

# Free Early Education for 3 and 4 year olds

September 2017 - August 2018



SURREY

**This leaflet is to help you understand about free early education at an important time in your child's development.**

### **Can you tell me a little bit about free early education?**

It is the opportunity for children to take part in planned learning activities, to consistently high standards, to help them progress towards achieving the early learning goals set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

You can find out more about the Early Years Foundation Stage at the Department for Education (DfE) website:

**[www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)**

### **How many hours can my child have for free during term time?**

Your child can have up to 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year.

### **How are the 38 weeks spread across the year during term time?**

Childcare providers are able to claim for the following number of days each term not including half-term breaks or school holidays:

**Autumn term 2017 – 70 days**

**Spring term 2018 – 55 days**

**Summer term 2018 – 65 days**

Not all childcare providers will be able to offer you 38 weeks or will be able to let you use the hours flexibly – they may have set session times each year.

If your chosen childcare provider does not offer 38 weeks, you may not be able to take the balance somewhere else.

### **What if I want to spread my childcare over more than 38 weeks across the year?**

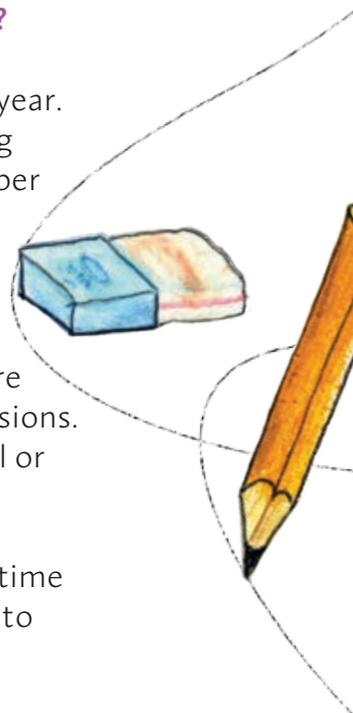
Some childcare providers allow the free hours to be taken throughout the year. This means that you would have fewer hours a week but for more weeks of the year. This is often referred to as a stretched offer of childcare. When you are choosing whether you want to use your hours term-time or throughout the year, remember that you will not be able to change this arrangement again until the term after your child's next birthday.

### **Can sessions be mixed between childcare providers?**

Yes, you can choose to take up free early education with more than one childcare provider if this suits you better. Schools are also beginning to offer a mix of sessions. So, for example, your child could have 9 hours in a local authority nursery school or class and 6 hours with a private childcare provider.

If you choose to split your hours between a childcare provider that offers term-time and a childcare provider that offers stretched, it is unlikely that you will be able to claim the full 570 hours.

If you choose to take up the full entitlement with one childcare provider, and take up additional hours with another childcare provider, you will be charged for all these additional hours.



### Can I choose exactly how many hours I take each day and when?

Some childcare providers will be able to allow you to use your hours flexibly over the week. Some childcare providers can spread the hours over 52 weeks, and at weekends. But you won't be able to have:

- More than 10 hours in one session
- More than two sites in a single day
- Any time before 6am or after 8pm



### Which childcare providers qualify?

The following are examples of childcare providers who qualify:

- Academies
- Day nurseries
- Maintained nursery schools and classes
- Pre-schools.
- Childminders
- Independent schools
- Playgroups

All childcare providers who offer free early education are inspected by Ofsted to make sure they reach a certain standard, to find out more visit: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Whilst we will do all we can to find you a place of your choosing, the offer is for a free part-time early years provision place and not a guarantee of a place with a particular childcare provider.



### Who can get free part-time early years provision?

As a general rule children can get free part-time early years provision from the term after their third birthday, for two years until they reach compulsory school age.

Child born between	Can have a free place from
1 April - 31 August 2014	September 2017
1 September - 31 December 2014	January 2018
1 January - 31 March 2015	April 2018
1 April - 31 August 2015	September 2018

Your child can receive the free early education until they either, start in a reception class at a local authority maintained school or reach compulsory school age, which is the school term after their fifth birthday.

### Does the free early education have a monetary value?

No, free early education is for up to 15 free hours a week. It is not a voucher or a parental subsidy.

### How do I claim?

You are not able to claim for free early education directly. Childcare providers that are registered on The Surrey Directory of Early Years Providers are able to offer free part-time places and will claim on your behalf.



### Is it really free or will I have to pay any fees?

The offer for up to 15 hours a week, for 38 weeks a year, is free. However, childcare providers can set the hours they choose to offer free early education, which can mean that you will be charged for any additional time taken.

Childcare providers can set their own rates for additional time or services. They should let you know in advance if you're expected to pay anything. You should also get an invoice, at least once a term, clearly showing what they are asking you to pay for.

### Will the childcare provider ask me to sign any forms?

The first term that a childcare provider claims on your behalf you will be asked to fill in a Free Early Education for 3 and 4 year olds Registration form. They will ask you to show your child's birth certificate or passport as proof of identity and eligibility. They will also ask you to complete a Free Early Education for 3 and 4 year olds Declaration of attendance form at the beginning of every term and another form if you want to increase or decrease the number of hours your child attends.

### School admission and deferred entry

In Surrey, children are able to start school in the September after their fourth birthday. You may choose to get a place at a school under the normal admission arrangements but postpone your child's admission to later on in the academic year and keep them with the childcare provider until then.

The place will need to be taken up within the school year. If you are planning to defer entry, you will need to inform the school as soon as you have made this decision.

### What will happen to my funding if my child is absent?

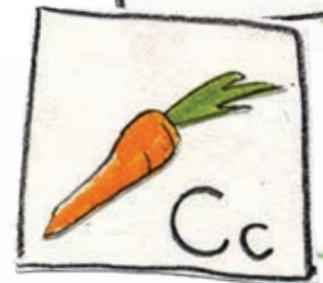
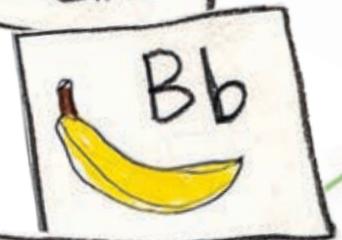
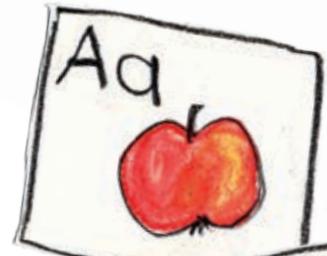
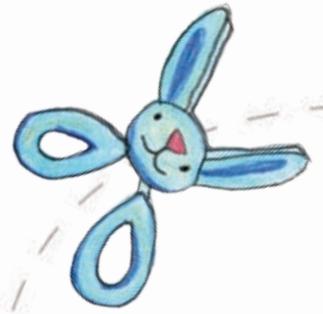
If your child is likely to be absent you should notify your childcare provider.

### Is there any support available for a child with a special educational need and/or a disability?

Every childcare provider will expect to have a child with a special educational need and/or a disability at some point. With careful planning and organisation most of these children are able to participate fully in the activities. Childcare providers are able to access specialist advice and may be able to apply for the full free hours even if the child does not go all the time.

### Can the lunch hour be part of the the free early education offer?

Yes, a child's free hours can be taken up around lunchtime. The childcare provider may make an extra charge for the lunch or you may be given the option of a packed lunch for your child.



### What happens if my childcare provider does not offer the full free hours?

Childcare providers in Surrey do not need to offer the full free hours. Some may not be able to be open every day of the week and some do not offer 38 weeks a year. If you choose a childcare provider that does not offer the full free hours, the childcare provider will let you know in writing what that means for you.



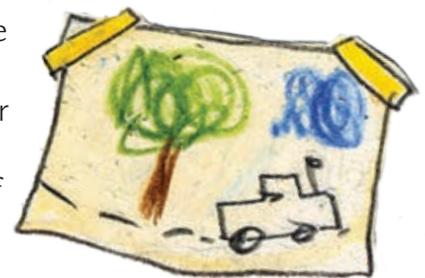
### Do I have to live in Surrey?

No. Surrey County Council pays for children who go to registered childcare providers in Surrey, it doesn't matter where they live. A child moving to England from another country is entitled to early years provision on the same basis as any other child, regardless of whether they have British citizenship.

### Can I change providers once the term has started?

You can only change childcare provider if:

- you move house and it's now too far to travel to your current childcare provider
- you change jobs and the hours your childcare provider offers no longer meet your childcare needs
- you have stated on either your Registration form or the Declaration of attendance form, that your child will be leaving during the term and you specify the last day that you wish the childcare provider to claim the free hours for you
- your childcare provider gets an inadequate outcome in their latest Ofsted inspection.



### Other help and support available

Did you know you that if you go to our online childcare finder and enter your location or postcode, you'll be able to scroll down the page and find the free early education places available?

**[www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarefinder](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarefinder)**

Find out more about childcare on the Surrey Family Information Service web pages at: **[www.surreycc.gov.uk/choosingchildcare](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/choosingchildcare)**

### Contact us

**Phone:** 0300 200 1004

**Email:** [surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk)

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