



Department
for Education

Funded Early Education Choice Framework

May 2013

Funded early education: what choices do I have?

Early education gives your 2, 3 or 4 year old child the chance to learn, make new friends, experience new activities, and build their confidence. It is also an important preparation for school.

The Government gives local authorities funding to provide a part time early education place for all 3 and 4 year olds, and for 2 year olds from low income families. Your child will be able to take up their place from the term after their 3rd birthday – for example if your child turns 3 in October, they would be entitled to take up their funded place from the beginning of the spring term (January).

This guide explains:

- how and where your child can take up their funded early education place
- what information may help you decide where your child will access their place
- how to make a complaint if you are not offered a choice

Choices about funded early education

Choosing where and how your child will take up their funded early education place	
How many hours of early education can my child have?	<p>Your child is entitled to 15 hours a week of early education for 38 weeks of the year. For many children this will mean 3 hours a day during school term times, but as a minimum you will also be able to choose to take 5 hours a day over 3 days a week.</p> <p>You may also be able to choose a different pattern or to take up fewer hours per week over more weeks of the year (for example, 11 hours a week over for 50 weeks). However, this will depend on the availability of the days and times you want at your child's nursery or childminder.</p>
Where can my child take-up their early education place?	<p>Funded early education places are available at a wide range of early years providers. You can take up your child's place by registering with a provider that offers them – the provider will give you any forms that you need to fill in. The types of provider you may be able to choose between include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Nursery classes which are part of a primary school;▪ Nursery schools which offer places to children between the ages of 2 and 5;▪ Day nurseries which often offer care and early education for children from birth to 5 and are normally open all day.▪ Children's centres which offer early education places and a range of health and family support services;▪ Playgroups and pre-schools which offer early education for children between 2 and 5 and are often open for 3 or 4 hours a day;▪ Childminders who will look after your child, usually in the childminder's own home;▪ Independent schools with early education

	<p>provision for 3 and 4 year olds.</p> <p>Your local authority is responsible for ensuring there is a range of provision in your area. However, the variety of providers will be different in each local authority and not all types of provider may offer funded early education in every area. Every provider has different admission arrangements and a limited number of places so it is important to check providers' admissions arrangements as your child is not guaranteed a place with a particular provider.</p>
<p>Will I not have to pay anything for my child's place?</p>	<p>Some providers offer parents the option to purchase additional hours of childcare (for example, if they work) whilst others do not, so it's worth checking if you need this. Others may make charges for other services such as lunch or dance classes.</p> <p>Your provider must not ask you to pay any fee for your child's funded early education place, or require you to pay for additional hours or optional extras as a condition of taking up your child's place.</p>
<p>What happens when my child starts school?</p>	<p>Many children will move into a school reception class in the September following their 4th birthday. However, if you feel that your child is not ready to start school, you can choose for your child to continue to access their funded early education place, until the term after your child's fifth birthday. You will need to discuss how this works with your local authority.</p>

Choosing the right childcare provider for your child

What information may help you decide where your child will access their place?	
Where can I get information to help me choose?	Your local Family Information Service can give you details of providers in your area which offer funded early education places as well as confirming when your child will be eligible.
How can I judge which is the right childcare provider for my child?	<p>Once you have identified the range of childcare providers locally, you will want to consider which provider best meets your needs and the needs of your child.</p> <p>All providers delivering funded early education places are inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (although some independent schools use a different inspectorate). Most providers are required to register with Ofsted on the Early Years Register which, along with the Early Years Foundation Stage, defines the standards providers must ensure that your child is safe and the quality of learning is high. Ofsted use these standards to judge the quality of providers, and make recommendations for improvement where appropriate. You can ask your provider for a recent copy of their inspection report or you can download it from the Ofsted website.</p> <p>Providers must display their Ofsted registration certificate and you can ask for a copy. More information about the Early Years Register is also available on the Ofsted website.</p>
What is the early years foundation stage?	All schools and providers who deliver funded early education places are required to follow the early years foundation stage (EYFS). The EYFS is designed to ensure that providers deliver high-quality learning for all children and sets out the staffing and health and safety requirements providers must meet.

What to do if you have a complaint

How to make a complaint if you are not offered a choice

Who can I complain to?

If you are not satisfied that your child has received their funded place or that you have not been offered a choice of providers, you can complain to your local authority using the complaints procedure on its website. If you are unable to resolve your complaint with the local authority, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may want to consider taking the matter up with the Local Government Ombudsman. If you think that your local authority is failing to meet its legal duty to find your child a funded early education place, you may wish to bring this to the attention of the Department for Education.

You can also make a complaint about your early education provider, or any other aspect about your child's safety – either to the local authority or Ofsted. Ofsted will look into any concerns that a registered provider is not meeting the requirements of the EYFS usually by carrying out an inspection.



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