

Flexible nursery place for three and four year olds: Information for parents/carers

Was your child born between 1st September 2003 and the 31st December 2004?

If the answer is 'yes', you are eligible for an increase in the number of free hours of Nursery Education. These are being increased to 15 hours per week term time only and can be accessed the term following your child's third birthday. Within your area most nurseries will be offering these hours. You may also be able to use these hours more flexibly.

The following information explains how the 15 hours will be made available in phases across Sunderland from April 2007 to April 2008.

Children's Services have been working with nursery education providers to ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements. To allow the necessary adaptations to be made to some buildings, the offer is being introduced in three stages.

- From April 2007 some providers will be able to offer the 15 hours.
- From September 2007 the majority of the remaining providers will offer the 15 hours
- The remainder of the providers will be delivering from December 2007.

Where is this offer available?

Your child will be able to receive 15 hours per week from most providers currently offering Nursery Education, for example: a nursery school or class, a private or voluntary nursery or an independent school with a nursery class.

How does the flexibility work?

It is anticipated that you will have the opportunity to choose a variety of flexible options, which can be accessed from 8am until 6pm, Monday to Friday. You will also be able to talk about your requirements with your chosen provider to see if your needs can be accommodated.

The 15 hours must be used over no less than three days.

Can I still take 5 sessions over 5 days?

Yes, this is still applicable.

Can these hours be shared with more than one provider?

Yes, you could have partnership arrangements between the providers listed below, as long as you have no more than 2 in a partnership.

- Nursery schools or Nursery Classes
- Private nurseries
- Childminders
- Voluntary Organisation Nurseries
- Independent school with a nursery class
- Before and after school clubs

Will there be an opportunity to buy additional childcare on top of the 15-hour entitlement?

Yes, within your neighbourhood there will be some providers that will be able to offer you the option of buying additional childcare should you need to do this.

Is there any financial help to pay for additional childcare?

Yes, for the hours you pay for over and above the 15-hour entitlement, you may be eligible for help through Working Tax Credit. There are other forms of financial help. For more information please ring the Children's Information Service: - 0191 520 5505.

Where is the best place to go for further information?

In the first instance it would be advisable to speak to the nursery education provider of your choice to see if they are able to accommodate your individual needs.

For more information about providers of nursery education in your neighbourhood, contact the Children's Information Service please telephone 0191 520 5505.

Why is Sunderland offering the 15 hours?

Sunderland has been invited by the Government to trial this offer to find out what parents want and the best way it can be delivered. All Local Authorities will be delivering 15 hours of nursery education by 2010.

This information can be made available in large print, Braille, audio and other languages. Please contact the Rad Ainley on 0191 553 5782 or email rad.ainley@sunderland.gov.uk for help.

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