



Early Years Education ‘Stretched Offer’ Information for Parents and Carers

Background

The Government allows for the free Early Years Education to be offered flexibly for families by making it possible to ‘stretch’ the hours available. This provision is for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds and offered by a number of participating nurseries, pre-schools and childminders.

If you wish to ‘stretch’ your child’s free entitlement over a longer period than the standard offer, you are able to do so by taking less hours a week over more than 38 weeks a year - up to a maximum of 52 weeks per year. This will enable children to attend childcare and early years education across a full year. This opportunity to access the free entitlement in this ‘stretched’ way will also assist you to budget and balance work or other commitments consistently across a full calendar year.

The ‘stretched offer’ availability in Hampshire

Hampshire County Council does not expect that all nurseries, pre-schools or childminders will provide a ‘stretched offer’. Hampshire County Council will seek to ensure that there is a mix of different types of provision to meet local community needs. All Hampshire early years education providers are able to offer a ‘stretched’ provision if they wish to do so.

Why use the ‘stretched offer’?

The benefit for parents whose child attends a nursery, pre-school or childminder open for more than 38 or 39 weeks is that the early years education provider can raise consistent invoices across the year instead of issuing higher bills over the school holiday periods. This will especially help families whose children attend provision during the summer holidays.

For parents whose child only takes up the free entitlement and do not have any additional hours, the ‘stretched offer’ would allow them to spread their child’s free hours into school holiday periods. This would provide children with consistent early years education across the whole year.

Features of the standard and ‘stretched’ offers

Standard Offer - Features	‘Stretched Offer’ - Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum 15 hours per week over a maximum of 38 weeks. Providers can offer just the standard offer of up to 15 hours per week up to 38 weeks. If the academic year pattern is longer than 38 weeks or includes part weeks which takes the academic year beyond 38 weeks, providers must agree with parents which weeks or part weeks their child will either not attend or be paid for by them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 15 hours per week over more than 38 weeks. Providers should not offer the ‘stretched offer’ alone and still provide the standard offer of 15 hours per week. Providers must agree with parents how their child can access any spare hours left where the hours per week multiplied by the number of weeks of the stretched offer totals less than 570. Providers will determine the ‘stretched’ offer weeks available based on consultation with parents and their operational requirements.
Features that are the same for the standard and ‘stretched’ offers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum claim per day of 2.5 hours Maximum claim per day of 10 hours Funding <u>cannot exceed</u> 570 hours per child’s birthday year Parents can choose to use a <u>maximum</u> of two approved early years education providers Parents must confirm the hours required with the early years education provider through a parent declaration for every funding period Parents must pay for any additional hours or services over and above the free early years education hours per week being claimed The provider confirms to parents the number of hours that are part of the offer and produces clear invoices indicating the free early years education hours. 	

Examples of how the ‘stretched offer’ would work

Offer	Hours per week	Max number of weeks	Total hours	Spare hours	Example of offer
Standard	15	38	570	0	Nursery, pre-school or childminder is not open during school holidays
‘Stretched’ example	12.5	45	562.5	7.5	Nursery, pre-school or childminder is open for 45 weeks a year and/or early years education is available for 45 weeks
‘Stretched’ example	12 6	47 1	570	0	Nursery, pre-school or childminder open for 48 weeks a year and/or early years education is available for 12 hours per week for 47 weeks and 1 week of 6 hours
‘Stretched’ example	11	51	561	9	Nursery, pre-school or childminder is open for 51 weeks a year and/or early years education is available for 51 weeks

'Stretched' example	11.5 6.5	49 1	570	0	Nursery, pre-school or childminder open for 50 weeks or more a year and early years education is available for 11.5 hours per week for 49 weeks and 1 week of 6.5 hours.
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What are funding periods?

Both the standard and 'stretched' offers fit into what are known as **funding periods**. The funding periods are:

- 1 January to 31 March – spring
- 1 April to 31 August - summer
- 1 September to 31 December - autumn

Hampshire County Council sets maximum hours that can be claimed in each funding period. These maximum hours are different for the 'stretched' and standard offers to take account of the number of weeks available in each funding period for the different offers. Therefore, unused hours cannot be carried forward from one funding period to the next to claim more than the maximum hours available.

What are spare hours?

There are 570 hours in a child's birthday year. After your child has taken their funded hours per week across all the weeks of the year agreed with your early years education provider, the hours left are spare hours. They can be taken at any time during your child's eligible birthday year providing they do not exceed 15 hours per week. You should discuss with your nursery, pre-school or childminder how they might be able to fit these spare hours in for you.

What is the difference between spare hours and unused hours?

Spare hours should not to be confused with unused hours. Unused hours are those which arise when the total hours available in the spring, summer or autumn funding periods are not used. For example; a child starts on just 5 hours per week in their first eligible funding period but cannot have the unused remaining hours carried forward to later funding periods.

How to claim the free Early Years Education (EYE) funding

For both the standard and 'stretched' offers, you must complete a **parent declaration form** to give your nursery, pre-school or childminder permission to claim the free early years education hours for your child. This will include the details of how the free hours are to be allocated with the provider; or, if two providers are required, between them both. If two providers are required, it is your responsibility to make this known to both services.

The nursery, pre-school or childminder can assist you in completing the parent declaration form.

An example of the declaration form is available from the Services for Young Children website: <http://www.hants.gov.uk/eye-eyeff/eye-scheme.htm>

'Stretched Offer' Frequently Asked Questions

1. My child is three (or four) years old and is not attending a nursery, pre-school or a childminder but I would like him/her to receive the free part-time early years education. What do I need to do?

If you are not aware of the service providers in your area, search online using the Family Information Directory: www.fid.hants.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can contact the Hampshire Family Information Service on 0300 555 1384 or email childrens.services@hants.gov.uk.

2. My child is currently receiving the standard offer. Can I change to have the 'stretched offer'?

If the provider that you are using offers a 'stretched' offer, you should discuss your requirements with them. (It may not be possible for one provider to offer a range of options and, therefore, you may want to consider using two providers to access your child's full entitlement). You cannot change the offer part way through a funding period. If you change the offer at the start of a new funding period, you should agree how this works out across the year with your provider as you still cannot exceed 570 hours in your child's birthday year.

3. Can I change provider midway through a funding period?

Yes, you can move your child to another provider and still receive your free entitlement. However, before you do this, you should note that:

- You must inform the provider you are leaving that you wish to do so **before** you leave.
- If you pay for additional hours and you are required to give notice to the provider prior to leaving in respect of these hours you will incur fees if you **fail to give notice**.

4. My child attends an early years education provision which is attached to a children's centre. Will I be able to take up the 'stretched' offer?

Provision at, or associated with, a children's centre is managed separately to the children's centre. The provider should consider offering a 'stretched' offer as part of its service just as any other provider would.

5. My child is an eligible two year old and is entitled to early years funding as part of the Government's extension of the early years education scheme. Is the 'stretched' offer available to me?

If your provider participates in the 'stretched' offer **and** is approved to offer funded two year old places, you may take advantage of the 'stretched' offer.

6. I am still unsure what the offers are. Who can I speak to?

In the first instance, speak to the manager or supervisor of the nursery, pre-school or childminder your child attends.

Help is also available from the Services for Young Children Information Support Team on 01962 847070 or email childcare@hants.gov.uk.

For information and regular updates visit: www.hants.gov.uk/childcare