

Nursery Education Funding for two, three and four year old children

Frequently Asked Questions for parents/carers

We have put together a list of the most frequently asked questions, if you need more advice or help please contact the Family Information Service on Tel: 0121 303 3521 or email familyinformation@birmingham.gov.uk.

1. What is Nursery Education Funding (NEF)?

Children aged three and four years old are entitled to 15 hours of free nursery education funding per week for a minimum of 38 weeks. Your child may access a free place from the school term after their third birthday until they start in Reception class. For more information visit: www.birmingham.gov.uk/nef.

2. Is Nursery Education Funding for 52 weeks of the year and how many hours can my child have?

Nursery Education Funding is for a total of 570 hours per year and must be used for a minimum of 38 weeks of the year. There is an opportunity to stretch the entitlement and take it over more than 38 weeks. However, this has an effect on the number of hours per week. Therefore, the most popular model is 15 hours per week over 38 weeks.

Birmingham City Council must ensure settings including childminders provide a range of models. Each setting selects the model they offer, so you will need to contact your chosen setting directly to discuss the options available to you.

3. Can funding be accessed in the school holidays?

It depends if you are stretching your entitlement. If you stretch your entitlement your child can access NEF in the school holidays, if this is the model the setting offers.

Otherwise the NEF offer is for 38 weeks of the year, 15 hours a week. The terms are as follows:

- Autumn Term – September – December – 13 weeks
- Spring Term – January – March – 12 weeks
- Summer Term – April – July – 13 weeks.

4. Is there any funding for extra hours?

Some three and four year old children will be eligible for a full time place. They will need to meet the criteria, which is available on www.birmingham.gov.uk/nef. If you think that your child meets the criteria please contact the setting you have chosen for advice on how to apply for this and what evidence you will need to provide.

There is no additional funding for two year olds – 15 hours per week is the maximum allowance.

5. Are children eligible as soon as they turn two or three years old?

No, if eligible it will be from the term following the child’s second or third birthdays as shown below:

A child born between	Will be eligible for funding
1 st April and 31 st August	The start of the autumn term (September) following their second or third birthday
1 st September and 31 st December	The start of the spring term (January) following their second or third birthday
1 st January and 31 st March	The start of the summer term (April) following their second or third birthday

6. What are the school term dates?

Start and end dates vary slightly each year. You can check the actual dates on the Birmingham City Council website; www.Birmingham.gov.uk/schooltermdates

If you are following the 15 hours of week, for 38 weeks of the year, the setting needs to ensure that they offer you the appropriate weeks within these terms.

7. I think my two year old meets the criteria for funding, how do I apply?

You need to make contact with a health visitor, social worker, children’s centre, family support worker, childminder, or professional in a childcare setting who will complete a referral on your behalf and submit to the Early Years Panel. Self referrals cannot be made by parents or carers.

8. Which two year old children are eligible?

Currently, funding for two year olds is not a free entitlement and your child will need to meet a criteria to be eligible.

From 2012 – 2013 the criteria for two year olds will be based on family benefits. If the family are in receipt of one or more of the following they will be eligible:

- Income Support,
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance,
- Child Tax Credits at higher rate than family element,
- Extra Working Tax Credits relating to a disability,
- Pension Credit,
- National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

In addition to this Birmingham City Council also have a limited number of places available which are allocated through an Early Years Schemes Panel made up of professional Early Years Officers.

9. Can my child access funding at any childcare provider?

No the childcare setting needs to be registered for Nursery Education Funding with Birmingham City Council and meet the quality criteria, for more information contact the Family Information Service (FIS) on 0121 303 3521.

10. If my child is absent, should the childcare provider/childminder offer additional hours/sessions?

No, the funding weeks must be agreed at the beginning of the placement. The childcare setting/childminder will ask you to complete a parental declaration form, which will confirm the hours and weeks you will be accessing. If your child is absent the childcare setting/childminder do not have to offer you additional hours.

11. My three year old child has attended a childcare setting/childminder for three weeks. I don't like the setting and want to move my child can I do this?

Once you have signed your parental declaration you have confirmed to the childcare provider you want to take up your child's free entitlement for the term with them. Settings have a 'headcount date' in which they must inform Birmingham City Council which children are in attendance so that funding can be released. If you move your child before headcount you will be responsible for paying fees to the setting. If you move your child after headcount you will not be able to access funding at another childcare setting/childminder unless this is an exceptional circumstance, for example moving house.

12. My two year old child was awarded funding and has been attending a setting for four weeks. I prefer another setting/childminder so I am going to move my child. Do I need to inform anyone?

Once funding has been agreed, you cannot move your child to an alternative provider. You need to go back to the professional who submitted the referral and request the change. The Early Years Panel will then assess the new childcare provider/childminder for quality and suitability.

If you have concerns about the setting/childminder or would like to make a complaint you must contact Ofsted.

13. What is headcount?

This is when settings record children's attendance for payment from Birmingham City Council. Your child **MUST** be in-attendance on that date to qualify for the funding.

14. When is headcount?

Headcount date is usually the third Thursday of each term. Autumn term is often later to allow for staggered school entry.

15. The setting I have chosen for my child to access their three year old NEF has asked for a £50 deposit, I am struggling to pay this is there any support available?

Nursery Education Funding must be completely free to the family if they are only accessing 15 hours. If you chose to purchase additional hours the setting/childminder can dictate charges and deposits. If you are only accessing the free entitlement there should be no cost for deposits, uniform or resources. If your child attends over the lunchtime period a reasonable cost can be made for the lunch provided.

16. The setting/childminder I send my child to say that the 15 hours needs to be accessed over three days, as I only send my child for two days we aren't entitled to all the funding. This doesn't seem fair.

The terms and conditions have been updated from October 2012, you can access your free entitlement over two days.

17. I want my child to access their funding at a nursery outside Birmingham, am I able to do this?

No. Birmingham City Council can only fund children attending a setting/childminder with a Birmingham postcode.

18. I want to use two settings/childminders to access my child's NEF, can I do this?

Yes you can use a maximum of two childcare settings/childminders. You must complete a parental declaration at each provision so the 15 hours funding can be split between the each provider.

19. Are there any rules about times of day that the free entitlement NEF can be accessed?

Yes, not before 7.00am or after 7.00 pm, no day longer than 10 hours and no day shorter than two and a half hours.