

Early Years Funding

Information for Parents/Carers

Three and four year old children are entitled to free early years provision. In Cambridgeshire, free places are available in pre-schools, playgroups, day nurseries, independent schools, with accredited Childminder Networks and in Local Authority (LA) nursery schools/classes, reception classes or units. These groups or childminders offering early years provision are called 'settings' or 'providers'. Parents/Carers are referred to in this document as 'Parents'.

What is the entitlement?

The entitlement is a maximum 15 free hours per week over a 38 week school year. The free hours are exempt from any additional charge or top up but hours in excess of the entitlement are charged for¹. The full entitlement can be spread evenly across the year but with fewer hours per week, depending on what your provider offers.

The minimum number of hours in a day that can be funded are 2.5 hours with the maximum being 10 hours; 12.5 hours can be spread over two days or 15 hours spread over 3 or more days per week. Check with your provider to find out what they can offer.

The hours can be shared across two providers but should be claimed over the same number of weeks in order to maximise the entitlement.

When is my child eligible?

Children become eligible from the school term after they turn three through to the school term they turn five. The eligibility dates are different from the school term dates.

A child born in the period:	Will become eligible for a free place:
1 April - 31 August	Autumn school term following child's 3 rd birthday
1 September - 31 December	Spring school term following child's 3 rd birthday
1 January - 31 March	Summer school term following child's 3 rd birthday

How do I find a provider who offers a free place?

If you need help to find a provider who offers free early years places, telephone the Childcare Information Service on 0345 04 54 014 or access their website at www.familiesandchildcare.org.uk

¹ If you think a charge is being made for any of the 15 hour entitlement please discuss this with your provider in the first instance. If you are still unsure, call the Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Team on 01223 507125.

What do I have to do to take up my free place?

A form called a Parental Contract will be issued to you by your provider. The Parental Contract is the agreement between you and the provider on how you will take up your free entitlement over the term, and effectively, over the academic year. Your provider is funded to offer your free place based on this contract. You must provide proof of your child's identity and date of birth (e.g. a birth certificate or NHS card) and then sign your contract.

Providers are not able to change the claim for funding they make to the Council each term and are not required to transfer any funding they receive to another provider but may do so, at their discretion, in certain circumstances.

How will my data be used?

Information gathered from the *Parental Contract* will be submitted to the Local Authority to support your claim for free hours. For more information of how the Local Authority handles personal data please see the Early Years Privacy Notice on www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

For further information contact the Early Years Funding Team on 01223 699805 or email nef@cambridgeshire.gov.uk