



# **Free Early Education Entitlement For All Three & Four Year olds**

Information for Parents and Carers,  
whose children are attending a  
registered provider in Bristol

July 2010

## Why do we provide Early Education to 3 and 4 year olds?

Children's experiences in the earliest years lay the foundations for the rest of their lives. Every child deserves the best start in life, which is why the government is committed to enabling all 3 and 4 year olds to access their entitlement to free early years education.

It is important that parents feel confident about the quality of the early years settings they choose. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a statutory framework that sets the standards for keeping young children happy, safe and secure when they are attending a setting outside their family home. It provides guidance for supporting children's early learning and development, through play that builds on their individual needs and interests. All settings offering free nursery education will be inspected by Ofsted to ensure that these standards are met.

## What is the Free Early Education Entitlement?

The Government is providing funding for all 3 and 4 year olds to attend a registered early years setting for a maximum of 15 hours a week during the school terms or a minimum of 12 hours all year round. Individual settings will be able to offer you different choices.

Registered settings and providers include:

- pre-school playgroup
- private day nursery
- childminder (if they belong to a registered childminder network)
- maintained nursery school
- nursery class in a primary or independent school
- Children's Centres

The Free Entitlement will be offered up to a maximum of 15 hours a week spread over at least 3 days and a maximum of 6 hours per day, for at least 38 weeks a year.

## When can my child access a free place?

Every child will be entitled to a maximum of 15 hours free provision from the term after their third birthday until they start school. Terms are split into 3 academic periods, September – December, January – March, April – August.

<b>Child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday</b>	<b>can access a free place from</b>
Between 1 April and 31 August	From the following 1 <sup>st</sup> September
Between 1 September and 31 December	From the following 1 <sup>st</sup> January
Between 1 January and 31 March	From the following 1 <sup>st</sup> April

## **What providers can I use?**

If your child does not attend any childcare setting at the moment, Bristol has a range of providers to choose from. A list of these providers together with details of the provision they offer, can be obtained from:

Family Information Service.  
Please call 0845 129 7217,  
Email [askcyps@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:askcyps@bristol.gov.uk)  
Fax: 0117 9142242

## **How can I access the Free Entitlement?**

Each term you will need to complete and sign a Parental Agreement, available from your childcare provider. The provider will then be able to receive money directly from us, the local authority, for your child's free place. You will not need a voucher or certificate. The parental agreement will be legally binding and you will not be able to transfer to another provider during the term without the agreed consent from the current childcare provider.

## **Can I mix sessions between providers?**

Yes, you can choose to take up the free entitlement with up to two providers, regardless of whether they are in the maintained, private, voluntary or independent sector. So, for example, you could have five hours with one provider in the voluntary sector (i.e. playgroup) and ten hours with a private provider (i.e. private day nursery).

## **Additional charges and Top Up's**

Providers will often provide lunch for children as a core part of the learning that takes place in the setting. If this takes place during a session that you have signed up to you will be charged for the lunch, though you should have the option to bring a packed lunch for your child or have access to a session that does not include a meal. Your free entitlement place should not be offered on the grounds that you have to pay for any additional service or hours. Bristol City Council does recognise the benefits and value of children eating lunch together and the nutritional content of the meals that some settings provide and therefore where possible would encourage parents to talk to the providers regarding the lunch options that are on offer.

Arrangements for charging for additional services (including nappies, lunches, uniforms etc) should be clear and transparent.

Some settings will ask for a registration fee to secure your child's place at their provision and will ask for you to sign a Parental Contract. Registration fees can only be charged if you are paying for additional hours above the free entitlement or have children who are younger accessing the setting.

## Special educational needs

The provider has a responsibility to provide support for children who are accessing their setting with identified Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Children with SEN will be offered full access to the Early Years Foundation Stage and a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum planned around their individual developmental needs.

## Can I be assured of the quality of the provider I choose?

All providers must be registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register. The integrated inspection report focuses on the quality of the childcare and education.

A providers Ofsted report is available for the public to view on the internet ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)) or you can ask the provider to give you their latest report.

Some providers may also have achieved a quality assurance award or may be working towards an award, such as the Bristol Standard.

### THE FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICE

The Family Information Service helpline can be contacted for free impartial information about early years and childcare services, family support services, leisure activities and parenting information.

Also if you would like this information in a different format, for example: Braille, audio tape, large print, computer disk or community languages, please contact

Phone: 0845 129 7217 Mon & Fri 8.30am-4.30pm  
Fax: 0117 914 2242 Tues, Weds Thurs 8.30am-6.00pm  
E-mail: [askcyps@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:askcyps@bristol.gov.uk)  
178 Easton Road  
Easton  
Bristol  
BS5 0ES

Or use 1BigDatabase – the online directory providing information on all services available for families, children and young people aged 0 – 19 in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and Bath & North East Somerset. [www.1bigdatabase.org.uk](http://www.1bigdatabase.org.uk)