

Information and frequently asked questions regarding Funded Entitlement for 2, 3 & 4 yr olds.

- 1. When can a provider be added to the directory of approved providers?** Eligible providers who agree to the terms within the Northumberland Local Code of Practice (NLCoP) can be added to the list at any point during the term, however, if this is not complete before 'headcount day' of the term in which they join the list - they will not be able to receive funding until the next term.
- 2. When do children become eligible for funding?**

3 & 4 year olds - ALL 3 & 4 yr olds are eligible for 15 hours funded entitlement children will become eligible for 3 & 4 year old funding the term after their third birthday.

2 year olds - NOT ALL 2 year olds are eligible for the 15 hours funded entitlement children who meet the eligibility criteria will become eligible for the funding the term after their second birthday. Parents of all eligible two year olds must show the provider the official confirmation of eligibility letter before the provider can apply for funding.
- 3. Can an eligible child receive the funding at any point in the term?** Currently in place each term is something called 'headcount day' and eligible children who are attending the provision by headcount date will receive the funding for that term, 3 and 4 year old children starting after 'headcount day' will not receive funding until the next term. However, they should be given a place if this is possible within current ratios. 2 year old children will be paid for from the day they start as there are 2 headcounts for this age group.
- 4. How many hours of funded entitlement are children entitled to?** All eligible children are entitled to 15 hours a week from the term after their second and/or third birthday. Parents can access as little or as much of the free entitlement as they choose.
- 5. Does a provider have to be able to offer the full 15 hours 38 weeks of the year in order to become an approved provider?** Children are legally entitled to 15 hours 38 weeks a year and although parents may choose not to use the full offer providers should be able to provide/offer this for parents. There may be some individual instances which can be looked at on an individual basis. If a provider intends to claim funding for less than 15 hours/38 weeks then parents must be made aware of this and the potential consequences i.e. they cannot reclaim the hours lost at a different point in time..
- 6. What would happen if a child leaves before or after headcount date?** Providers can request a 4 weeks' notice period from parents and they should be made aware of this when they take up their entitlement. Providers are required to pass on funding they have received for children should such a request be received from a provider where a child has moved either before or after the headcount date. This should be done directly between providers and a transfer date and payment agreed without the

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involvement of the Authority. Where providers cannot agree a transfer the Authority will make a decision and adjust funding at the next payment.

7. **What is the hourly rate for 2, 3 & 4 year old funded entitlement?** There is a base rate for each age group to which additional amounts are added for deprivation (child's postcode). The amount a provider receives may be more or less than their normal hourly rate for fee paying parents - if lower, no extra charges can be applied for the funded hours, however charges can be applied for snacks, meals (a packed lunch option must be given) and any hours a child attends over and above their funded entitlement. The current (2015/16) base rate for 2 year old funded provision is £4.19 per hour. The current (2015/2016) base rate for 3 & 4 year old funded provision is £3.20 per hour.
8. **How if funding claimed?** Approved providers will receive login details and a password along with written guidance of how to access a secure online portal to submit 'headcount' information to the Authority.
9. **Can a child take their entitlement at more than one provider?** Where a child attends more than one setting to receive their free entitlement, the parent should indicate via headcount process how they wish the funding to be split between the settings, except in the case of a child attending a **maintained nursery class** for 15 hours when the Authority will allocate a the full 15 hours funding to the school (this is because maintained schools cannot charge for any hours unless they also have community powers). If the child only attends the maintained school for a portion of their entitlement the maintained school will only receive payment for the hours attended i.e. 6 hours and 'tops up' at alternative provision this is acceptable.
10. **If a child take their free entitlement at more than one provider who should complete the on entry data assessment?** The provider where the child takes the majority of their entitlement should complete this assessment. If a child takes equal provision at two providers the providers should negotiate between themselves who completes this.
11. **Are funded places only offered during term times?** Providers who operate all year round can offer funded entitlement as a 'stretched offer', the entitlement can be provided over more weeks at less hours per week, if a setting can accommodate this they will be informed of the number of hours the child is entitled to in the term and it is the responsibility of the provider to ensure the child receives their full entitlement over the year. Independent schools may offer more hours over less weeks with the agreement of the LA.
12. **What would happen if the provision is not available?** (e.g. Closed for holidays, election, training, staff illness) It is the responsibility of the provider to make sure funded hours are provided at another time.
13. **If parents choose to take holidays or children are ill when they should receive their entitlement should the missed hours be offered at an alternative time?**
This is not a requirement in these circumstances. However, providers must be aware of and follow the monitoring of attendance guidance within the NLCOP.

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- 14. What are the rules for staggered intakes?** Providers receiving funding have a statutory obligation to offer the full 15 hours per week over the full 38 weeks to all eligible two, three and four year olds. Providers must agree an alternative delivery model with the Authority if unable to meet the core offer.

Where, for practical reasons, a provider wishes to offer a staggered intake, they must be aware that parents need not accept the situation. In such cases written agreement must be sought from the parent in advance of the start of the term before depriving a child of their free entitlement. In cases where parents agree to a staggered intake, but would be financially disadvantaged by having to pay for childcare, the Provider has an obligation to reimburse the parent for their childcare costs.

- 15. How long do approved providers remain on the directory of funded providers?**

Approved providers must renew their commitment to the NLCoP and the conditions within annually. Providers are able to remain on the list unless they request to be removed or they are no longer eligible (i.e. are no longer Ofsted registered, receive an Inadequate or Requires Improvement Ofsted Inspection grade, or are unable to meet the Northumberland Local Code of Practice).

NOTES

- The Northumberland Local Code of Practice (NLCoP) sets out the FULL expectations for providers offering Funded Places. Approved providers must be fully aware of all the requirements within. This frequently asked questions document is to support providers understanding of common issues we have recently addressed and is not full guidance.
- Parents who apply for 2 year old funding and are successful in their application for a funded place, will receive a list of approved providers from which they can choose. The provider should check each child's eligibility (i.e. copy of the letter from NCC confirming they will be funded and sight of child's birth certificate to confirm age eligibility).
- Approved Providers can receive 2 year old leaflets which they can use to distribute to parents or prospective parents to promote the 2 year old funding and help parents check if their child is eligible to receive 2 year old funding.
- Regarding 3 & 4 year olds, this is a universal offer. It is parental choice with all the funding as to where they place their child. (Providers must check age eligibility by sight of birth certificate)
- Sight of birth certificates should be documented in induction documentation and signed by the staff member who has viewed the certificate. This is to ensure children are eligible by their age i.e. term after their second/third birthday and providers evidence that correct procedures are being followed if an audit was carried out under the term described in NLCoP.