

FAQs about free early years education places for 3 and 4 year olds

Worcestershire County Council provides **free** early education places for **all three and four year old children** within Worcestershire.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) for providers

To help early years providers, practitioners or managers we have put together a list of frequently asked questions, with answers, about free early education places below. This document has been designed for download and/or print from the Early Years and Childcare Service's website. All information is correct from 1st April 2011.

We hope that this FAQs document is helpful and answers many of the questions that you may have. However, if you have any queries or would like more information please do not hesitate to contact **Nicky Burford** on **01905 822 682** or nburford@worcestershire.gov.uk.

1. How should our setting provide the free childcare place?

Parents should be able to access the **full** 15 hours, over 38 weeks, without any charge. The free entitlement must be free at the point of delivery. There must be no charges to be paid up front. Where possible, the free place should be provided flexibly to meet the needs of parents. Parents must have the option to only access 15 hours over 38 weeks if they wish. Registration fees can only be charged if the parent is accessing additional hours and/or services.

2. Are there any restrictions?

To receive the full 15 hours of free early education, the child must attend for a minimum of three days each week. They do not have to take up the full 15 hours.

Parents can use:

- A minimum of 2.5 hours in one day
- A maximum of 10 hours in one day
- A maximum of 12.5 hours over two days
- A maximum of 15 hours over one week

3. When can a child have a free place?

Children who are born between:	Will have a free place from the following:
1st April and 31st August	September
1st September and 31st December	January
1st January and 31st March	April

FAQs about free early years education places for 3 and 4 year olds

4. Our setting doesn't currently provide Nursery Education Funding. How do we get involved?

If you are registered with Ofsted, or an accredited Childminder, please get in touch with Nicky Burford on 01905 822682.

5. What do I have to do to receive funding for children attending our setting?

Once you have been through the registration process, you will receive a Provider Claim Form after every half-term, which must be filled out fully, including the child's date of birth and full address, in order to receive the funding.

In order to confirm that the child you are claiming for is eligible, you must see a copy of their birth certificate and ask them to fill out a parent claim form. If the child is attending more than one setting, please return a copy of the parent claim form along with your funding claim form. Parent claim forms should be filled in annually, or whenever circumstances change. Please retain copies of the Parent claim Forms for your records, as a copy will be requested if you are audited by the Early Years and Childcare Service.

6. How does our setting receive payment from Worcestershire County Council?

In March each year, an indicative budget will be sent to all settings, which outlines figures for the estimate payment based on the setting's payments from the previous financial year.

Payments are made termly, and consist of an estimate payment for the term and an actual payment for the previous term.

The actual payment is the total amount of children and hours, less the estimate payment, which was paid in the previous term. This is paid in arrears; however, an estimate payment is made at the start of the term based on the indicative budget.

7. What if a child attends more than one setting?

If the child attends more than one private, voluntary or independent setting, the funding will be split proportionately between both settings. However, if the child attends a maintained setting and a private, voluntary or independent setting, funding will be allocated to the maintained setting as a priority. If less than 15 hours are taken, remaining hours can be taken at an alternative provider.

Please note, from September 2011, funding will be split proportionately across any two providers, including maintained provision.

For example, if a child attends setting A for 20 hours a week and setting B for 10 hours a week, setting A will receive two thirds of the funding and setting B the remaining third. Therefore, 10 hours will be allocated to setting A and 5 hours at setting B.

FAQs about free early years education places for 3 and 4 year olds

This can be worked out using the following formula:

Hours at your setting ÷ total hours child attends funded childcare providers x 15 = funded hours.

Applied to the example above, it can be worked out like this:

20 hours (at setting A) ÷ 30 hours (total hours) x 15 = 10 funded hours at setting A

10 hours (at setting B) ÷ 30 (total hours) x 15 = 5 funded hours at setting B

Total funded hours = 10 + 5 = 15 hours

If the child attends more than two settings, the parent is entitled to choose which two settings they would like the funding to be allocated to.

8. We would like to offer the funding for more than 38 weeks of the year. Is this possible?

If you wish to offer the funding during the holiday you can annualise parents' bills. For example, if you are open for 50 weeks of the year, you could divide the total funded hours by 50 weeks instead of 38 weeks, reducing the weekly amount, but offering the funding all year round. You are under no obligation to do this. If you wish to offer this, parents must be given the option to have their bill calculated over 38 weeks only.

9. If a child is unwell, is the free place affected?

If a child is unwell for a short period, you can still claim the funding, as you are expected to keep their place open for them. However, if the illness is for more than four weeks, please contact Nicky Burford on 01905 822682.

10. If the child takes a short holiday, can we still claim funding?

If the child is unable to attend due to a family holiday, their free hours will normally be used to keep their free place open until they return. If your setting wishes, you can offer a retainer to parents, enabling them to keep the child's place open, and allowing them to receive their free hours later in the term. You are under no obligation to offer this.

11. Can children still receive the free place if they do not live in Worcestershire?

If the child attends a childcare provider in Worcestershire, the place will be funded regardless of where the child lives. If the child attends a childcare provider in another local authority, that local authority will fund the child's place. If a child is attending two settings, one which is outside of Worcestershire, please

FAQs about free early years education places for 3 and 4 year olds

return the parent claim form with the Provider Claim Form, and an agreement will be made between the two local authorities.

12. A child is joining our setting mid-way through the term, can we still claim funding?

As long as the parents have formally notified the other setting that they are no longer taking up the place, you can claim for the remaining weeks in that term. Please include them on your Provider Claim Form, stating how many weeks the child will attend with you during the term.

13. Is there any extra funding for children with Special Educational Needs?

If a child has Special Educational Needs (SEN), their entitlement is still a maximum of 15 free hours. In previous years it has been possible for children to receive up to 30 hours, if a child has attended a specialist provision, alongside a mainstream provision. This will no longer occur. Where a child with SEN attends a specialist provision, funding will be given to that setting as a priority. If a child attends a specialist provision for less than 15 hours, children will be able to receive their remaining entitlement at any other funded setting. This is the only situation in which a child's funding will not be split proportionately.

Children who are currently being funded for more than 15 hours will continue to be so until the end of the Summer Term 2011. Any new children from April 2011 will only be funded for a maximum of 15 hours.

For any child who attends less than 15 hours, but is funded for 15 hours, this will continue until the end of the Summer Term 2011. Thereafter, they will only be funded for the number of hours they attend.

Please be aware that supplementary funding for children with SEN and funding for specialist settings is under review, however it will continue in its current format until March 2012.

14. How do I bill for additional hours/services?

Invoices must be clear to parents. They should state the amount of hours that the child is funded for, and the fees for any additional hours/services.

If the child attends for more than 15 hours at your setting, or between two settings, the remaining hours must be charged at your hourly rate, not the funding rate.

15. Can lunchtime be classed as part of the free entitlement?

The free place can include lunchtimes. You can offer a meal, either as part of the free hours or at an additional cost, however, this should be the parent's choice, and they should be able to bring a packed lunch for their child if they wish, at no additional cost.

FAQs about free early years education places for 3 and 4 year olds

16. Where can parents get more information?

If parents have any further queries, please direct them to the Family Information Service.

Parents can call their helpline on **01905 822 666** where there will be qualified staff (Family Information, Advice and Brokerage Officers) at the end of the phone to take their call, Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. They can also email the team familyinfo@worcestershire.gov.uk or visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/familyinfo.

The Family Information Service's website now includes a [Nursery Education Funding page](#) which contains **FAQs for parents** that is also available to download and/or print. Follow the 'button' called **Childcare, children's centres and schools** on the home page and then click on the **Free places for 3 and 4 year olds** 'button.'

In addition to Nursery Education Funding and childcare information, Worcestershire's Family Information Service offers a whole range of information and advice to parents and carers, including:

- Support services for families
- Finding childcare
- Schools and learning
- Things to do and places to go
- Money matters
- Working with children
- Rights of working parents
- And more.....

'Any family, any question!'

The Family Information Service welcomes any family with any question and a team of trained Family Information, Advice and Brokerage Officers are on hand to help...

If you feel a family you are working with would benefit from chatting to a Family Information, Advice and Brokerage Officer, please give them the contact details above.

Worcestershire's Family Information Service has been awarded a Families First Quality Award demonstrating a commitment to improving information and advice.