

Early Education Funding Fact Sheet

Solihull Family Information Service

This fact sheet details the offer you can expect to receive from Private, Voluntary and Independent childcare providers who are registered with Solihull MBC to provide the early education funding entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

How do childcare providers become funded to offer early education places?

In order to receive funding from Solihull MBC, each childcare provider must be registered with Solihull MBC and agree to abide by:

- Statutory Guidance relating to early education and childcare and
- Provider Agreement published by Solihull MBC

When can I take up my free entitlement?

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to receive up to 15hrs funded early education per week up to a maximum number of hours per term. Eligibility begins for 3 year olds based on their 3rd birthday as detailed below up until they start full time school; this can be for a maximum of 6 terms for a total of 570 hours per year.

Child's 3rd birthday

1st April and 31st August
1st September and 31st December
1st January and 31st March

When you can claim

From the following September term
From the following January term
From the following April term

The funded hours must be taken between 6am and 8pm only, with a maximum 10hrs taken per day using a maximum of 2 sites per day.

You will need to ask your chosen childcare provider to confirm **when** they offer the early education funding as some will offer it all day and others may offer specific sessions such as 3 hours per day over 5 days. To take up your place you will need to show a copy of your child's birth certificate.

Where can I take up my entitlement?

Your child can access their funded entitlement at an Ofsted Registered childcare provider who is registered with their local authority to offer funded early education places. If you wish, you can request to split your entitlement between childcare settings as long as they are both registered to offer funded places and you ensure your child does not attend for more than their 15hrs per week entitlement unless you pay for additional hours. Not all childcare settings will be able to offer the full entitlement or a reduced entitlement; you will need to speak to the individual provider about what they offer.

Although you are entitled to take up a funded early education place for your child, the local authority does not guarantee a place at a particular childcare provider or a specific pattern of attendance.

School Nurseries

You may choose to apply for your child to access their funded entitlement at a school nursery. The process for applying for a school nursery place has changed. Parents will now need to contact their chosen school directly to apply for a school nursery place. There should be information on each school website on how and when to apply as well as their admissions criteria and admissions policy. The school will be able to tell you what they can offer.

If you are not sure which schools are local to you please visit <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/onlinemaps> where you can search for schools closest to your postcode area including your catchment school.

You should check the start date for the September term with the individual school to see when your child will be able to start as if you accept the offer of a place at a school nursery; you will not be able to access a place for your child at a private childcare setting at any point during the term.

If you wish to split your funding between a school nursery and a private setting you are entitled to make a request to the school and we would expect them to make a reasonable adjustment to accommodate parents where possible. If the school is only able to offer a 15 hour place, the Family Information Service can support you to find a suitable alternative in a private setting if you prefer.

Will I be charged?

If your child attends a private childcare setting just for their funded 15hrs entitlement (or less), there should be no compulsory charge.

If you would like your child to attend for longer than 15 hours per week or to access additional care during holiday periods if funded hours are not available then you will need to ask the private setting how much more you would have to pay.

'Government funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of free, high quality, flexible childcare. It is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional hours or additional activities. Parents can therefore expect to pay for any meals offered by the provider alongside their free entitlement. Parents can also expect to pay for other consumables or additional activities offered by the provider, such as nappies or trips. Where parents choose to purchase additional hours of provision, consumables or additional activities, this is a private matter between the provider and the parent. However, providers must offer alternative options for parents. This could include, for example, allowing a parent to bring in their own consumables or a packed lunch, where the meal offered is not suitable for children with specific dietary needs or the parent prefers a lower cost option.' (Taken from *Early years entitlements: operational guidance for local authorities and providers June 2018*).

How will I know what I am being charged for?

Private, voluntary and independent providers are free to set their own criteria for the admission of children, providing they comply with relevant legislation on equalities and non-discrimination. However, for clarity, all parents should have the same rights to access a free entitlement place, regardless of whether they choose to pay for additional hours of provision, additional activities or meals.

Providers should ensure that their admissions information is clear and accessible for parents, for example, by publishing the number of standalone 15 and 30 hours places they offer to enable parents to make an informed decision on where to take up their child's entitlement. Providers should ensure that they are completely clear and transparent about which hours / sessions can be taken as free provision and this should be consistent for all parents taking up free hours. (Taken from *Early years entitlements: operational guidance for local authorities and providers June 2018*).

Providers should also ensure they have clear invoicing structures in place for parents so that you can easily recognize and understand what hours you have accessed under your funded entitlement and how any fees charged relate to additional hours and services you have chosen to take up.

What can I do if I feel I am being invoiced incorrectly or it is not clear what I am paying for?

You should contact your childcare provider and ask them to go through your invoice with you and break down all costs to show you exactly what you are paying for. They should be able to detail the rate they are charging you for additional hours / days attended, any charges for additional services/consumables including meals, uniform, trips as well as showing that you are getting your full funded entitlement.

If a childcare provider is charging you for additional hours they should be able to show you how they have worked out the cost of your 15hrs and how this has been deducted from your invoice.

E.g. the childcare provider will need to work out the total cost for your 15hrs free entitlement using their usual rates **not** using the rates funded by the Local Authority.

What can I do if I am not happy with the childcare provider I have chosen?

You will need to give the correct amount of notice to your childcare provider if you are choosing to move to another setting either mid-term or at the end of a term which can be 4-6 weeks, this will be stated in the contract you signed when you took up the place. The Family Information Service can support you to find an alternative childcare provider; you can contact them on 0800 389 8667 or email familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk

What can I do if I am not satisfied that my child has received their early education place?

You should firstly speak to your childcare provider and ask them to go through any invoices you have received to show you the funded hours. If you are still dissatisfied you can put in a complaint to Solihull MBC following the Council's Corporate Complaints policy. <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/About-the-Council/Complaints/councilcomplaints> or call 0121 704 8005 or email connectcc@solihull.gov.uk

What can I do if I am unhappy with the care provided by my childcare provider?

You can contact Ofsted complaints 0300 1234 234 or complete the online form <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-form>

Updated June 2019