

# Early Education Funding: Information for Parents/Carers



## 1. All parents/carers claiming Early Education Funding:

- are responsible for ensuring that their child uses the funded hours agreed with their provider on a regular weekly basis and understand that funding may be withdrawn with regular non-attendance.
- must notify their childcare provider of their child's absence and the reason will be recorded in the register. Providers will be paid where parents withdraw their child, for instance to go on holiday, for **up to 2 weeks** (or **3 weeks** for children claiming a stretched offer) per funding cycle. The childcare provider **may charge** parents/carers for any additional week's absence, where part of their terms and conditions.
- should be aware that, once a Parent/Carer Declaration form is signed, if a child leaves the setting or cancels their reserved place without giving the required notice period, stated in the contract between parents/carers and a provider, it may affect the Early Education Funding claim with a new provider, **except** where there are safety or quality concerns for which a formal complaint has been made to Ofsted and substantiated.
- should be aware that in the event of any concerns regarding a child's Early Education Funding, they should attempt to resolve this with their childcare provider in the first instance. If their concern cannot be resolved, they should then contact the Local Authority.

## 2. Children can start claiming funded hours the funding period following their:

- Second birthday for eligible two year olds
- Third birthday for universal entitlement and 30 hours extended entitlement

Child's birthday	When the funding can start
1 January – 31 March	1 April (Summer Term)
1 April – 31 August	1 September (Autumn Term)
1 September – 31 December	1 January (Spring Term)

3. Early Education Funding ceases on 31 August following the child's fourth birthday **and** they are registered to attend the reception class of a publicly funded school (or academy). Schools receive government funding from 1 September and **are legally obliged** to provide an education for children from the first day of term. Some schools, however, operate a phased entry where the children's first day may start after their enrolment at the school. The local authority will not provide Early Education Funding for a phased entry period, therefore, any issues regarding phased entry must be directed to the school. Parents that choose to access a childcare place for the period of time their child is not in school will need to pay the full costs of that place to their childcare provider. This is because their child's entire funding entitlement for a full-time place is being received directly by the school or academy regardless of the exact first day the child physically attends. Children that have deferred entry to school for a year can continue to receive Early Education Funding until the funding period following their fifth birthday, as can children that attend reception class at an Independent School.

4. Providers can set what times of day they will accept government funded hours. For instance, some may choose 9am to 3pm and charge privately for early morning or late afternoon care. All providers should be able to offer at least 15 hours per week of funded early education and share an admissions policy where places are limited.

Early Education Funding can be provided, where available, between 6am and 8pm, with no session longer than 10hrs and no more than two providers any one day.

5. Government funding is intended to cover the cost to deliver up 15 or 30 hours a week of high quality, flexible early education. It is not intended to cover the cost of meals, consumables, additional hours or additional services. Parents can therefore expect to pay for any meals, consumables or services offered by the provider, alongside their free early education entitlement.

Where parents are unable or unwilling to pay for meals and consumables or services, providers that choose to offer the free entitlements are responsible for setting their own policy on how to respond. The provider must be

transparent about any additional charges that may be incurred before a parent registers their child to attend, enabling the parent to make an informed choice.

6. Providers can charge parents a deposit to secure their child's place but should refund the deposit in full to parents within a reasonable time scale.
7. Children claiming the Early Education Funding are entitled to receive a maximum of 570hrs (1,140hrs for the Extended Entitlement) over 3 funding periods (terms). There are three ways a provider may offer funded hours: Term Time (38wks), Funding Period Stretch (up to 51wks) or All Year Round Stretch (up to 51wks). Please note that an All Year Round stretch will mean a small loss of funded hours over the course of a year (for example 11hrs per week over 51 weeks = 561hrs).

Please speak with your provider or see the BCP Council website for further details on these offers available in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

8. Applicable only for children using an All Year Round stretch offer with their provider: Children that turn 4 years old between 1 September and 31 March are due to begin school the *following* September, therefore cannot access full years worth of an *All Year Round* stretched offer (their equivalent early years funding goes direct to the school they attend from 1 September).

Child Birthday	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Autumn
1 Sept – 31 Dec	3yo	3yo	3yo	4yo	4yo	Sch
1 Jan – 31 March		3yo	3yo	3yo	4yo	Sch
1 Apr – 31 Aug			3yo	3yo	3yo	Sch

Because of this, the local authority must limit the available hours for 4 year old's prior to school and these children are permitted either the *term-time offer*, or *funding period stretch* only. Alternatively, another option could be a provider led stretch where the provider can stretch the total hours available as a 4 year old between 1 January and 31 August in a way that suits both the provider and the parent. Please speak with your provider, or see the BCP Council website for more information.

## Help with childcare costs

Parents/carers can get more help with childcare costs through Tax-Free Childcare, Tax Credits or Universal Credit.

### Tax-Free Childcare

- For working parents, including the self-employed
- With children under 12 (or under 17 if disabled)
- For every £8 parents pay in, the government will add an extra £2, up to £2,000 per child per year (up to £4,000 for disable children)
- To apply parents/carers must sign-up online via the HMRC Childcare Service:  
<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-tax-free-childcare>

### Tax Credits for childcare

- For working families
- With children under 16 (or under 17 if disabled)

### Universal Credit for childcare

- For working families claiming Universal Credit
- With children under 17

### Childcare calculator

The government provides a childcare calculator which provides an estimate of how much parents/carers could get to help pay for approved childcare. As well as 15 and 30 hours childcare it also calculates if parents/carers might be eligible for Tax Credits, Universal Credits, Tax-free Childcare or help whilst study.

The calculator can be found here: [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)