596460/early\\_education\\_and\\_childcare\\_statutory\\_guidance\\_2017.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596460/early_education_and_childcare_statutory_guidance_2017.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/350685/Early\\_Years\\_Guide\\_to\\_SEND\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice\\_-\\_02Sept14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/350685/Early_Years_Guide_to_SEND_Code_of_Practice_-_02Sept14.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-workforce-strategy>

- a new targeted £12.5m Disability Access Fund to support disabled children to access the free entitlements, equivalent to £615 per child per year
- a requirement for local authorities to set up a local inclusion fund to support providers to secure better outcomes for children with SEN

Additional information and guidance on these new funding reforms is available at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/580716/EY\\_NFF\\_Operational\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/580716/EY_NFF_Operational_Guidance.pdf)

## Case studies

Below are examples of good practice in developing local SEND strategies, workforce development and culture, and engaging and informing parents.

Providers and local authorities may also wish to access the 'SEND and disability in the early years toolkit', produced by the Council for Disabled Children and Action4Children, available on the Foundation Years website.<sup>4</sup>

### Case Study 1

#### Developing local SEND strategies – “20:20 Vision for SEND” - Northamptonshire

To fully engage young people and their families in the development of a SEND strategy Northamptonshire held a series of events across three days in March 2017. They invited partners from across the local area, including young people and families, to start a conversation on the future for SEND in Northamptonshire and to co-produce the SEND strategy for the next 3 to 5 years.

They held four events, spread over three days, designed to cover the whole range of SEND services across age groups. 35 percent of places at each event were reserved for young people and parents with the remaining places open to professionals. Prior to the events they sent a series of questionnaires to parent support groups, schools and youth groups asking for up-to-date feedback on key questions such as 'what is currently working well?' and 'what would be better if?'

This information enabled Northamptonshire's planning groups to organise events around the key themes identified. Each event was organised by a planning group consisting of representatives from across the local area partnership with essential participation from

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2015/06/sen-and-disability-in-the-early-years-toolkit/>

the local parent forum group and Shooting Stars, a Northamptonshire support group for young people with learning disabilities.

Across the four events, 396 young people, parents and professionals met to discuss the future for SEND in the county. Northamptonshire will continue to communicate regularly with the new network they have created to continue the debate and refine the priorities to be included in the new SEND strategy. They are planning a further event at the end of June for participants to agree the strategy and to discuss how it can be implemented and reviewed effectively. All the information from the events is available online here:

<http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/SEND/local-offer/Pages/2020-Vision.aspx>.

### **Impact:**

Of those engaged, 25 percent were young people or parents – a good start towards Northamptonshire’s target of 35 percent.

Feedback from all the events showed that engagement was constructive and inclusive. Northamptonshire found that their event format worked; an introduction by young people and parents followed by 20 minutes of focussed discussion provided them with a wealth of information to draw on to start preparing their strategy.

Overall, Northamptonshire are aiming to co-produce a strategy which will be regularly used and reviewed by all local area partners. They are considering how they can use the format of these events to support the co-production of other significant improvement strategies.

## **Case Study 2**

### **Workforce development and culture - pooling inclusion funding across settings to provide high quality SEND support - Telford and Wrekin**

ABC Day Nursery is a small chain of nurseries based in Telford. The nurseries are situated in Hoo Farm Animal Kingdom, Hollinswood Primary School, Lightmoor Village, and Hadley Learning Community. All four nurseries have consistently been rated Outstanding by Ofsted.

The owner of ABC Day Nursery has worked to create a culture of inclusion for every child. Members of staff are encouraged not to see SEND as a barrier, and receive in-house and external training to ensure that they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to support every child’s needs. The settings ensure that every child feels included and that they do not become dependent on one member of staff. This means

that when the child's key person is not in the room, on holiday or off sick, the child remains included and other staff are able to support their needs. Care of staff is very important and staff are supported by their colleagues to ensure they can manage the needs of children with SEND in the setting.

The settings combine their inclusion funding to employ an in-house early years qualified area SENCO. The area SENCO oversees the work of the SENCO in each setting. Each local SENCO is also the lead practitioner. The area SENCO attends SEND training and cascades this to all the staff in the setting. They also provide CPD for each setting's SENCO. The area SENCO works with local health professionals to organise training; for example, on how to support a 2 year old, who is tube fed and has complex physical and mental needs.

### **Impact**

Ofsted reported in 2015 that 'the staff adopt an inclusive approach to their work and the uniqueness of all children and families is respected'.

The 2 year old who is tube fed, receives consistent support from all practitioners in the setting for her needs. This allows her to access an all-round curriculum and to develop through exploration and discovery. This contact with her peers has promoted her social interaction and language use. Her personal, social and emotional development is appropriate to her age, and her SEND support is appropriate to her needs.

Parents of children with SEND at ABC Nursery settings stated that they have the trust, confidence and the opportunity to consider either continuing with their work, or returning to work.

The time invested initially with the area SENCO ensures that training is then cascaded to all staff across the four settings, saving health professionals' time in the longer term.

## **Case Study 3**

### **Engaging Parents - Partnership Inclusion Offer - City of York**

City of York Council is trialling a new Partnership Inclusion Offer with a small number of their Shared Foundation Partnerships (for details on these partnerships, see page 20). The Offer gathers together in one place useful information relating to SEND from all members of a Shared Foundation Partnership in a given local area. The aim is to improve the confidence of parents of children with SEND to access childcare by

improving the information available to them on how local providers can work together to meet their child's needs.

The Partnership Inclusion Offer collates information into a clear standardised format. It includes:

- members of the Shared Foundation Partnership
- SENCOs
- other partners
- staff qualifications and experience
- transitions arrangements
- resources that may be shared across the partnership

The Partnership Inclusion Offer is made available on provider websites for parents to access. It will be reviewed by a Partnership SENCO on an annual basis.

**Impact:**

The impact of the Partnership Inclusion Offer is currently being assessed by City of York.

# School Census and Early Years Census

## Summary

This section explains regulations underpinning the schools and early years census and focuses on the changes to data collected.

## Legislation

Regulations made under section 99 of the Childcare Act 2006 (The Childcare (Provision of Information About Young Children) (England) Regulations) require all providers delivering free provision to children aged under five to provide data on children in their care to the Secretary of State their local authority when requested to do so. The information about individual children that must be provided is set out in Schedule 2 of the regulations.

Private, voluntary and independent providers who deliver free entitlement places should complete the early years census. This includes independent schools, childminders registered with Ofsted and childminders registered with a childminder agency which is itself registered with Ofsted.

Maintained nursery schools, maintained schools, academies and free schools complete the school census.

Schools with on-site early years free provision make their return via either the school census or the early years census, as appropriate for the individual children attending the setting. This paragraph describes which census is used to return data on children receiving the free entitlements.

- registered pupils of the school (2, 3 and 4-year-olds depending on the statutory age range of the school) are recorded via the school census (and not the early years census)
- children (aged 2, 3 and 4) attending a separate Ofsted registered PVI provider on a school site, are recorded via the early years census (and not the school census) and this should be completed by the provider not the school.
- children attending s27 (governor run) provision should be either:
  - recorded via the school census where they are registered pupils of the school (can include 2-year-olds if the school's statutory age range covers 2-year-olds); or
  - recorded via the early years census where they are not registered pupils of the school

## Changes to data collection for 2017 – 2018

### School census

For children in receipt of the free entitlement the school census will collect data on children in early years and nursery year groups:

- who are taking up the universal 15 hours free entitlement and separately the additional 15 hours of free provision (the extended free entitlement) including the child's eligibility code;
- whether a child is in receipt of Disability Access Funding from the local authority

Pupils aged 4 at the start of the academic year in reception year groups and above are funded via the schools block of the dedicated schools grant and therefore the school census will not collect information about the extended entitlement, the eligibility code or Disability Access Funding for those children.

### Early years census

The early years census will collect data on:

- children who are taking up the universal 15-hour free entitlement and separately the additional 15 hours of free provision (the extended free entitlement) including the child's eligibility code;
- whether a child is in receipt of Disability Access Funding from the local authority except for children taking up their free entitlement in independent school reception classes.

The early years census will also collect new data items on provider opening and closing times and staff qualifications.

### Children splitting provision between providers

Where parents split their child's free entitlement between providers, local authorities and / or providers will need to distinguish between the 15 hours universal entitlement and the additional 15 hours extended entitlement in order to accurately record take-up in the school census and the early years census. Local authorities may wish to use the parental declaration form to enable parents to indicate at which provider they are taking the universal 15 hours free entitlement and, where appropriate, pass this information onto the provider. Local authorities should take account of the statutory guidance which is clear that, if a parent ceases to meet the eligibility criteria for 30 hours, the parent may choose which provider they continue to take up their child's universal 15 hours entitlement as long as the child meets the age criteria (i.e. they are under compulsory school age).

## The January census and calculation of the Dedicated Schools Grant

Local authority Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations are calculated using **January** school and early years census data. Early years providers and schools provide data on the number of children taking up free entitlement places and the number of hours of free provision. In 2018, Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January will be census day.

The early years census collects data on all children receiving provision which is funded by the department during census week (the week in which Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January falls). The school census collects data on all children who were registered pupils of the school on census day (Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January) irrespective of whether they were physically expected to attend the school on census day.

If a child would normally be taking up free hours in census week but is absent e.g. because of sickness, the child should still be recorded on the census return as being in receipt of the free provision.

Similarly, if a child is registered at a school on census day but is only expected to attend that school for part of the week which does not include census day, the child should still be recorded on the census return as being in receipt of free hours.

If a provider would normally be open and delivering free places to children but is closed during census week due to exceptional circumstances, e.g. severe bad weather, the provider can still make a census return for the children who would have been taking up free hours had the provider not been closed.

Local authorities must fund children who are eligible for the childcare entitlements.

Local authorities must base its allocation to providers on the predicted total number of hours of attendance (of eligible children).

During the course of the financial year, local authorities must review and re-determine the allocations to providers when further information about hours of attendance becomes available.

DSG allocations to local authorities are based on census results. Further information on completion of the school census is available [here](#) and information on the early years census is available [here](#).

Further information on how the data collected in the school census and early years census is used in the calculation of the dedicated schools grant can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2016-to-2017>





Department  
for Education

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