

**Essex County Council**

**Free Early Education Entitlement for Two,  
Three and Four Year Olds**

**A Guide for Parents**

**September 2017**

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Eligibility</b> Frequently Asked questions	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Flexibility</b> Frequently Asked questions	<b>9</b>
<b>4. Quality</b> Frequently Asked questions	<b>15</b>
<b>5. Funding FEEE places</b> Frequently Asked questions	<b>16</b>

# 1. Introduction

The answers to the frequently asked questions in this guide seek to explain how Essex County Council (ECC) funds free early education for eligible two year olds and all three and four year olds in day nurseries, pre-schools, childminders, nursery schools and school and academy nursery classes. These early years and childcare providers are known as the maintained, and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector.

Before an early years childcare provider can deliver the Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) they must have a funding agreement with ECC. This forms a binding contract between them and ECC and states that they must abide by the conditions and requirements of the contract and the Department for Education (DfE) 'Early Education and Childcare: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities'. Not all early years childcare providers will offer FEEE, or may only offer some elements of the FEEE

What is the Free Early Education Entitlement?

- The FEEE is at the heart of the Government's vision for all children to have access to high quality early years learning and education.
- Evidence shows that regular good quality early learning and education has long lasting benefits for all children.
- The FEEE for two year olds is not universal and can only be accessed by families meeting certain criteria. Eligible children are entitled to 570 hours of FEEE over the year which can be taken over a minimum of 33 weeks and up to a maximum of 52 weeks. The entitlement is divided into three terms ranging from eleven to fifteen weeks which mirror the school terms.
- The FEEE for three and four year olds is a universal free provision for every child from the term following their third birthday up until they reach compulsory school age. Eligible children are entitled to 570 hours of FEEE over the year which can be taken over a minimum of 33 weeks and up to a maximum of 52 weeks. The entitlement is divided into three terms ranging from eleven to fifteen weeks which mirror the school terms.
- From September 2017 eligible working parents will be able to access the Extended Free Entitlement (EFE) which is a further 15 hours on top of the universal entitlement giving them up to an additional 15 hours of FEEE. You may see this entitlement described as the "30 hour offer" Eligible children are entitled to 570 hours of FEEE over the year which can be taken over a minimum of 33 weeks and up to a maximum of 52 weeks. The entitlement is divided into three terms ranging from eleven to fifteen weeks which mirror the school terms.

## 2. Eligibility – can I apply for a FEEE place?

**Outcome** children take up high quality early learning and education, regardless of their parents' ability to pay – benefiting their social, physical and mental development and helping to prepare them for school. Evidence shows that regular, high quality early education has lasting benefits for all children.

### Frequently asked Questions

#### Q. Is my two year old eligible for free early learning and childcare?

**A. Two year olds** can access free early learning and childcare if they meet one or more of the criteria set out below:

- Their parent/carer meets eligibility criteria also used for free school meals as set out below:
  - Income Support
  - Income-based Job Seekers' Allowance
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
  - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
  - The Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
  - Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit) and have an annual income not exceeding £16,190
  - Working Tax Credit during the four week period immediately after their employment finishes or after they start to work less than 16 hours per week
- Their family receives Working Tax Credits and have annual gross earnings of no more than £16,190
- Their family receives Universal Credit and have monthly earnings of no more than the DfE earnings threshold
- They have a current statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education, health and care plan
- They are receiving Disability Living Allowance
- They are looked after by a local authority
- They have left care through an adoption order, a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order which specifies with whom they live

#### Q. How can I apply for a free nursery place for my two year old?

**A.** You can apply for funding online, or through an early years childcare provider, Family Hub, health visitor, social worker or specialist teacher.

To apply online go to [https://emsonline.essexcc.gov.uk/CitizenPortal\\_LIVE/](https://emsonline.essexcc.gov.uk/CitizenPortal_LIVE/) and register. To do this you need to log in and click on 'Funded Early Education for Two Year Olds' to complete an application. Once you have submitted your form your eligibility will be checked and if eligible you will be given a reference number which you can take to an early years childcare provider to access the free place.

**Q. When can I access a free nursery place for my two year old?**

**A.** Eligible two year olds can access a FEEE funded place in the term after their second birthday, see below:

<b>Child born between</b>	<b>Eligible for funding</b>
1 April – 31 August	1 September following the 2nd birthday
1 September - 31 December	1 January following their 2nd birthday
1 January – 31 March	1 April following their 2nd birthday

**Q. What information do I need to provide to get my free nursery place?**

**A.** Early years childcare providers will ask to see your child's birth certificate to confirm their eligibility for the FEEE.

If you are applying for the two year old FEEE and are not eligible under Free School Meal criteria you may need to provide other evidence of your eligibility, e.g. a photocopy of TC602a form for the working tax credit eligibility.

To find out more about the Free Early Education Entitlement for two year olds:

- visit an early years childcare provider, you can find your nearest at <http://www.essex.gov.uk/Education-Schools/Early-Years-Childcare/Pages/Early-years-and-childcare.aspx>
- visit a Family Hub, you can find your nearest at <http://childrenscentresfinder.direct.gov.uk/childrenscentresfinder/>
- speak to your health visitor or allocated social worker
- contact the Family Information Service by email at [fis@essex.gov.uk](mailto:fis@essex.gov.uk) or by telephone on 0800 055 6874

**Q. What is Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and why is my provider asking me to fill in another form?**

**A.** Three and four year old children who get the free entitlement could be eligible for the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). The EYPP gives early years childcare providers extra money which they can use to improve outcomes for children by supporting their learning and development. Early years childcare providers could get £302 more a year for each child taking up the full 570 hours funded entitlement to early learning and education and this extra money could make a real difference to them.

Children are eligible for the EYPP if they are three or four years old, receiving the FEEE and their parents meet the criteria used for free school meals. Children are also eligible if they:

- have been looked after by the local authority for at least one day
- have been adopted from care
- have left care through special guardianship
- are subject to a child arrangement order.

So that they make best use of the extra money your early years childcare provider will work in partnership with you to carefully consider the learning and development needs of your child, and will support them with the following areas:

- personal, social and emotional development
- communication and language
- physical development
- literacy.

Early years childcare providers will ask all parents to complete the Early Years Pupil Premium Voluntary Registration Form at the same time as the Parent/Carer Agreement form so that they can check whether any of the children attending attract the additional funding.

#### Q. When does my child qualify for 3 and 4 year free entitlement funding?

A. The term after their 3rd birthday, see below:

Child born between	Eligible for funding
1 April – 31 August	1 September following the 3rd birthday
1 September - 31 December	1 January following their 3rd birthday
1 January – 31 March	1 April following their 3rd birthday

The dates have been fixed by DfE in line with the current Statutory Guidance

#### Q. How do I apply for my 3 year olds free place?

A. If your child is already attending an early years childcare provider they will claim the FEEE on your behalf and will ask you to sign a parent/carer agreement form to confirm this. If your child is not registered with an early years childcare provider yet, you will need to find an early years childcare provider that offers FEEE places and register your child with them.

You can search for a provider at <http://www.essex.gov.uk/Education-Schools/Early-Years-Childcare/Pages/Early-years-and-childcare.aspx>

Or contact the Family Information Service by email at [fis@essex.gov.uk](mailto:fis@essex.gov.uk) or by telephone on 0800 055 6874

#### Q. Am I eligible for the Extended Free Entitlement and how can I claim it?

A. You can now find a straightforward explanation of all government childcare support on the new Childcare Choices website: [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

The Extended Free Entitlement (EFE) for three and four year olds will be available in England from September 2017. This doubles the existing 15 hours currently available and could save working families up to £5,000 a year.

You will be able to check your eligibility now using the online childcare calculator [www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator](http://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator) and, if eligible, submit an online application **before** the beginning of the term you wish to receive your funding. **Please note, if you apply for your code after the beginning of the term that you wish to receive funding your provider will not be able to claim the extended entitlement and you will only be able to access the universal entitlement that term.**

Once signed up, you will receive an eligibility code to take to your childcare provider. Early years childcare providers will then check the code with their local authority. If eligible, parents can book their EFE place for up to an additional 15 hours.

Working parents of three and four year olds will need to meet the following criteria in order to be eligible for up to 15 additional hours of EFE:

- They earn or expect to earn the equivalent to 16 hours at National Minimum or Living Wage over the coming three months.
- This equates to £120 a week (or c.£6,000 a year) for each parent over 25 years old or £112.80 a week (or c.£5,800 a year) for each parent between 21 and 24 years old and £56 a week for apprentices in their first year.
- This applies whether you are in paid employment, self-employed or on zero hours contract.
- The parent (and their partner where applicable) should be seeking the free childcare to enable them to work.
- Where one or both parents are on maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave, or if they are on statutory sick leave.
- Where one parent meets the income criteria and the other is unable to work because they are disabled, have caring responsibilities or have been assessed as having limited capability to work.
- Where a parent is in a 'start-up period' (i.e. they are newly self-employed) they do not need to demonstrate that they meet the income criteria for 12 months.
- If one or both parents is a non-EEA national, the parent applying must have recourse to public funds

There is also information for parents on the Family Information Service (FIS) webpage on the main ECC website here <http://www.essex.gov.uk/Education-Schools/Early-Years-Childcare/Pages/Early-years-and-childcare.aspx>.

You will need to have claimed the EFE and got your eligibility code **before** the start of the term to access your funding in that term as follows:

<b>EFE Cut-off Date</b>	<b>Term funding will be paid from</b>
31 August	Autumn term
31 December	Spring term
31 March	Summer term

If you miss this deadline, you won't be able to claim your EFE until the next term, and may have to be pay for your childcare fees if your child starts before this

**Q. What are some of the benefits parents can lose if they access the extended entitlement?**

**A.** You need to look at all the options open to you to ensure you choose the best package for you that does not impact on any benefits you may be entitled to when you take up the extended entitlement. The Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) website states:

The eligibility criteria are the same as the ones for Tax-Free Childcare, except parents can continue to get the following types of support at the same time as the extended entitlement funding:

- tax credits

- Universal Credit
- childcare vouchers or salary sacrifice schemes
- childcare grants and bursaries

It is possible that the childcare element of Working Tax Credit could be affected as you would likely be paying for less childcare.

It might be helpful to use the Childcare Choices costs calculator, to help you make your decisions. This can be found at

<https://childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/par/app/extendedentitlement>

**Q. I use a childminder for childcare. Are they able to claim Free Entitlement Funding on my behalf?**

**A.** Yes, all childminders can claim FEEE funding as long as they;

- are registered with Ofsted,
- have an Ofsted judgement of Good, Outstanding or Requires Improvement to offer the FEEE to three and four year olds
- have an Ofsted judgement Good or Outstanding to offer the FEEE to eligible two year olds
- have a FEEE funding contract with ECC

**Q. What if an early years childcare provider doesn't have an Ofsted judgement? Are they able to claim Free Entitlement Funding on my behalf?**

**A.** Yes. Newly registered early years childcare providers are eligible to offer the FEEE before their first Ofsted inspection. However, the outcome of their Ofsted inspection will determine whether they can continue offering the FEEE and whether they can offer places to eligible two year olds

According to the DfE Statutory Guidance they must also;

- meet the independent school standard in relation to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- actively promote fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- not promote as fact views or theories which are contrary to established scientific or historical evidence and explanations

**I am a registered Childminder, can I claim FEEE for minding my son?**

**A.** No, Childminders are not permitted to claim FEEE funding for providing early learning education and childcare to children that are members of their own family, e.g. if they are the child's parent, grandparent, brother or sister, aunt or uncle. Please note this is defined in section 18 of the Childcare Act 2006 set by the Government and not Essex County Council.



### 3. Flexibility – what does flexibility mean?

**Outcome:** Children are able to take up their full FEEE at times that best support their learning and at times which fit with the needs of the parents.

Early years childcare providers delivering the FEEE flexibly must ensure that the entitlement is offered to you in a way which meets your needs and gives you real choices about how you access a free place.

#### Frequently asked Questions

##### Q. How do I know I am getting what I am entitled to?

**A.** Your provider **must** complete a Parent/Carer Agreement with you as it sets out how you are accessing the FEEE, and this must not be for more hours than your child is accessing the FEEE with the childcare provider. It is really important that you are aware of all the details relating to your child's place before you sign the form. Ensure you are aware of any additional costs and what these are for. Early years childcare providers must make sure you are able to access your entitlement without any additional cost unless these have been agreed prior to your child taking up the place. Please take note of the following:

- Completing and signing the form confirms the contractual agreement between you and the provider for the duration of the term
- The Parent/Carer Agreement Form records the number hours/weeks of FEEE for the duration of the term
- The Parent/Carer Agreement Form informs you that if you decide to move your child after headcount, the point in the term when the provider provides data on funded children to ECC, you may be liable to pay full fees at the new provider
- For the FEEE for three and four year olds the Parent/Carer Agreement Form records whether you are accessing the funding in one or two provisions
- The Parent/Carer Agreement Form informs you of how hours can be taken
- The Parent/Carer Agreement Form informs you that additional charges can be made
- The Parent/Carer Agreement Form informs you about the restrictions of increasing hours in a term
- The Parent/Carer Agreement Form informs you about what happens if your child starts school

##### Q. Can lunch or meal times be included in the free entitlement and will this have to be paid for?

**A.** Yes. Free Entitlement hours, both the universal and extended entitlements, can cover a lunch time period where it is structured to support the children's overall learning & developmental process

When the Free Entitlement hours do include a lunch time period there may be a charge for lunch or snacks, any charge for the lunch must be agreed with you in advance. If you **don't want** to pay this charge the provider must give you the choice to bring a packed lunch or allow you to take your child out of the setting over the lunch period

### **Q. The provider has asked me to pay a top up fee – is this allowed?**

**A.** No, early years childcare providers cannot charge a ‘top up’ fee (the difference between what they would normally charge and the amount they receive from ECC) for any free entitlement hours.

Early years childcare providers can only charge for hours and services that are not part of the free entitlement. Any costs that you may be liable for should be made absolutely clear on the parent/carer agreement form in advance, which should show that;

- you have received your child’s full 15 hour funded place completely free, there should be no monetary value attached to the free 15 hours
- additional hours and services can be charged for, e.g. meals or hours in addition to the funded free hours. The provider must notify you of these before you take up the place as you will be agreeing to them by signing the parent agreement form

Please also be aware that;

- the rates that a provider charges for additional hours outside of a child’s FEEE place are a private matter between the provider and the child’s parent/carer. Local Authorities cannot intervene in early years childcare providers’ private business outside of a child’s FEEE place
- if your child is only accessing the 15 hours of FEEE you will not need an invoice. However, the provider must tell you that an application for funding has been made on your behalf and ensure you complete a Parent/Carer Agreement Form
- charges for any additional hours and/or services must be clearly recorded separately on an invoice.

### **Q. How do I know if I am being charged the right amount?**

**A.** You should be provided with an invoice which must be clear and transparent so you can clearly understand what has been charged for.

The invoice a provider sends to you should include the following:

- The relevant date
- The childcare provision details
- Details of you/your child
- The period of time the invoice is for i.e. one week, two weeks, a month
- It should itemise what is free of charge i.e. FEEE funded hours, and what are chargeable items
- FEEE hours cannot be represented as a monetary value or as a discounted item on the invoice
- Chargeable hours that have been taken outside FEEE hours should be clearly itemised on the invoice
- Any snacks, meals and additional activities that have been agreed with you in advance should also be clearly itemised on the invoice
- The provider should indicate when you should pay their invoice

**Q. Do I have to pay anything if I just want my free entitlement?**

**A.** No, The entitlement is a free, part time place for each eligible two, three and four year old child. If you only want to access your FEEE funded hours you should not be expected to pay any additional charges e.g. snacks or extra-curricular activities unless you have agreed to these before taking up your place.

Early years childcare providers can charge a refundable deposit to reserve the free entitlement place for three and four year olds, but **not** for eligible two year olds. An early years childcare provider can charge a deposit up to a maximum of one week's charges covering the number of hours you want to take up. The early years and childcare provider must refund the deposit to you when your child takes up the place by no later than the half term break for that term.

Early years childcare providers **must not**;

- attach any conditions to the funded place which oblige you to purchase additional hours or pay lunchtime charges in order to secure free early education
- charge for any goods or services where such payment is conditional to access the free place for example a registration fee or charges for a uniform

**Q. How many days a week can I take my free entitlement over?**

**A.** The FEEE can be taken up in a number of ways. ECC has a duty to ensure that, as a minimum, you can access the FEEE in the following patterns:

- either three hours a day over five days of the week
- or five hours a day over three days of the week

The free early education place does not offer a guarantee of a place to you at any one provider or a particular pattern of provision, you need to find a place that suits your needs. Most early years childcare providers choose to deliver the FEEE places in line with school term times, but there is no requirement for them to do this and some will also offer FEEE places over more weeks.

**Q. Can I still choose to take my Free Entitlement funding for fewer than 38 weeks?**

**A.** Yes, you can take the funding for fewer than 38 weeks at a provider of your choice; the minimum they should offer is 33 weeks.

If your provider is receiving funding to deliver a reduced entitlement they cannot charge you for additional hours of provision if your child is accessing 15 hours or under per week.

If you choose to use a provider who offers fewer than 38 weeks, it is not then possible to make up the remaining weeks up at another provision. If you need the full 38 weeks it is best to choose a provider that can accommodate this.

**Q. Am I able to take up my Free Entitlement over more than 38 weeks?**

**A.** Yes you can, but the maximum number of hours per term you can claim for does not change nor does the amount of funding you are entitled to. See the table below for a breakdown of the maximum number of hours that can be claimed each term, the total number of hours that can be claimed per year is 570.

Term	Inclusive term dates	Duration of FEEE	Equivalent in hours
Summer 2017	18/04/2017 to 21/07/2017	13 weeks	13 weeks x 15 hours = 195 hours
Autumn 2017	04/09/2017 to 20/12/2017	14 weeks	14 weeks x 15 hours = 210 hours
Spring 2018	02/01/2018 to 29/03/2018	11 weeks	11 weeks x 15 hours = 165 hours

If your provider does offer funding over 50 weeks of the year please be aware that the 15 hours maximum hours per week will be worked out pro rata and therefore the hours will be reduced to approximately 11 hours per week.

**Q. Is my provider allowed to close for training days?**

**A.** Yes early years childcare providers can claim FEEE for up to 1 day per term when they are open in order to carry out staff training. Where possible these days should be taken outside of the funded sessions, but some settings cannot accommodate this as they are not open longer than the funded weeks. If this is the case the provider should make you aware before you sign your parent/carer agreement that you will lose a day of FEEE per term. Your provider should also give a minimum of a half term's notice of any planned closures. You will not receive any refund for this day as there is no cash value to the FEEE funding

**Q. What happens if a bank holiday falls on a day my child attends? Am I entitled to be offered an alternative day so my child can access their full Free Entitlement funding?**

**A.** If you request to access your child's FEEE place on a day where a Bank Holiday falls, i.e. Mondays, then the early years childcare provider should inform you before you sign the parent agreement form that your child will not be able to access their entitlement on bank holidays. Some early years and childcare providers may be able to offer you a different session to cover this period, but not all of them will be able to do this. If the early years childcare provider is not able to offer an alternative, you need to be aware that your child will not receive their full entitlement where there are bank holidays within the funded weeks as these days cannot be taken with another early years and childcare provider.

**Q. The DfE guidelines say that I can claim a maximum of 10 hours in a day – is this right?**

**A.** Yes. The guidelines set by central Government stipulate that parents can claim up to 10 hours of FEEE in any one day.

It is also possible for a parent to take their 15 hours over a minimum of two days and maximum of five days, and be claimed between 6am and 8pm.

**Q. Is it okay to just ask for the hours I want to claim for or do I have to take up the full entitlement?**

**A.** Yes, you can just ask for the hours you want, you do not have to take the full 15 hours, or additional 15 hours if you are eligible for the EfE, if you do not want to.

When asking for your hours at the start of each term be clear with the provider how many hours you can take and when. This should be confirmed on your parent/carer agreement form.

NB. The provider will only be funded by ECC for the amount of hours that your child actually attends the setting.

**Q. What if I want to split my Childcare entitlement between two Essex early years childcare providers – can I do this and how does the number of hours claimed get checked?**

**A.** Yes, if you are accessing the FEEE for three and four year olds you can split your 15 hours, or additional 15 hours if you are eligible for the EfE, between two or more early years childcare providers if it meets your needs. If you are using more than two providers you can only claim the FEEE at a maximum of two sites in any one day. You also need to be aware that some childcare settings, particularly schools, will have a sole provider policy and will not allow split funding.

If you are splitting the funding you will declare this on the Parent Agreement form you sign with each of your chosen early years childcare providers at the start of each term detailing the amount of hours you will take at each provision. You must not claim for more than your entitlement between each of your chosen early years childcare provider

Both provisions will then submit the details of your claim for your child at each provision to Essex County Council who then cross check details of each child to prevent any over claims. If you do over claim, you will be expected to pay for any hours over the FEEE at the early years and childcare providers charging rate

If your child is accessing the FEEE for two year olds, they can only attend **one** provider.

**Q. Can you combine school places and nursery places?**

**A.** Yes you can split your free entitlement between a PVI provision and a maintained school nursery/nursery class/nursery school if you wish. However you should bear in mind that most schools will have a single provider policy and this may not be possible.

The ECC FEEE contract gives early years childcare providers the option to operate a 'sole provision policy' if this is their policy they must inform you at the time you complete the Parent/Carer Agreement Form.

You cannot split the funding between a PVI and a reception class in a school. When a child enters reception class at any school they will no longer be entitled to the FEEE.

If your child is due to start in a reception class at a maintained school or academy (not a private or independent school) you will not be eligible to claim Free Entitlement funding for the weeks at the beginning of the autumn term before they actually start.

Independent schools can claim FEEE for four year olds in reception class until they reach statutory school age, provided they have a FEEE contract with ECC.

**Q. Can we insist that the provider is open for longer hours?**

**A.** No. This is left up to individual settings, but equally they must be mindful of parent demand (sufficiency) as another provider may fulfil the need or any gaps in the market.

NB. Free entitlement hours can be accessed between 6am -8pm

**Q. I now want to increase my hours, even though the term has started is this possible?**

**A.** No, at the start of each term we ask parent/carers to sign a declaration form with the provider for them to be able to claim funding on your behalf. Increasing hours after the headcount day means that the provider cannot claim for the extra hours requested by the parent. ECC will not pay the provider for these extra hours. In this instance the provider can ask the parent to pay for the additional hours until the end of the current term (this should be included in the provider/parent contract).

## 4. Quality

**Outcome:** all children are able to take up their entitlement to funded early learning education in a high quality setting. Evidence shows that higher quality provision has greater developmental benefits for children, particularly for the most disadvantaged children. The evidence also shows that high quality early education at age two brings benefits to children's development. This guidance reflects the Government's intention that, as far as possible, early education for two-year-olds is delivered by early years childcare providers who have achieved an overall rating of 'outstanding' or 'good' in their most recent Ofsted inspection report.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Q. How do I know my child is getting the best care?

**A.** ECC must ensure that all early years early years childcare providers who deliver the FEEE must:

- deliver the full Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and either be registered with Ofsted as an early years provider, or are a school taking children aged three and over and therefore exempt from registration with Ofsted as early years early years childcare providers
- submit to an inspection by Ofsted
- maintain records about children receiving the FEEE and make that information available to the local authority, and Ofsted on request

#### Q. Can I get my free entitlement at any provider I choose?

**A.** ECC will only fund early years childcare providers who are registered with Ofsted and hold a FEEE contract, and will:

- base their decision whether to fund an early years childcare provider to deliver early education places solely on their most recent Ofsted
- fund places for two, three and four year old children attending any provider rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted
- fund places for three and four year old children attending any provider rated 'Requires Improvement'
- only fund two year old places in 'Requires Improvement' early years childcare providers where there is not sufficient, accessible 'Good' or 'Outstanding' provision
- secure alternative provision and withdraw funding, as soon as is practicable, for children who are already receiving their funded entitlement at a provider when it is rated 'Inadequate' by Ofsted
- fund new early years childcare providers registered with Ofsted until their first full Ofsted inspection judgement is published.



## 5. Funding FEEE places

**Outcome:** fair and transparent funding which supports a diverse range of early years childcare providers to deliver early education places and encourages existing early years childcare providers to expand and new early years childcare providers to enter the childcare market. This diversity enables parents to choose a provider that best meets the needs of their child and family.

Eligible children are entitled to 570 hours of FEEE over the year which can be taken over a minimum of 33 weeks and up to a maximum of 52 weeks. The entitlement is divided into three terms ranging from eleven to fifteen weeks which mirror the school terms.

From September 2017, children of eligible working parents across the country have been entitled to an additional 570 hours per year, meaning that many families are now able to claim 1140 hours of free childcare per year or up to a maximum of 30 hours per term-time week for each of their 3 or 4 year-olds.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Q. How does the early years and childcare provider claim the funding from ECC?

**A.** The early years and childcare provider enters your child's details on an online form at set times each term, the table below sets out the term dates when funding can be claimed. The early years and childcare provider will submit a headcount that includes all children attending the early years and childcare setting between a set period.

Term	Inclusive term dates	Duration of FEEE	Equivalent in hours
Summer 2017	18/04/2017 to 21/07/2017	13 weeks	13 weeks x 15 hours = 195 hours
Autumn 2017	04/09/2017 to 20/12/2017	14 weeks	14 weeks x 15 hours = 210 hours
Spring 2018	02/01/2018 to 29/03/2018	11 weeks	11 weeks x 15 hours = 165 hours

The provider can claim up to 570 hours of FEEE throughout the year. If early years childcare providers are stretching the entitlement over longer than 38 weeks they still claim the full 570 hours within the dates above.

FEEE funding is paid to the early years childcare provider if the following conditions are met:

- your child is included in the headcount and registered at the provision on the day of the headcount
- or if your child is included in the headcount but ill or otherwise absent during that week, and genuinely expected to take their place during that term
- if your child joins after headcount date a late claim can be submitted providing your child has NOT claimed FEEE at any other provision within Essex for that term



**Q. How much does the provider get paid?**

**A.** All early years childcare providers offering the FEEE for eligible two year olds are paid a flat rate of £5.18 per hour per child for those eligible two year olds in place.

Early years childcare providers of the FEEE for three and four year olds are paid using a Single Funding Formula (SFF). The hourly rates that the local authority pays early years childcare providers in 2017/18 are set out below

- Pre-schools, day nurseries and independent schools - £4.21 per hour
- Childminders - £4.41 per hour
- Maintained school and academy nursery classes - £4.24 per hour
- Maintained nursery schools - £6.19 per hour

Early years childcare providers may also receive a social deprivation supplement of an additional 10p, 20p or 30p per hour for qualifying children based on their home postcode.

They may also receive the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) for eligible three and four year old children attending their setting. The EYPP is calculated at an additional 53 pence per hour for every hour of FEEE.

**Q. My child has special needs am I entitled to any extra funding?**

**A.** It would be down to the childcare provider to make a claim to ECC, such as an inclusion grant to meet any additional childcare requirements for your child. Supporting evidence for any such claim would need to be substantiated by a childcare professional such as a special educational needs advisor. The funding would go to the early years and childcare provider to be able to offer any additional service to your child.

**Q. Is it okay to take holiday during the term, and if so will my childcare provider be penalised when my child is not attending?**

**A.** Yes, this is okay. The early years childcare provider would not have funding withheld if a child is absent for a short period due to holiday or sickness

**Q. Are schools allowed to say you have to come to our nursery if you want a place at the school?**

**A.** No, they are not allowed to say this, but equally we are aware this could be happening. If you are told this, we would appreciate this being brought to our attention so we can take action.

**Q. I have recently moved to Essex from another local authority – am I able to claim for Free Entitlement funding even though the term has started?**

**A.** We would allow a childcare provider to claim for any child not already enrolled in Essex. They would be able to make a 'late claim' for the entitlement remaining for that term.

**Q. What if I want to move my child from one Essex childcare provider to another is this possible and how does this get funded?**

**A.** If you move your child to another provider part way through the term, after the headcount has taken place, your new provider will not be able to claim the free entitlement funding from ECC. Therefore you may be liable for the fees for the rest of the term at the new provider.

In these instances ECC request that the original provider passes on the unused funding for the term to the new provider, however this is not part of their contractual agreement and we are unable to insist that they do so.

In addition your original provider may also charge a fee if you failed to comply with your contractual notice period, so if possible please check this out prior to taking the decision to move your child.

**Q. What do I do if my provider closes unexpectedly during the term?**

**A.** If a provision has to close during a term you will need to seek an alternative provision, please contact the Family Information Service by email at [fis@essex.gov.uk](mailto:fis@essex.gov.uk) or by telephone on 0800 055 6874 for assistance. Once you have secured an alternative provider, they will submit a late claim for your child's FEEE for the remainder of the term.