



Department
for Education

Early years entitlements: operational guidance

For local authorities and providers

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Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to help local authorities and providers understand in more detail the Department for Education's (DfE) 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). Local authorities and providers will find all our case studies and helpful tools on the Childcare Works [website](#).

Summary

This publication provides operational guidance from the DfE. 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. This guidance should be read alongside the [statutory guidance](#) for local authorities on the provision of early education and childcare.

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

What are the main changes to the Guidance?

Following feedback from local authorities, providers and sector organisations, we have re-ordered and clarified the text throughout the guidance. In addition, we have updated the sections on local authority audit process and the Chapters on Eligibility and Charging. We have reflected new information in some of the case studies.

Eligibility, application and validity checking processes for 30 Hours Free Childcare (the Extended Entitlement)

Summary

Summary of the end-to-end application process:

- Parents apply through the digital childcare service, or in some circumstances, by phone using the childcare service Customer Interaction Centre. If their application is successful, they are given an 11-digit eligibility code (beginning '500').
- Parents take their eligibility code to a provider for verification, together with their National Insurance number and child's date of birth.
- 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 DfE's Eligibility Checking Service (ECS).
- Local authorities should audit the eligibility codes at 6 points in the year to identify children who have fallen out of eligibility.

Parents will be prompted every three months to reconfirm that they remain eligible. If they are no longer eligible for 30 hours, they will enter a grace period and will be able to retain their place for a short period.

Parents can only start claiming a 30 hours place for their three or four year old **the term following the date they receive a decision from HMRC**. Therefore, they should be encouraged to apply in good time. Providers will need to verify the code before a child take up their place.

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 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 our guide at <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 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.

Parents need to check with their childcare provider or local authority whether their two year old is eligible for a free 15 hour place.

What can local authorities and 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 are likely to be eligible and how to apply.
- Use our 30 hours Eligibility Guide to help parents understand if they are eligible. You can download a copy at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility>.
- **Providers should urge parents to bring their code to their provider as soon as they receive it.**
- **Local authorities should encourage their providers to verify parent codes as rapidly as possible.**
- **Local authorities should remind providers that a parent cannot take up their 30 hours place until the code has been verified.**
- Reassure parents who do not want to use Tax-Free Childcare that they should still apply for 30 hours via the digital childcare service. If they are receiving financial support through tax credits and childcare vouchers 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 or the 2 year old offer.

Digital Childcare Service

Application: How do parents apply for 30 hours (extended entitlement)?

Parents should apply via the childcare service. They will be asked to:

1. Create a Government Gateway account if they do not already have one. If they do, they will need to sign into Government Gateway to verify their identity before accessing the childcare service. Parents can find details and instructions on how to register for a Government Gateway account at [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).
2. Once in the childcare service, enter their personal details including their name, address and National Insurance number and the same details for their partner (if they have one).
3. Declare that they expect to meet the income requirements over the coming three months.
4. Declare whether they are in receipt of any relevant benefits.

Having completed their application, if eligible, parents will:

5. Have a childcare service account. In the “secure messages” section of their account, parents will receive messages regarding their eligibility.
6. Be given an 11 digit ‘eligibility code’ for their child – this can be found in the ‘30 hours free childcare’ section of their childcare service account (see Image A) and in their ‘secure messages’ section (see Image B). These codes normally start with ‘500’. However, there are a small number of cases where parents might have a temporary code starting with ‘11’.
7. Be asked to take this code (along with their National Insurance number and child’s date of birth) to their provider to reserve their 30 hours place.

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.

If parents encounter any problems during the application process or accessing their childcare service account, they should direct their queries to the childcare service Customer Interaction Centre. Local authorities and providers should direct parents to the childcare service guidance pages in the first instance. The telephone number can be found under ‘Get help’.

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

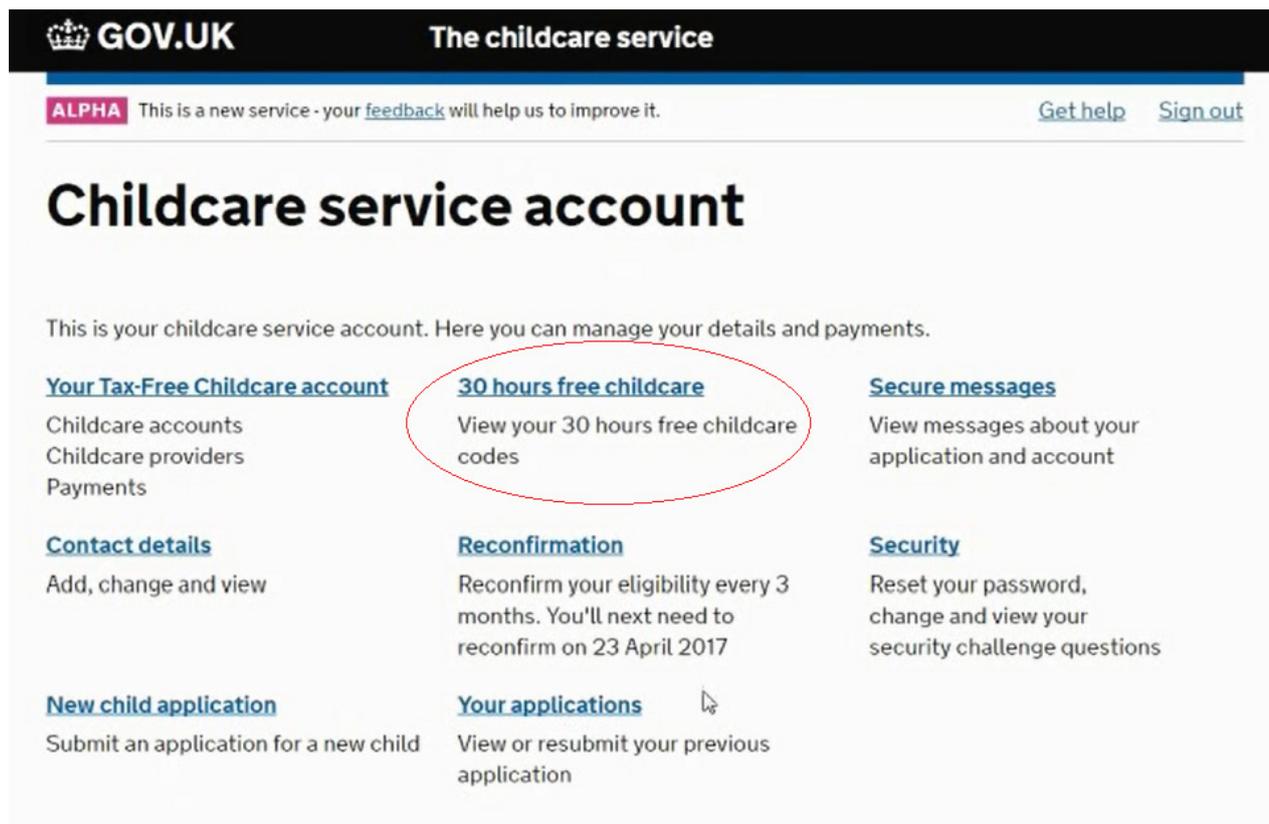
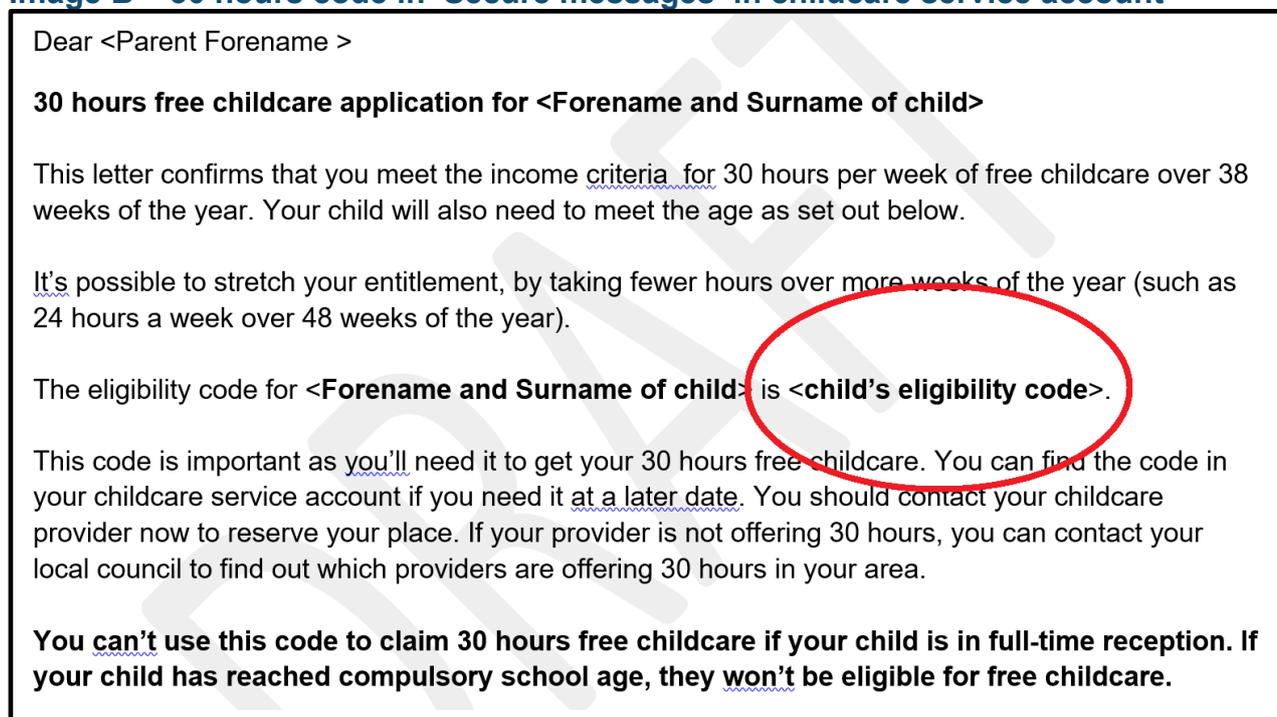


Image B – 30 hours code in ‘Secure messages’ in childcare service account



Reconfirmation Process

Every three months parents will need to reconfirm that the details they entered on their application are still accurate (see Image C). 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 have not reconfirmed. This prompt will tell them that they have a secure message to read. This message will remind them to reconfirm and can be found in the 'Secure messages' section of their childcare account. If their circumstances have changed, they will log into their childcare service account, amend and then resubmit their details. If their circumstances have not changed, they only need to tick a box saying that their details have not changed. Parents that completed their original application over the phone will need to phone the Customer Interaction Centre to reconfirm their eligibility. Temporary codes beginning '11' expire and so parents will reconfirm by completing a childcare service application online. Parents will need to reconfirm regardless of whether their child has started their 30 hours place.

Image C – Reconfirmation message

Childcare service: reminder to reconfirm your eligibility

To continue getting Tax-Free Childcare or 30 hours free childcare, you must check and reconfirm your details with us by **<end date for reconfirmation>**.

You can do this in your childcare service account, go to www.childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk It's easy to do and will only take a few minutes.

If you don't reconfirm

Tax-Free Childcare - you can still use your childcare service account to pay your childcare provider but you won't get any further government contribution paid into it.

30 hours free childcare – your entitlement to 30 hours free childcare will stop. You'll need to contact your local authority to find out when your entitlement will end.

For more information on Tax-Free Childcare or 30 hours free childcare

Go to www.childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk

If parents miss the reconfirmation deadline, or if their circumstances change, they will receive a message telling them that their eligibility has lapsed. Although they are no longer eligible, they will 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.

Image D – 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.

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

If a parent becomes eligible again for 30 hours after they have fallen out of eligibility, they will need to complete present another childcare service application and present **their code to their provider again for verification**. If the same parent completes this application, they will receive the same eligibility code for that child.

What should childcare providers do?

- Remind parents to bring their eligibility code, along with their National Insurance number and child's date of birth, to them as soon as possible as parents will not be able to take up a place until the code has been verified.
- Remind parents that they need to reconfirm when prompted by HMRC.
- Verify codes promptly so that you can reserve a place for parents who you know are eligible.

The difference between applying for 30 hours (extended entitlement) and 15 hours (universal entitlement)

Parents must apply for 30 hours free childcare through the digital childcare service or, in some circumstances, directly with the childcare service Customer Interaction Centre, **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 DfE's Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) to verify the code (see the graphic on page 14 – 'Provider guide to checking validity of 30

hours eligibility codes'). Parents wanting only to claim the universal 15 hours entitlement should do so via their provider and local authority and not through the digital childcare service.

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 take up 30 hours once both of these conditions are met: a child starts the term following, their third birthday and the term following receipt of their eligibility code from HMRC, whichever is 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. Please note that the earliest a parent could receive a 30 hours code for their child will be 16 weeks before they turn three years old. If a parent applies before this point, they will need to wait until reconfirmation before applying for 30 hours.

Like the universal 15 hours entitlement, parents cannot claim 30 hours free childcare once their child has reached compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday). Please note the latest a parent could receive a 30 hours code is 22 weeks after the child turns five. 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 state-funded school.

We recommend that providers do not sign an agreement with parents until they have verified both the age of the child and the validity of the code.

Here are some illustrative examples of when children can claim their entitlements, and when they cannot.

Two and three year olds

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

If the parent's code was issued on 7th February and the child's birthday is on 11th March, the child can take up their place from 1st April.

Example 2: Child is two years old, will be three before next term but parent needs to reconfirm because the parent's code was issued on 20th March and the child's birthday is on 10th 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 1st 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 7th April and the child's fourth birthday is on 7th May. The provider should ask the parent whether their child will be starting full-time reception in a state-funded school 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 10th January and child's fourth birthday is on 11th March. The child will be able to claim their 30 hours place from 1st 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 state-funded school.

Four and five year olds

Example 1: Child is in reception

The child's fourth birthday was on 10th May and the parent's code was issued on 27th September. 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 18th November (2017) and the child's fifth birthday was on 1st November of the same year. Whilst they have an eligibility code, the child will reach compulsory school age from 1st 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.

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.

Providers verifying 30 hours eligibility codes



Parents will apply for 30 hours free childcare using the childcare service online application. Parents will give you their 30 hours eligibility code to reserve their 30 hours place.



You will need to **validate the code** with your local authority. To do this, you need from the parent:

1

30 hours code

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 can take up 30 hours place



Your LA will let you know when a parent is no longer eligible for 30 hours and give you a grace period. Your parents may also let you know when this occurs.



Verification of Codes for 30 Hours (Extended Entitlement)

Parents wishing to reserve a 30 hours place will present the childcare provider with their 30 hours eligibility code. The parent's eligibility code will be 11 digits long and usually begin with the number '500'. 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.

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. Providers only need to verify the code against either the applicant or the partner listed on the application, not both.

Before providers verify the code with the local authority, they will need to get the written consent of the parent or partner whose information is being checked. The Department has provided a sample parental 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>.

The DfE provides an Eligibility Checking Service (ECS), which currently checks eligibility for Free School Meals, the 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.

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

- A 30 hours eligibility code
- The parent or partner's National Insurance number
- The child's date of birth
- The written consent of the parent/partner whose details are being used

ECS Services: Using the ECS to verify codes

The ECS supports the verification of codes as follows:

- A. Every successful 30 hours application through the childcare service generates an eligibility code that 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.

The ECS provides two methods that local authorities can use to verify eligibility codes:

- Web browser
- Web services

It is crucial that parents take their codes to providers as early as possible in the term before they wish to take up a place. Otherwise, the parent cannot be certain that they have reserved a place with that provider. The method a provider will use to check the validity of an eligibility code will depend on the systems 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.

The local authority staff must perform the check and communicate the outcome to providers including the code's validity start date.

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. After the parent has presented their eligibility code, the necessary evidence and the provider has obtained written consent, the provider logs into the portal, enters the eligibility code and receives the code's validity start date for the child.

Once an eligibility code has been successfully verified, the provider can confirm the parent's place and agree the start date. Providers should then add the child to their headcount. The provider should update their local authority on changes to headcount and the number of hours they have agreed with the parent.

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.

If a parent falls into their grace period before their child has started a 30 hours place, they should not take up their 30 hours place.

Parents reconfirm their eligibility every three months. The first reconfirmation may differ slightly depending on the parent's circumstances. . Parents will receive messages about reconfirming their eligibility in the 'Secure messages' section of their childcare account.

The 'validity start date' is the date on which the parent has applied and been issued with 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 and is generated by the ECS.

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 3rd March; parent successfully applies for 30 hours on 15th March (can take up a place from 1st April). Parent is issued a code with a validity start date of 15th March and end date of 21st June.
- Parent is able to reconfirm their eligibility for 30 hours up to four weeks before their validity end date (i.e. from 24th 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 21st June.
- The grace period will apply from 21st June until 31st December.

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

Using the ECS to determine the Grace Period

Local authorities should complete audits of eligibility codes during the year. Authorities can then prompt providers to inform parents when they will lose funding for their child's place. They can also ensure that children do not start places during the grace period.

The statutory guidance specifies that local authorities should complete an audit check on eligibility codes at six fixed points in the year as set out in the table of LA audit dates. Authorities can determine whether children were eligible or in the grace period on the start of term audit dates in advance of the specified date, because HMRC will not issue validity end dates between 23rd of month and 6th of the following month.

Local authorities can determine whether children were eligible or in the grace period at the mid-term audit date after the audit date.

Therefore, we suggest as a minimum local authorities complete an audit of previously verified codes during the windows show in Table 1. This table is intended to complement the audit dates as set out in the statutory guidance. It will also assist local authorities manage a range of dates that they may see when carrying out an audit.

Table 1 – Suggested local authority audit dates

Audit	LA audit date from statutory guidance	Suggested LA audit window	Validity end dates	Grace Period End date
Spring: Mid-term	11 February	11 – 18 February	1 Jan – 10 February	31 March
Summer: Start of term	1 April	24 March - 1 April	11 Feb – 31 March	31 August
Summer: Mid-term	27 May	27 May – 2 June	1 April – 26 May	31 August
Autumn: Start of term	1 September	24 August - 1 September	27 May – 31 August	31 December
Autumn: Mid-term	22 October	22 October – 29 October	1 September – 21 October	31 December
Spring: Start of term	1 January	24 December - 6 January	22 October – 31 December	31 March

Note: HMRC will not issue validity end dates which fall between the 23rd month and 6th of the following month inclusive.

At the start-of-term audit, local authorities should:

- Identify children who may have reserved a 30 hours place with a valid code but are now in the grace period. These children cannot take up their place. Providers should be advised accordingly.

At the mid-term audit, local authorities should:

- Identify children in a 30 hours place who are now ineligible and should stop before the start of the next term.
- Advise providers that the place should be stopped at the end of term (because the child will have finished their grace period). The provider can confirm this to the parent.

The exact dates that local authorities use, and how frequently they audit, can be decided locally.

Local systems (which access ECS via the web services interface) will be able to run an automatic check against all previously verified eligibility codes and will associate codes with relevant providers. If local authorities use the ECS web browser, they will need to keep a record of codes verified and which providers are relevant so they can undertake a batch check and communicate the results to the right providers.

Further information on the ECS

Local authorities can obtain more information on the ECS from the ECS Service Desk and via the ECS LA Portal. The following documentation is available:

- 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, or 17 if disabled, can use Tax-Free Childcare 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, or 17 if disabled, 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 30 hours free childcare only, or leave these and apply for Tax-Free Childcare as well as 30 hours free childcare. Parents can use Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare at the same time.

Childcare providers need to sign-up to the childcare service in order to receive Tax-Free Childcare payments. 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 parents and 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
- not before 6.00am or after 8.00pm
- a maximum of two sites in a single day
- meet the quality requirements as set out in regulations and in the statutory guidance
- no artificial breaks

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.

Minimum Requirements of Sessions

As set out in the statutory guidance, there is no minimum session length. However, providers must be registered (or be schools that are exempt from registration) on the Ofsted Early Years Register (EYR) or with a Childminder Agency which is registered with Ofsted. In order to register, a provider must care for an individual child for more than two hours in a single day.

Local authorities should ensure that, providers are registered on the EYR or are exempt from this, that the free entitlement sessions are no longer than 10 hours and delivered between 6 am and 8 pm.

As set out in regulations, in order to receive funding to deliver free places providers must be either:

- registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register
- registered with a childminding agency which is registered with Ofsted

- schools taking children aged two and over which are exempt from registration with Ofsted as an early years providers

Providers must deliver the full Learning and Development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) unless:

- they are an independent school which has met the quality requirement (most recent Ofsted inspection judgement is “good” or better) and notified the Secretary of State that they intend to take up exemption from the Learning and Development requirement; or
- the Department has granted an exemption from one or more of the Learning and Development requirements on the grounds that the provider’s established principles cannot be reconciled with one or more of the Learning and Development requirements.

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.

Example

A child may attend a breakfast club based on the school site in the morning, followed by nursery class and then move to a childminder at lunchtime. This would still class as two sites, even though the child could be attending three different providers.

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

The Family and Childcare Trust supported this partnership. 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 hours 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.

Strong local partnerships are the basis for effective local partnerships. Schools can 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 can become part of a local early years network to exchange information and expertise with other providers to avoid operating in isolation.

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 successful partnerships:

- 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 reported 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.

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 all details will be published on Foundation Years [website](#).

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. The authority 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.

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

The tables below set out how this could work for a parent.

Term-Time	Flexible Provider	Morning Session (typically 9-12)	Flexible Provider	
	Flexible Provider		Afternoon Session (typically 12-3)	Flexible Provider
Holiday	Flexible Provider			

Table key

Sessional Provider Examples include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery class in a school • Independent nursery school • Playgroup 	Usually term-time only	15 hours per week 38 weeks a year
Flexible Provider Examples include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childminders • PVIs • Out-of-school clubs 	Could also be open during holidays but must be open in the January census week	Parent can agree to take 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year or stretch offer over the full year. Any time outside these hours paid for by agreement with providers

It would also be possible to wrap funded hours from the flexible provider around a morning or afternoon session, providing this did not exceed the two sites in a day requirements.

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, offering the free entitlement at times between 6 am and 8 pm 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 such as a sessional nursery, pre-school or playgroup.

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 (CMA) 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 the 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 should 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 (if these fall outside the free hours taken with the childminder), 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>Before 9am Childminder charges for care, transfer to nursery or playgroup and on-call services</p>	<p>9am-12pm Free hours at nursery class or playgroup</p>	<p>12pm-3pm Childminder picks up and provides free hours</p>	<p>After 3pm 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 nursery 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.

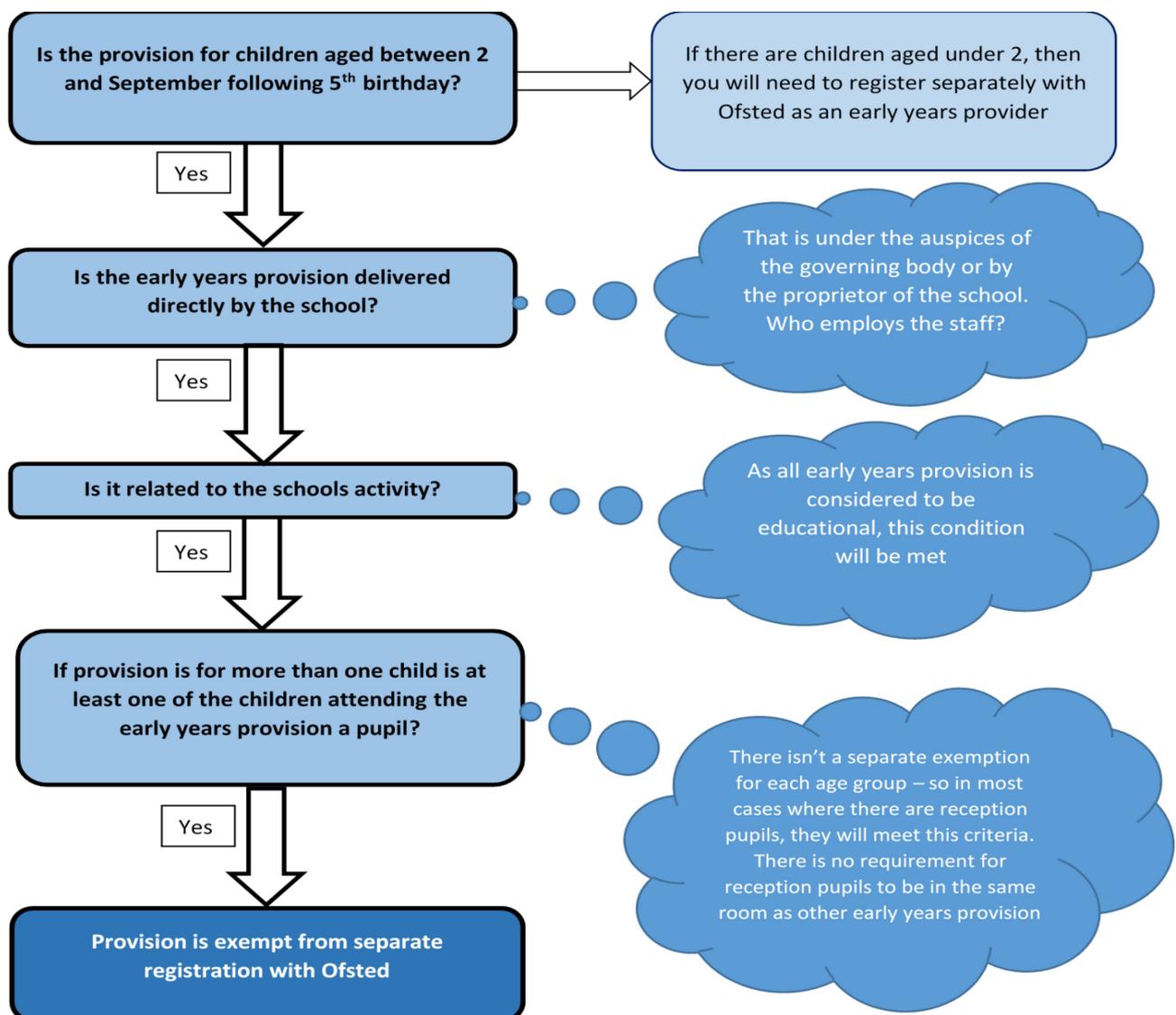
Does early years provision in a school need to be registered with Ofsted?

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
- ensure all children attending are 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 early years children do not need to be in the same room as the pupils, who could be in a separate 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:



Staffing ratios and qualifications - early years provision for 3-year-olds in schools

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

** Maintained 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 delivered outside the standard two session school day where children normally attend nursery classes.

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 without a school teacher leading provision) applies 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 free of charge and that providers' charging policies enable this.

Meals, consumables and additional activities

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 additional activities. Parents can therefore expect to pay for any meals offered by the provider alongside their free entitlement. Parents can also expect to pay for other consumables or additional activities offered by the provider, such as nappies or trips. Where parents choose to purchase additional hours of provision, consumables or additional activities, this is a private matter between the provider and the parent. However, providers must offer alternative options for parents. This could include, for example, allowing a parent to bring in their own consumables or a packed lunch, where the meal offered is not suitable for children with specific dietary needs or the parent prefers a lower cost option.

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.

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 legislation on equalities and non-discrimination. However, for clarity, 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, additional activities or meals. Whilst the child continues to take up the 30 hours' entitlement there should be no restrictions on that place e.g. parents should 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 take up their child's 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 structures 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 further 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. This should set out clearly the charges for meals, additional activities or additional hours. Providers may wish to have a separate agreement for any additional hours or activities, which clearly sets out for how long the parent has opted to pay the additional charges and the circumstances when the parent can opt out of paying the additional charges.

Sessional provider example

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

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

Extended Entitlement 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 28, childminders may offer a chargeable on-call service as part of their offer to parents. This service could include providing emergency childcare cover whilst the child is in another setting taking up free hours.

SEND

Summary

The government is committed to promoting equality and inclusion for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) by removing barriers that 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 2010¹ and take full account of the SEND Code of Practice 0-25² 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 and their full entitlement. Our recently published workforce strategy³ 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 specialise 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.

¹ 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

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/350685/Early_Years_Guide_to_SEND_Code_of_Practice_-_02Sept14.pdf

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

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:

- 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.

For additional information and guidance on these new funding reforms please consult the funding operational guidance at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/580716/EY_NFF_Operational_Guidance.pdf

Summary of key provisions in the Children and Families Act Part 3

Part 3 of the Act sets out the general principles that local authorities must have regard to when supporting children and young people with SEND. The principles are based on the government's vision for reforming services for children and young people with special educational needs, as set out in the 2011 Green Paper, "*Support and Aspiration: A new approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability*" and the 2012 follow up paper "*Progress and next steps*". They seek to ensure that local authorities place children, young people and families at the centre of decision-making, enabling them to participate in a fully informed way, and with a focus on achieving the best possible outcomes.

- Section 20 sets out that a child or young person has special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability, which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. It also provides a definition of learning difficulty.
- Section 21 defines special educational provision as provision that is additional to or different from that which would normally be provided for children or young people of the same age in a mainstream education setting.
- Section 22 places a duty on local authorities to identify, in their area, all of the disabled children and young people and all the children and young people who have or may have special educational needs.
- Section 23 outlines the duty on health bodies, who have determined that a child under compulsory school age, has or probably has special educational needs or a disability, to inform the child's parents and the local authority of their opinion.
- Section 24 states that a local authority in England is responsible for a child or young person if he or she is in the authority's area and has been identified by the authority or brought to the authority's attention, as someone who has or may have special educational needs.
- Sections 25 to 27 places a duty on LAs and their partner commissioning bodies to ensure integration between education, health and social care provision including

joint commissioning arrangements. The education, health and care provision must be kept under review.

- Sections 30 requires local authorities to publish and maintain and keep under review a local offer. The local offer is information about the education, health and social care provision that the local authority expects to be available for disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs.
- Sections 33 to 48 cover mainstream education for children and young people both with and without education, health and care (EHC) plans, including assessment of EHC needs, and details of EHC plans.
- Section 49 requires local authorities to prepare a personal budget for children and young people who have EHC plans if the child's parent or young person requests one. A personal budget is an amount identified as available to secure particular provision specified or to be specified in the EHC plan.
- Sections 51 to-60 cover the appeals, mediation and dispute resolution process.
- Section 66 requires maintained nursery schools, schools and post-16 institutions to use their best endeavours to secure that the special educational provision called for by their pupil's or student's needs, is made. Section 67 requires schools to have a SEN Coordinator (SENCO) and to ensure that SENCOs have particular qualifications and/or experience.
- Sections 69 requires all maintained nursery schools and schools to publish a SEN information report. This report must include information such as an institution's SEN policy and the arrangements it has to prevent disabled pupils from being treated less favourably than other pupils.
- Section 70-75 sets out how the legislation applies to children and young people detained in youth custody.
- Section 76 places a duty on the Secretary of State to exercise his/her information gathering powers to secure information about children and young people under the age of 19 with special educational needs.
- Section 77 requires the Secretary of State to issue a code of practice, which local authorities, school governing bodies, colleges, clinical commissioning groups and a range of other bodies must have regard to, when exercising their functions.

Section 79 requires the Secretary of State and Lord Chancellor to carry out a review about how effectively disagreements about the exercise of functions, in relation to children and young people with SEND are being resolved.

Education, Health and Care plans

Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 contains provisions that set out the statutory framework for identifying and assessing the needs of children and young people with

special educational needs (SEN) who require support beyond that which is usually available. Statements under section 324 of the Education Act 1996, and Learning Difficulty Assessments made under section 139A of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, are being replaced over a transitional period by 0-25 Education, Health and Care plans (EHC plans) for both children and young people. The transitional period for transfer reviews will end on 31 March 2018.

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.⁴

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

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 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 held 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 SEN Co-ordinator (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 21). 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 Partnership Inclusion Offer has been a high priority for discussion where the local authority meets with individual Shared Foundation Partnership leads. It has also been promoted at Shared Foundation Partnership Information Sessions across the City. Almost half of our 27 Shared Foundation Partnerships have published their Partnership Inclusion Offer and included it on their partnership web page, via school web pages etc. Some are still completing the offer template to ensure a comprehensive offer is produced. The local authorities is exploring ways in which this can be shared with parents wider across the city. As part of this we have already contacted 3 parent forums to encourage them to share the information with other parents/carers about this new Partnership Inclusion Offer, what it supports and how it can offer a greater insight to parents on the skills, knowledge and expertise in areas of the city.

We will be exploring a formal link to the York's Local Offer and in the meantime continue to share as part of the wider offer.

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 that is 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. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-census-2018-guide>

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 either the school census or 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. This states that, if a parent ceases to meet the eligibility criteria for 30 hours, the parent may, at that point, choose which provider they continue to take up their child's universal 15 hours entitlement.

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. For example, in 2018, Thursday 18th January will be census day.

The early years census collects data on all children receiving provision that is funded by the Department during census week (the week in which the census day falls). The school census collects data on all children who were registered pupils of the school on census day

If a child would normally be taking up free hours in census week but is absent, for example, 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, for example 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>



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