

Funded Early Learning – Frequently Asked Questions

Please note this document has been produced as an alternative format to the information available on the webpage. Most of the information is also contained on the Funded Early Learning page but there is additional information here.

If you've already read through the webpage, the additional information is in a box like this one to make it easier to find.

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What is Funded Early Learning?

Government funded childcare is available for all 3 and 4 year olds, and eligible 2 year olds.

All eligible children are entitled to at least 570 hours of funded childcare each year. In Sheffield we call this Funded Early Learning or FEL.

FEL helps children learn through play activities. Parents have seen their children make friends their own age and become better behaved with grown-ups; their speech and language have improved; they settle down and concentrate for longer; they're willing to try new foods which improves their nutrition; and younger children improve their sleeping patterns and toilet training.

The funded hours also help parents and carers access employment and training, spend time with their younger children or just find time to get things done.

The hours must be taken over a minimum of 38 weeks (15 hours a week, or 30 if entitled to additional hours) but can be taken over more weeks: for example, your child could take 12 hours a week for 47½ weeks. Talk to your childcare provider about what options are available.

Eligible 3 and 4 year olds will be entitled to an additional 570 hours a year (1,140 funded hours in total). This is commonly referred to as "30 Hours Free Childcare" but in Sheffield we call it Extended FEL. You will need to meet the criteria for your child to be eligible (see below).

Is my 2 year old eligible for FEL?

2 year old children are eligible if they are old enough (see the **When can I apply for 2year old FEL** section below) and if they meet any **one** of these.

EITHER the family is eligible for:

- income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit
- tax credits and an annual income under £16,190 before tax
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- the Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

OR the child:

- is looked after by a local council
- has a current statement of special education needs (SEN) or an education health and care plan (ECH)
- is getting Disability Living Allowance
- has left care under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order

How do I apply for 2 year old FEL?

Applications **can be made online** via a smartphone, tablet or computer. You can apply for 2 Year FEL via the Citizen Portal using this link. You will need an email address set up before you apply.

You can only apply for children who live with you and for whom you have parental responsibility. Our **Citizen's Portal Guidance** is available in the Downloads section on the Funded Early Learning webpage.

You must let us know if the child stops living with you or you no longer have parental responsibility while they're still using a FEL place.

If you are having problems applying online you can request assistance from a local nursery or your childminder if they are registered to provide FEL. They may need to book a time to do this and you must be with them when the application is made. If a nursery assists with the application, you are not obliged to take a place at that nursery.

Occasionally the portal facility may be unavailable due to an upgrade or a fault. If this happens you should wait at least 24 hours before trying again to allow time for the site to be fixed.

When can I apply for 2 year old FEL?

You can apply at any time starting from 10 weeks before the end of the term in which your child's turns 2.

Date of 2nd birthday	Apply from	Place funded for a year starting from
Between 1 April and 31 August	23 June	1 September
Between 1 September and 31 December	23 October	1 January
Between 1 January and 31 March	22 January	1 April

If your child is already old enough to start, then the place will be funded as soon as you confirm you are eligible using the online portal. For example, if you haven't applied yet but your child's second birthday was in the previous school term, then the place can start as soon as you complete a successful application.

Will a change in circumstances affect my 2 year old's place?

Once you have applied successfully, your child's funded hours will be available until they start school.

Even if the reason you qualified changes, your child's place is still funded. For example, if you qualified because you earned under £16,190 but your earnings go above that amount, your childcare funding is still available.

After your child turns 3, they will be entitled to the Universal FEL offer, along with all other 3 and 4 year olds – see next section.

How do I know if my 3 or 4 year old is eligible for FEL?

All children aged 3 and 4 are eligible for the universal hours of FEL from the term after their third birthday.

Date of 3 rd birthday	Place funded from*
Between 1 April and 31 August	1 September
Between 1 September and 31 December	1 January
Between 1 January and 31 March	1 April

*The 570 hours of FEL a year starts from this date, and is not linked to the calendar year, financial year or school year. If you don't start your place straight away, this is still the date the entitlement starts from.

The universal hours will be funded until your child takes a place in a school reception class or reaches compulsory school age. School reception classes are for 25 hours a week and provide a good stepping stone between nursery and school. Reception class places are available from the September after your child turns 4, but they can be deferred for one or two terms if you prefer.

Is my 3 or 4 year old eligible for the extended FEL offer?

Parents or carers of 3 and 4 year olds need to meet the following criteria in order to be eligible:

- Earn or expect to earn the equivalent of 16 hours pay at National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage over the next three months.
 - For 25 years old and over this is £120 a week (in 2017)
 - For parents under 25 years old this is £112.80 a week (in 2017)
- This threshold applies whether you are in paid employment, self-employed or on a zero hours contract.
- If you are about to start work and will become eligible, you can apply up to 14 days before the job starts.
- One or both parents can be absent from the work place due to maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave, or on statutory sick pay.
- If one parent meets the income criteria above and the other is unable to work because they are disabled, have caring responsibilities or have been assessed as having limited capability to work.
- Parents who are newly self-employed and are in a "start-up period" do not need to meet the income criteria for 12 months.
- If you are a non-EEA national you must have recourse to public funds – i.e. you must have a National Insurance Number or National Asylum Seeker Number.
- Foster Parents are eligible for their own children, but not for children they foster.
- Earnings of any one parent must not exceed £100,000 per year.

Applications based on future earnings:

If you are on a **zero hours** contract or **self-employed** or if you are **about to start work in the next 14 days**, you may not have the recorded earnings that allow HMRC to automatically verify that you meet the criteria.

You will still be able to complete your application on the basis that you have a reasonable expectation of meeting the earnings criteria over the next 3 months.

HMRC may then contact you to provide additional information to evidence that you have a reasonable expectation of earning the required amount.

If it turns out that you don't meet the earnings criteria over that 3 month period this will be picked up when you are due to reconfirm. Having not met the criteria you will no longer be eligible for the Extended FEL hours. As long as your application was based on a reasonable expectation of future earnings then you will be subject to the same rules around the grace period as all other parents – see the **What happens if I stop being eligible?** section below.

If you have any questions about how to apply, you can call the HMRC helpline on 0300 123 4907.

Additional criteria:

If you are in a couple, and **one of you is unable to work because of a disability or caring responsibilities** then you will need to be in receipt of one of the following to be eligible:

- Carer's Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- National Insurance Credits because of incapacity or limited capability to work
- or if they have been assessed as having limited capability for work for Universal Credit purposes.

The other parent in the couple still has to earn that minimum threshold. A lone parent unable to work would not be eligible, but they still get the universal 15 hours a week.

If you have any questions about how to apply, you can call the HMRC helpline on 0300 123 4907.

The eligibility criteria must be met by **both** parents/carers in a couple, or the lone parent in a single parent family.

HMRC will determine who is eligible. Neither the Local Authority nor the childcare provider can influence this decision.

The child must also be old enough – see **How do I know if my 3 or 4 year old is eligible for FEL?** above.

What if I become eligible after the term has started?

Children who become eligible part way through the school term will not be funded for the additional hours until the start of the following term.

For example, in a family with both parents at home, if one parent works and the other does not, their child won't qualify for the additional hours. If the unemployed parent starts a new job in October, they can apply for Extended Hours but the additional hours won't be funded until January.

In this example the family will need to pay privately for any childcare they need above the 15 funded hours that all 3 and 4 year olds receive.

There are a number of Government schemes available to support working parents with childcare costs, so it is important to choose the right one.

If you are eligible for Universal credit, then you could claim back 85% of your childcare costs.

If you are eligible for Tax Credits, then you could claim back 70% of your childcare costs.

If you are not eligible for either of these credits, then you could apply for Tax Free Childcare, where the Government pays 20% of your childcare costs – but your childcare provider will need to be registered.

If you have a partner who already receives Childcare Vouchers, then you may be better off staying in that scheme.

When you apply for the "30 Hours Free Childcare" online, it is a joint application with the Tax Free Childcare, so if you are better off with Tax Credits or Universal Credit then you should opt out of this part of the application.

The schemes are explained in more detail on [the Childcare Choices Website](#). There are calculators on the site to help you work out which option is best for you before committing to any changes.

Once the additional funded hours are available, parents need to notify HMRC of any changes to stop any Tax or Universal Credit being paid and avoid building up a debt that will need to be paid back.

How do I apply for the extended FEL offer?

Applications **can be made online** via a smartphone, tablet or computer. You can apply via the GOV.UK website.

You will need a Government Gateway account set up before you apply – the application will take you through this, but allow approximately 30 minutes to complete the whole process.

The application will allow you to apply for Tax Free Childcare at the same time, which can save you 20% on your childcare costs. If you are better off with Tax Credits, Universal Credit or a Voucher scheme then you can opt out of this part of the application (see **Is there any other help towards childcare fees** below).

You will need your latest pay slip, your national insurance number, your partner's national insurance number and the date you both started your current employment.

At the end of the process you will be set up with a government childcare account, which will show your eligibility details.

Go to the GOV.UK website: <https://childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/>

When do I apply for the extended FEL offer?

It is important that you apply as soon as you meet the criteria as a delay may mean you won't get the extended hours until the following term.

Children can start the extended hours from the term **after** they turn three **and** approval is received from HMRC. If you don't apply until after the start of term, your child will only be funded for the universal element (up to 15 hours a week) until the next term.

Date of 3rd birthday	Eligibility code received by no later than	Place funded from
Between 1 April and 31 August	31 August	1 September
Between 1 September and 31 December	31 December	1 January
Between 1 January and 31 March	31 March	1 April

The earliest you can apply is 16 weeks before your child's third birthday.

The latest you can apply is when your child reaches compulsory school age. As with the universal FEL hours, you cannot use these extended hours at the same time as a school reception class but you can defer a school reception place by one or two terms if you prefer.

If you become eligible part way through a term (for example if you start a new job) then the extended hours won't start until the following term. See **What if I become eligible after the term has started?** section above.

Remember to apply during the term before your child can start their place in order to secure government funding for the additional hours.

Sign up for a reminder at Childcare Choices Website: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

What happens after being told I am eligible?

If your application is approved you will receive an eligibility code to take to your childcare provider when you book a place. **This number is valid for three months.**

You will be able to find your code by going into your Childcare Service account at <https://childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/> and clicking on 30 hours free childcare. Please see the **How parents can access the childcare service** download if you are unsure how to do this.

GOV.UK will send you a reminder 4 weeks before the number expires asking you to confirm you're still eligible. It's important you reconfirm your claim when contacted.

If you don't reconfirm eligibility before the first term of extended hours starts, you will not be able to use the extended hours. (see example below)

If you don't confirm you're still eligible once the extended hours have started, you will lose eligibility and go into the grace period (see the next section below).

You don't need to reapply for the 2 year old FEL offer.

What if I stop being eligible for the extended FEL offer?

If your circumstances change and you no longer meet the criteria, or if you fail to reconfirm your eligibility, GOV.UK will inform you that you are no longer eligible.

Your child's place will **not** stop immediately as it will still be funded for a grace period. After the grace period ends your child is still entitled to the universal FEL hours (up to 15 hours a week).

The length of the grace period varies according to when you stop being eligible.

Date of ineligible decision on reconfirmation:	Grace Period end date (child funded until):
1 January – 10 February	31 March
11 February – 31 March	31 August
1 April – 26 May	31 August
27 May – 31 August	31 December
1 September – 21 October	31 December
22 October – 31 December	31 March

We will inform your childcare provider(s) that you are no longer eligible and the end date for the grace period.

If you are using more than one provider to deliver the funded hours then you should use the grace period to discuss where and when you want to use the reduced hours.

Reapplying for the Extended FEL hours

You can also reapply during your grace period and if you are eligible the funded hours will continue.

You will be given a new code that will need to be checked by your provider(s) again, but the three month renewal cycle will keep to the same dates as before – this means you may need to reconfirm quite soon after reapplying.

Because the grace period runs to the end of the term the new code will be valid from the start of the term after applying.

The grace period will not apply if the extended hours have not started yet. If your code needs to be reconfirmed before the first term and you don't confirm that you're still eligible you will only be entitled to the universal offer, up to 15 hours a week.

Losing eligibility – three examples:

Three children turn 3 in mid-December, so their parents can apply for the Extended FEL hours from the middle of September. The children will be able to take their funded childcare places from January.

The parents of child A apply on September 15th and receive a code to take to their provider and book a place for the start of January. However, they do not confirm they are still eligible three months later, on the 15th December. Because the Extended Hours have not yet started, they can no longer have the extended hours in January and will only be able to have the universal FEL hours (up to 15 hours a week).

The parents of child B apply on October 15th and book a place with a provider using the code they receive from HMRC. However, they do not confirm they are still eligible three months later, on the 15th of January. Because the Extended Hours have started, their child's place is still funded until the end of March. From April they will only be eligible for the universal hours.

The parents of child C apply on November 15th and are able to book a place with a provider starting in January. However, they do not confirm they are still eligible three months later, on the 15th of February. Because they become ineligible after the half term, their child's place is still funded until the end of August. From September they will only be eligible for the universal hours.

All of the parents can reapply for the Extended FEL Hours again if they are eligible.

None of the above scenarios should be taken as advice to act one way or the other. Applying later has implications for how the grace period will operate but applying earlier will make it easier to confirm your place with a provider.

Paid absences from work

As noted above, parents can still be eligible if they are absent from the work place due to paid sick leave, maternity, paternity or adoption leave. This means you don't lose your eligibility if any of these apply to you when it's time to reconfirm your eligibility, as long as your reduced pay still meets the threshold.

How do I find a place for my 2, 3 or 4 year old?

To offer a FEL place, childcare providers have to be registered with the Local Authority and they have to agree to our Code of Practice and Funding Agreement. <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/schools-childcare/fel-funding-providers.html>

All providers offering FEL should be on [our Sheffield Directory listings](#).

FEL providers include:

- Nursery classes in schools
- Day nurseries
- Childminders
- Playgroups and pre-schools
- Maintained nursery schools

Childcare providers should be happy for you to visit them to look around and ask any questions you may have before you make a decision on who will look after your child.

You may want to consider using more than one childcare provider, especially if you are entitled to the Extended FEL offer (30 Hours).

If you live outside of Sheffield but would like to use a Sheffield provider or live in Sheffield but want to use a provider in another area, then that can be arranged in most cases. Check with your chosen provider when you book your child's place.

You should also read our [advice on how to choose a childcare provider via this link](#).

For **2 year old FEL**, the provider will need to confirm your eligibility code is valid before they can confirm the place. You will also need your child's birth certificate and proof of residency.

For the **universal FEL for 3&4 year olds** the provider will need to see your child's birth certificate and proof of residency.

The provider may also ask to see your National Insurance Number so they can apply for additional funding called Early Years Pupil Premium. **Pupil Premium will benefit your child directly and if you are eligible it is important you allow your provider to apply.** Applying for Pupil Premium does not affect any Tax Credits or means tested benefits and is paid directly to the provider.

For the **Extended FEL (30 Hours)** the provider will need to confirm your eligibility code before they can confirm the place (see **How do I apply** section). They will also need to see your National Insurance Number(s), your child's birth certificate and proof of residency.

Can I use more than one childcare provider?

Yes, your child can use up to two different settings a day. You can also use different providers on different days – which may be useful if you need childcare at weekends or during school holidays.

All FEL places should be formally agreed between the parent and provider on a Parent/Carer Agreement form. If you are using more than one provider, you should use this form to document how many hours you are using in total. This will help you to avoid going over your entitlement of 570 or 1,140 hours a year. If you exceed your entitlement, your provider cannot be paid for the excess hours and you may be charged.

While it is permitted to use more than one provider, you should carefully consider if this is best for your child. One of the aims of FEL is to prepare children for the routine of a school day and they will benefit from stability. Changing between providers will naturally cause a disruption in that routine.

If you are using more than one childcare provider, you should ask the providers

- How they will manage the transition from one provider to the other?
- Do they have an information sharing agreement?
- Have they planned how Early Learning will be delivered between them?
- Have they worked out that the total hours do not exceed your entitlement?

For the Extended FEL offer, your provider may ask you to say who is delivering the universal hours and who is delivering the extended hours.

Universal and Extended Hours

If you are already using one provider and need a second provider in order to get the Extended FEL Hours, then the first provider can carry on claiming the Universal Hours and the new provider can claim the Extended Hours.

If you are new to both providers, then you need to choose. Both Universal Hours and Extended Hours are paid at the same rate, so it normally makes no difference to the providers – they just need to know who is claiming what so that they can get paid.

The only time it will make any difference to the provider is if your child is also eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). EYPP is additional funding paid to providers to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds and is only paid on the Universal Hours.

More information on EYPP is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-pupil-premium-guide-for-local-authorities>

Nominating one provider as the one that delivers the Universal Hours doesn't mean that they are the provider your child goes to if you lose eligibility and only get the Universal Hours. If you lose eligibility you have the grace period to choose when and where you want to take the Universal Hours.

Where one provider is delivering the full entitlement (e.g. 30 hours a week) it doesn't make any difference which hours are Universal and which are Extended.

Can my provider charge me for a government funded place?

Providers in Sheffield receive £4.07 an hour for each 3 or 4 year old, with an additional 30p an hour for children from deprived areas and additional funding available through the Early Years Pupil Premium. Places for 2 year olds are funded at £4.94 an hour.

Government funding is intended to cover the cost of providing 570 or 1,140 hours of high quality, flexible childcare per year, but many providers offer services that go beyond the scope of Funded Early Learning.

Providers are allowed to ask parents to pay for the following, but they cannot make it a condition of accessing the funded place:

- Any hours in addition to the funded entitlement.
- Consumables: e.g. food, drink, sun cream, nappies, wipes.
- Additional services: e.g. drama, music, foreign languages, yoga, outings.
- Deposits: these should be fully refundable – see below.
- On-call charges for childminders – see below.
- Transportation: e.g. picking up at a nursery outside of the funded hours.

Deposits can be charged for reserving a funded place, but they should be repaid in full if your child takes up the place. If the deposit is for privately paid for childcare it may be deducted from future charges rather than returned. The provider should not charge you an administration fee as a condition of accessing a funded place.

Childminders are allowed to apply a charge for being on-call. For example, if your child is at a nursery in the morning and with a childminder in the afternoon, the childminder may charge for being available in the morning should your child need picking up due to an emergency.

You should not be charged for more flexible hours, or to guarantee your child's funded place. Government funding should not be used as a subsidy against the provider's hourly rate – any privately paid for hours should be billed separately. If your child is at a setting morning and afternoon, providers can charge for the food at lunch but should avoid creating a break in your funded hours by charging you for the time. You should also have the option of supplying a packed lunch for your child.

When choosing your childcare provider, you should be aware of any additional charges and consider whether they add to the quality of the experience you want your child to have while in their care.

Any charges should be agreed and recorded in your Parent/Carer Agreement with the provider and you should be given a copy of this for your records. See the example Parent/Carer Agreement in the Download section.

When can I use the FEL hours?

Childcare providers can choose the times when they offer the FEL hours, so talk to them first to ensure that the time you want is available. They are not obliged to offer FEL for all their opening hours.

FEL can be taken on any day of the week but you will not be able to have:

- More than 15 hours a week (30 if eligible for the extended entitlement)
- More than 10 hours in one day
- More than two settings in one day
- Any time before 6am or after 8pm

If you work shifts, ask your provider if they can be flexible about the hours they make available.

Many settings offer FEL over 38 weeks of the year as standard, but it can be delivered over up to 52 weeks. If you want a service that covers school holidays, ask your provider about a “stretched offer”. For example:

- 570 hours a year could be 12 hours a week for 47½ weeks.
- 1,140 hours a year could be 23 hours a week for 49½ weeks.

If you want to use less than the full entitlement (for example, only 10 hours a week), this is allowed, but you should agree it with your childcare provider so they know what hours they will be funded for.

Keeping to a routine is important for your child, but if you want to take holidays, your provider will still be funded for 4 weeks per year. For holidays over 4 weeks your provider may charge you to keep the place open. Absences should be discussed with your provider in advance.

Absences due to illness

You are not able to claim back any funded hours that your child has been unable to attend due to illness.

If your child is unwell and unable to attend for more than four weeks then your provider should contact the Childcare Planning Team to discuss the circumstances and how to proceed with funding the place.

Absences due to holidays

There is a limit of four weeks per year that can be funded to keep a place open due to holidays.

If your child is going to be absent for more than four weeks holiday over the year then you will need to discuss this with your provider, as they will not be able to claim funding.

They may charge a retainer to keep the place open but they don't have to. They can offer the funded place to another child rather than accept a retainer.

What if I want to change my childcare provider?

The Parent/Carer Agreement you sign with your provider normally stipulates a 20 day or 4 week notice period. You will have to serve this notice period before you can move or transfer your child to a different provider. You can move to a different provider at the start of a new term without serving the notice period, but you should let your provider know as a courtesy.

You MUST give your new provider the details of your previous provider. Your new provider will be able to confirm that your child's funding has been transferred properly and check that you are not at risk of exceeding your annual hours. If you do not provide this information you may be liable for charges by your new providers for the 4 week notice period.

Only in very exceptional circumstance will the 4 week noticed period be waived. Examples of exceptional circumstances are:

- Unexpected relocation in Sheffield (e.g. fleeing domestic abuse, interim accommodation in another area of the city following homelessness).
- As a result of child protection the child is placed in the care of others such as foster care.
- If the family circumstances change (e.g. due to a sudden job change and it's too far to travel to your current childcare provider).
- To accommodate an unexpected changing shift/work pattern.

See Section 8 of the example Parent/Carer Agreement in the Download section.

What if I want to complain about my childcare provider?

We understand a common concern is that the provider's relationship with you and your child will be affected if you express dissatisfaction, however in the first instance you should attempt to resolve any concerns with them and discuss a reasonable solution.

Your provider should have a clear complaints procedure to follow.

Disputes involving invoices and billing should be resolved based on the terms and conditions agreed in your Parent/Carer Agreement or other contract and not referred to the Local Authority.

The Local Authority will only become involved where there is a clear breach of the current FEL Code of Practice. Complaints will be forwarded to the appropriate department for investigation.

Where possible, we will endeavour to:

- Acknowledge the complaint either by telephone or in writing within 3 working days of receipt
- Investigate the complaint to ensure that the Provider is delivering the FEL to the statutory requirements
- Refer to the Parent/Carer Agreement signed by parent and Provider
- Inform all parties of the outcome of the complaint

You can contact us on: childcareplanning@sheffield.gov.uk

What do I have to sign?

When you join a provider you will be asked to complete a Parent/Carer Agreement or contract. This will consist of the following information:

- Your child's birth certificate or passport as proof of identity and eligibility.
- Any eligibility reference number required for 2 year old FEL or the Extended FEL for 3 and 4 year olds.
- Your National Insurance Number or National Asylum Seeker Number.
- Parent/Carer and Provider declaration of the information provided.
- Termly Pattern of Attendance, setting out the number of hours your child attends. This may be recorded on a separate form – see example Termly Pattern of Attendance Form in the Download section.

The form also asks your permission for the provider to apply for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and/or the Disability Access Fund (DAF) on your child's behalf. These enable your provider to allocate additional resources to support your child.

Accessing FEL, EYPP or DAF does not affect your right to tax credits or any means tested benefits.

If your childcare costs decrease as a result of taking up a FEL place, you should notify any agency that disregards this cost from your income.

You should read and fully understand all of the information. Once the details have been understood and agreed by everyone involved, it should then be signed and dated by provider and parent and each party should keep a copy.

Once signed it is a legally binding contract that is enforceable by law. If you have any concerns about signing your Parent/Carer Agreement you can contact your nearest Citizen Advice Bureau. We cannot advise on legal matters.

You should inform any relevant authorities if your childcare costs have reduced (for example, let HMRC know if you claim Childcare Tax Credits to avoid accruing a debt).

What happens to my personal information?

In processing your personal information and any other information you provide about your family to us or your childcare provider, we must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. Further information is available from the Information Commissioner <https://ico.org.uk/>

The information recorded on the Parent/Carer Agreement is kept for reference and to allow providers to check if you or your child are eligible for the different types of funding without having to ask you for the information again.

To ensure the privacy of your information and to let you know about your information rights as well as how your information may be used, we have produced the Privacy Notice, available in the Download section.

How do I know if my child is learning?

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the Government's standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to age 5. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

Children are supported in seven specific areas:

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

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

When a child is aged between two and three, practitioners must review their progress, and provide parents and/or carers with a short written summary of their child's development in the first three areas.

In the final term of the school year in which the child turns 5 (no later than 30 June) the EYFS Profile must be completed. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1 of school. Because most children go into a school reception class, this is normally completed by the school.

Your childcare provider must follow the EYFS regulations to deliver the funded childcare. Full details are available online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

What happens when my child gets old enough for school?

Children are eligible to start in a school reception class from the term after they turn 4. You cannot have a school reception place and a FEL place at the same time.

A FEL place at a school does not guarantee a school place when your child gets older, so you need to contact the school regarding their admissions process. Going into a reception class will make your child an official pupil of the school, but you can defer this for one or two terms if you prefer.

Children reach compulsory school age the term after they turn 5 and no FEL funding will be available at that point.

Is there any other help towards childcare fees?

For childcare costs in addition to the Government funded hours there are a number of schemes available:

- Tax Free Childcare: for every £8 you pay in, the Government pays in £2.
- Childcare vouchers: available through participating employers.
- Tax Credits or Universal Credit.
- Disability Living Allowance if eligible.

You cannot access all of these programmes at the same time, so you should research which one is best for you. A Childcare Calculator is available online to help work out what's available. <https://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator>

More information on the different options is available at: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

Further Information

You can get advice regarding FEL from the childcare planning team at Sheffield City Council. See contact details below:

Childcare Planning:
Email – childcareplanning@sheffield.gov.uk
Tel: 0114 2813785

Or contact your [local Family Centre](#)

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