

Free Entitlement (Universal and Extended) FAQs for Settings

Contents

Admissions and Eligibility	2
Patterns of Delivery	3
Invoicing	5
Additional Services	6
Headcount and Claiming	7
Non-FE Sources of Funding	9
Closed Settings	10
Childminder Specific Questions	10
Extended FE Specific Questions	11
Privacy Notice and Leaflets	13
Queries to WSCC	14
Areas of Deprivation	14
Participation Funding	14
Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) Specific Questions	14

Admissions and Eligibility

Can a childcare setting give priority to children attending full time?

Priority can be given to children who are attending full time and/or purchasing additional services provided by the setting, but this must be clearly documented in the admissions policy of the childcare setting. The childcare setting is obliged to offer their timetabled free time only if they do not fill their vacancies with children accessing a full session/day, and they may choose to offer the place on a term by term basis. The parent should consider the educational benefit to the child of attending for a full session in making a decision.

How should admission policies be set out to explain to parents how FE works?

The admission policy should set out the childcare setting's priorities for admission. Childcare settings can refer to the policy if a parent challenges a decision not to give admission. "FE sessions only" must be included in the list of priorities.

Can you limit the number of children we offer FE places to?

Yes. Within your admission policies you can clearly state how many of your overall places are allocated for 2 year old FE, Universal FE and Extended FE.

Can there be any penalty clause placed upon parents if they put their names down with several different settings as this affects the settings planning for places?

The Free Entitlement must be free at the point of delivery and as such cannot have any conditions applied to it. However, you can now charge parents a reasonable refundable deposit for Universal and Extended FE places, which must be paid back (or not cashed in) after headcount week. This is not applicable to Two Year Old FE funded places.

We hold sessions to increase to 15 hours when children are 3, however holding 30 hours for the eligible parents would be difficult, how can we accommodate this?

Until a parent provides you with a code which you can validate with the Family Information Service, you should not be offering or holding Extended FE places. Parents can only apply for their children up to 16 weeks before the child turns 3. You should make parents aware of this and have it included within your admissions policy, so that parents are aware that you cannot guarantee them a full Extended FE place, just as they cannot guarantee you that they will be eligible by the time their child reaches eligible age.

Are children without British citizenship eligible for FE?

A child moving to England from another country is entitled to Universal FE on the same basis as any other child, regardless of whether they have British citizenship. However, access to Extended FE depends upon the child having "recourse to public funds"

Can we offer 30 hour places only to children who are older or we feel could cope with full time as we have no sleep facilities? Do we need to provide sleep facilities?

You can limit the number of 30 hour spaces you offer; in the same way you can now in your admissions/FE policy for Universal and 2 year old FE. However, you can't pick and choose which individual children you feel 'can cope' with 30 hours childcare per week. 30 hours a week is not full time childcare. Many settings who do not have sleep rooms, have a quiet corner in which they have specialist early years sleep mats, for children to rest/sleep on if they still require a nap. The Extended FE is for children from the term after their third birthday.

We have concerns over how we will manage our waiting list - if we offer 30 hour places and they are no longer eligible at the time of starting, how does this affect our business?

Whilst managing your admissions you need to bear in mind that you shouldn't offer a place to a child until you have verified their code with the Family Information Service. Once the code is verified, if the parent loses eligibility they will move into a grace period, which in many cases is longer than most settings notice periods.

What happens to those children that don't get the 30 hours? Will they be squeezed out of settings?

It is not the intention of the Government to displace Universal FE children with Extended FE children. This is where localised collaboration and innovative thinking in how to make it work is essential. The Local Authority has processes in place to monitor sufficiency across the county which relies upon settings updating their places and vacancy information.

Patterns of Delivery

Are the FE hours restricted to particular times of day?

Each childcare setting can stipulate where the funded hours fall during the day, between 6.00am and 8.00pm. However, evidence shows that continuous provision is in the best interest of the child. Children should be able to take up their free hours in continuous blocks

and artificial breaks in the day should be avoided, for example over the lunch period. This information must be clearly provided to parents.

If a childcare setting has an INSET day/Emergency closure does the parent lose the FE time?

INSET days are over and above the 38 weeks entitlement. As such if the childcare setting has for example INSET days or bank holidays that causes loss of FE time then they should offer additional hours to compensate. (If they cannot offer additional hours they should be planning their INSET days outside of delivery periods. If they can offer alternatives it is up to the setting and their parents how many they arrange). In the case of Emergency Closures (e.g. for bad weather) then funding for 1 or 2 days closure is not recovered by WSCC. Parents should refer to the setting's own policies.

Can childcare settings offer less than 15 (30 for Extended FE setting) hours FE but still charge for additional hours?

If the childcare setting offers FE over 38 weeks or less, and is open for 15 hours or more per week, then they must offer the full 15 hours of FE (30 for Extended FE settings). Additional time over and above FE can be charged for. However, if they offer FE stretched over 39+ weeks the entitlement will be less per week but they can only charge for the additional hours over and above FE. Childcare settings can still choose the times during which FE is made available but are responsible for ensuring parents are fully informed prior to admission. Settings can also still choose how many FE places they offer each term, as long as this is open and transparent.

Does FIS have to share vacancy information with parents?

No, however, the FIS use your vacancy information for a lot more than informing parents of local childcare. It is used by planning departments and for sufficiency decisions. The FIS does have a statutory duty to publish your updated details on a regular basis and it is a condition of FE funding that you update your details, via the portal, each term. The vacancy information that you provide through the portal does not show on your public details. The free type box that you complete regarding your setting is what parents see. This could simply say 'contact provider for further information'.

Can we have 2 sessions 9:00-12:00, 12:30-3:30 and charge for a lunch club?

As per the Statutory Guidance from the DfE, artificial breaks in the day such as this should be avoided. Places must be delivered completely free of charge and provided flexibly in a pattern which meets the needs of parents. In terms of the Extended FE, this is for working parents and providers should work with parents to ensure that as far as possible the pattern of hours are convenient for parents' working hours. Although parents may be offered the opportunity to collect their child for the lunch break, consideration needs to be given to how this practically works for working families. You must make it clear in your policies, and to parents, any potential costs involved before they sign up to your setting.

It must also be optional, so if a parent wants to access both sessions, but either wants to provide a packed lunch or collect the child in between sessions, this is permitted. If the child brings a packed lunch but Pساتاگے۴ for the non-FE time, you can still charge for the time, but not the food. You cannot make attendance at the lunch club a requirement in order to access the child's FE.

Can Extended FE be used over multiple settings (split/shred funding)?

Yes, it can be, you can split funding (share funding) across numerous settings, however, in the Statutory and Operational Guidance the DfE state that children should only use their entitlement across two sites in one day. This is the same for all types of FE; Universal, Extended and Two Year Old FE.

Invoicing

How should a childcare setting show the FE on invoices to parents?

Childcare settings should provide clear, written information about any fees or charges for additional services, or additional time taken over and above the FE. Parents cannot be charged for any part of the minimum funded entitlement either directly or indirectly. Any fees charged for additional time must be at the standard rate of the childcare setting and should not be more than those charged to parents whose children do not access a free place. See further information and a sample invoice: www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecsfreeentitlement

How much is the FE worth in money, and should this be shown as a deduction on a parent's bill?

The FE is not a monetary value to be taken off a childcare setting's bill, but a grant in terms of free time. The childcare setting claims the grant on behalf of the parent and funding is paid directly to the childcare setting from the Local Authority. There should be no charge for any FE hours at a childcare setting. Childcare settings can charge for any additional time or services that the child attends or uses. Each childcare setting should provide clear invoices to parents. Further information and a sample invoice are available online.

Can a childcare setting charge in full for hours taken by a child, and provide a refund of FE at a later date?

No, hours must be free at the point of access.

How should deposits, admin fees, registration fees and invoicing be administered?

Parents should not be required to pay a registration fee, non-refundable deposit or admin fee for accessing their FE only. Invoices should be clear and transparent i.e. showing number of FE hours at no cost and other non-FE hours or services itemised clearly. However, you can now charge parents a reasonable refundable deposit for Universal and Extended FE places, which must be paid

back (or not cashed in) after headcount week. This is not applicable to Two Year Old FE funded places.

What happens if a parent leaves without meeting the notice period?

Please see the [Provider Declaration and Additional Information for providers](#).

Additional Services

Can a childcare setting charge for drinking water, paints etc. during FE time? No, these must be included. Charges can be made for meals, snacks and child hygiene products. FE sessions can include the lunch period. Artificial breaks in the day should be

avoided. The meal itself and the cost of the meal is an additional service. Parents should be given the option of providing a healthy packed lunch if they prefer, rather than paying for the lunch provided by the setting.

Can a childcare setting charge for additional services and activities during the free hours?

Childcare settings can charge for additional services but parents should not be required or expected to take them up in order to access a free place. Additional services are primarily time outside of the FE session, meals and snacks; child hygiene products, activities or sessions outside of core EYFS e.g. swimming, dancing, outings. Parents should be advised by the setting of any additional costs and an explanation of what they are for, before the child takes up the place. Childcare settings should provide an itemised bill stating clearly what is being paid for and what has been received free. Parents should not be required to purchase additional services in order to access the FE.

What can we charge for?

There are a number of things you can charge for such as meals, snacks and child hygiene products. Though parents must have the option of providing their own and not be charged for these. Trips, special activities, uniform, water bottles, nursery bags etc. can also be charged for but you must make it clear that a parent is not obligated to take up these items in order to access FE. There are two distinct types of revenue for settings, as below:

- Optional = optional services are additional 'options' that parents can opt in or opt out of, such as lunch, snacks, nappies etc. They are optional because if the parent opts in they pay the setting to provide them, if the parent opts out they don't pay but the parent must provide their own for their child.
- Voluntary = voluntary contributions can be asked of parents for the general support of the setting – like a donation. This can be for things such as paper, paints, post-its, general delivery of the EYFS. They are voluntary because the parent is not obliged to pay, but if they do not pay, they also do not have to provide their own for their child. The setting is still

required to provide these items for the child whether the parent pays or not. Extras such as uniforms, book bags, branded items etc. are also voluntary as they are not an EYFS requirement, however, if a parent doesn't pay for them, the setting does not have to provide them.

Headcount and Claiming

What if a child misses headcount day or approaches our childcare setting after the start of term?

A child can only be funded if the childcare setting has submitted their details at headcount to WSCC. Disputes should be settled between the childcare setting and the parent. It is the settings responsibility to inform parents of the headcount dates. In the week of the headcount it is essential that a child is attending the hours agreed for that term. Failure to attend in the headcount week will result in loss of funding. Parents may inform the childcare setting in advance of a planned holiday during headcount or illness of a child. Childcare settings may ask for exceptional situations to be considered for dispensation after the headcount date via: free.entitlement@westsussex.gov.uk

Headcount day - why are they on these particular days/dates? Can they be moved forward (beginning of term)?

Spring term Census is set by the DFE. The headcount days are there to enable parents to have found and accessed a setting in time, if they are too close to the beginning of term we may see an increase in the number of post-headcount/exceptional payment requests.

Does a child need to be in attendance for the number of hours claimed by a childcare setting?

Yes, the child should attend for the FE that has been claimed. Occasional lateness, sickness and planned holidays are acceptable. Two weeks would be a typical family holiday. For longer periods the circumstances of the family would be taken into account e.g. four weeks return to country of origin would not trigger reclaimed funding. Anything longer should not be claimed on headcount and treated as an Exceptional Request. Childcare settings should make it clear to parents that any holiday taken is 'lost' FE.

What form is used by parents and carers to apply for the FE?

Parents should be given a Parent Declaration form by the childcare setting for Universal and Extended FE. However, for Extended FE, parents also need to apply to the HMRC for an eligibility code prior to being offered a place at a childcare setting (see below).

The Parent Declaration needs to be signed by the childcare setting once they have seen an appropriate ID confirming the child's identity and date of birth (plus eligibility code for Extended FE and/or 2 year old FE). Please see the FAQs for Two Year Old FE document for further information regarding Two year old FE eligibility and claiming processes. Childcare settings can download the latest Parent Declaration form at www.westsussex.gov.uk/ecsfreeentitlement

How do parents apply for Extended FE (30 hours)?

Parents can get information on [how to apply online](#). Parents can contact HMRC on the dedicated helpline for Extended FE and Tax Free Childcare on 0300 1234 097.

The parent is unable to provide the childcare setting with an acceptable form of proof of ID and date of birth for the child. Can the child still get funding?

The childcare setting will not be able to put the child on headcount as they cannot verify the date of birth. It is the childcare setting's responsibility to communicate this requirement to the parent at the earliest opportunity (point of initial enquiry). The parent should contact the Family Information Service to discuss what other proof of date of birth will be accepted.

How often does a parent need to fill in a Parental Declaration form?

The parent completes one form for each childcare setting that will provide FE for the child. The latest version of the parent declaration should always be used, as it is the most accurate and up to date form, capturing all the relevant information needed. Additional boxes exist on the form to capture any subsequent changes to addresses, or hours claimed and the parent will be required to sign again

Do childcare settings have to use the WSCC parent declaration form?

Yes, unless WSCC ratify use of a childcare setting's own form.

How often do childcare settings have to send parent declaration forms into West Sussex County Council?

You only need to send a parent declaration form into us when FE funding is split (shared) between more than one setting. You should keep all the others safely for reference later.

Can all childcare settings enter FE data online (estimate and headcount)?

Yes. View the latest information [on our Online provider portal page](#).

How will FE payments be proportioned and when will they be paid?

At the moment we are intending to continue paying 70% on estimate claims and 30% on actuals. Payment dates are published at [online](#).

What are the current FE rates in West Sussex?

View the current rates [online](#).

Non-FE Sources of Funding

What can the Disability Access Fund (DAF) be spent on?

The disability access fund is a new measure which aids access to early years places by, for example, supporting providers in making reasonable adjustments to their settings and/or helping with building capacity (be that for the child in question or for the benefit of children as a whole attending the setting). This could involve changes to the environment; staff training; staff mentoring; changes to the structure of the day etc.

What happens if a child who is eligible for DAF attends more than one setting and what happens to the DAF if the child moves setting?

Only one setting can receive the DAF per financial year. The parent must nominate which is the main setting. The DAF also cannot be transferred if the child moves setting. However, a new setting can apply for a new DAF in the next financial year.

Will inclusion funding be increased to take into consideration the increased hours children will be in settings?

As with all inclusion claims for children, each claim will be looked at on a case by case basis. Inclusion funding is currently under review to take into account the additional hours that some children will be accessing.

Is the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) limited to the 15 hours Universal FE?

Yes. Comparing the eligibility criteria for the EYPP and the criteria for the Extended FE, the minimum joint salary for extended FE is approx. £10,272 and the maximum for EYPP is £16,190, so there may be some families that could be eligible to both, but this will be limited. If the parent splits their FE across more than one setting, it is the parent's choice to nominate where their Universal FE is taken.

Why is the inclusion funding paid the term after a child starts and we have to rely on it being refunded?

All settings are able to apply for Inclusion funding for children before they take up their FE place in the setting, funding will then be applicable for the term the child starts in your setting.

Closed Settings

I have been approached by a parent who was attending a setting within West Sussex which closed part-way through the current term. How do I obtain the funding for the remainder of the term?

In these situations, the Free Entitlement Advisers will decide on the most appropriate process for claiming funding for these children. As this is done on a case by case basis, please contact the FIS Specialist team who will advise further.

Childminder Specific Questions

What happens when a Childminder is sick during FE time and is unable to offer care to a child receiving funding?

If it is just a few days sickness then the Childminder would be expected to make up for the FE time missed. If however, sickness was for a substantial period of time then they would either need to pay the funding back to the local authority in full or source alternative care for the child. If they found alternative care then we would expect funding to be passed onto the other childcare setting for those hours.

What happens if a Childminder and/or parent wants to take a holiday within the FE time?

If the Childminder takes holiday they would be expected to make up for the FE time missed. If, however, the child is on holiday they will simply miss out on the funding. This would be parental choice but the Childminder would need to explain this to any parent thinking of taking holiday at these times. This is exactly the same as it would work for a child going to a nursery or pre-school.

Will there be monthly payments for childminders?

In the recent Funding Consultation sent to all settings, including childminders, via the broadcast email, the overwhelming majority preferred to stick with termly payments upfront, rather than monthly payments in arrears.

Can childminders charge retainers for children who are accessing FE at a pre- school/nursery?

Childminders can charge retainers for any additional services or hours that you are selling over and above FE, such as 'on call' services.

For example, a family drops off to you at 7.30am, you take the child to pre-school at 9.30am, the child accesses part of their FE at the pre-school for the morning session. You then collect the child at 12.30pm, return home and the child accesses further FE with you 1.00-6.00pm.

You can make it clear in your admission policy that your FE hours are afternoons only. You can then charge for two hours in the morning (and potentially breakfast), the drop-off journey, an 'on call' charge for the morning non-funded hours, the collection journey and lunch (if parent does not provide a packed lunch). Remember! If a child is claiming FE hours in another setting, they cannot simultaneously be claiming FE hours with you – in this example the morning session. So you are able to charge a retainer for your non-funded hours. It all has to be clear and consistent in your written policies and parents made aware of what you will be charging them for, upfront before they sign any contracts with you.

Extended FE Specific Questions

If a parents' situation changes, what are the time scales for funding payments/cut off?

The Operating Guidance from the DfE says that there will be between half, to a terms, grace period for children who become ineligible. Parents will be responsible to reconfirm their eligibility every three months with the HMRC online. Please see the published Grace Periods from the DfE below:

Validity end date	LA audit date	Grace Period End date
1 January – 10 February	11 February	31 March
11 February – 31 March	1 April	31 August
1 April – 26 May	27 May	31 August
27 May – 31 August	1 September	31 December
1 September – 21 October	22 October	31 December
22 October – 31 December	1 January	31 March

How many children are eligible for 30 hours in West Sussex?

The Department of Education estimates that 6320 children will be eligible across West Sussex. We are currently carrying out further work to identify the potential impact in each area. However, each childcare provider should be carrying out their own consultation with their current customers and the local community to identify the need for the services they currently provide/may provide in the future.

Can we work with a range of other settings to deliver the Extended FE?

There are several models for collaborating with other providers and how this works will be individual to your setting's circumstances, based on the needs of

the local families in each area. There isn't a 'one size fits all' approach to collaboration, and different areas will need different models. Collaboration can be a great way to support your working parents, but also to reduce some of your shared costs and administration tasks.

Why is the salary threshold so high?

The lower threshold (the amount each parent has to earn to be eligible) is the equivalent of 16 hours per week at National Minimum Wage. So around £114 per parent - per week. The upper threshold is currently drafted at £100,000 per annum. This has been set by Central Government rather than by West Sussex County Council.

If one parent earns £110,000 and other parent earns £60,000 does this mean they are not eligible?

That's right - this family would not be eligible.

Will self-employed parents be eligible?

Yes, if they meet the eligibility criteria in the statutory guidance.

Why would you offer 30 hours funding to a parent only working 16 hours a week?

The 30 hours FE is a work incentive. Parents who may currently be working for 16 hours at national minimum wage may have more chance and opportunity of increasing their hours at work, or finding alternative employment with better prospects, if they can ensure their children are in quality, reliable and secure childcare. This in turn improves outcomes for those children. Research shows that access to high quality childcare and education from an early age improves a child's outcomes. Plus, if the nursery is stretching funding across the whole year it is closer to 22 hours per week, which the parent also needs to factor travel time to and from work into.

How quickly would parents find out they were eligible?

Parents will apply [online](#) at and be notified of the outcome. This can differ parent to parent, depending on their individual circumstances. You should encourage parents to apply the term before they wish to make use of the Extended FE.

How do settings sign up to offer Extended FE?

Childcare settings can sign up at any point following submission of the Provider Declaration by contacting the Family Information Service on 01243 777807.

Will the 30 hours still be for children the term after their third birthday?

A parent can claim once both these conditions are met, i.e. the term after the child's third birthday and the term following receipt of their eligibility code from HMRC (whichever is the latest). Parents should be encouraged to apply the term

before their child reaches the age criterion to ensure they can access a place at the start of the term after their child turns 3. If not they will only be able to access universal FE and have to wait until the following term for the Extended FE.

Do parents need to both work 16 hours and can they lose their eligibility?

Yes, within the Statutory Guidance, both parents need to be working (except for lone parents or where one parent is disabled or has a major caring responsibility and in receipt of certain benefits) and fall within the minimum and maximum criteria. If the parents drop or increase income under or over these limits they can lose their eligibility and enter their funding grace periods, details of which can be found in the Statutory and Operational Guidance.

How does a setting know if a parent changes their status if they do not tell us?

West Sussex County Council re-checks eligible families on a regular basis and settings will be informed. The Government's Eligibility Checking Service will automatically calculate the grace period to minimise administrative burdens on Local Authorities and providers.

Privacy Notice and Leaflets

Is there further information available about how a child's information is stored and used in relation to obtaining the funding?

The Privacy Notice explains how the data is used and shared, and each childcare setting should display (or provide) a copy for parents. The current document is available [online](#).

Do parents need to keep a copy of the Privacy Notice?

No, the parent should be provided with a copy to view before signing the Parent Declaration form. The childcare setting can choose to provide a copy for the parent to keep if they wish. The current document is available [online](#).

Does a parent need a copy of the WSCC Discover Free Entitlement leaflet?

Yes, a leaflet should be provided to each parent (whose child will be accessing FE) by the childcare setting. Copies of the leaflet are available on request from the Family Information Service 01243 777807.

Queries to WSCC

Who handles queries on the FE in West Sussex?

Childcare settings should refer to the contact details section at the back of the Provider Declaration in order to contact the most appropriate staff. Parents should contact the Family Information Service.

Areas of Deprivation

How and where are the areas of deprivation identified?

The rationale behind the Deprivation Supplement is to recognise the additional costs associated with the potential learning and development needs of children from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The Deprivation Supplement is a mandatory supplement as part of the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) used to make the FE payments, and is calculated based on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) for individuals' postcodes. These values are set by central Government for each area. 3% of the total budget is allocated and this is distributed to approximately a quarter of all children receiving FE. The value for each childcare setting could change depending on the mix of children.

Participation Funding

How is funding for different Local Authorities worked out?

The Government ran a funding consultation last summer which closed on 22 September 2016. The [Early Years National Funding Formula \(EYNFF\) operational guide](#) was published in December 2016 and sets out how funding is calculated including how funding can and should be used.

Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) Specific Questions

If a parent pays into the TFC account can they withdraw it again?

Yes, however the tax element will be removed.

Does TFC replace workplace childcare vouchers?

Yes, these will stop being available for new sign ups in 2018, but people currently using them will continue to do so, if they choose to.

Will accounts be per family or per child?

Per child.

Do providers have to be registered to offer TFC?

Yes. All West Sussex childcare settings should have received a letter from the Government containing your unique ID which you will need to start the online process. Once you are in the secure site you will need to:

- Confirm your unique taxpayer reference (UTR) number. You can find this on previous tax returns or other communications from HM Revenue and Customs; or your National Insurance number, if you are a nanny and don't have a UTR.
- Provide bank details for the account you wish to receive Tax-Free Childcare payments into.

Can parents/carers be eligible for both Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours?

Yes.