**Case Study: A blended delivery model: Delivering the new extended free entitlement (EFE) through a partnership between a Nursery School and Children’s Centre and local Primary School**

**The new EFE for three and four year olds**

The new EFE for three and four year olds from September 2017 will principally be available to children whose parents are working 16 hours or more per week and earn at least an average of 16 times the national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW). At the current rate, this means that a parent must earn a minimum equivalent of £115.20 for over 25 year olds and around £107 for a 21 year old. The upper limit is £100,000. In two parent households, both parents will have to be working and meet the criteria individually. For more information about the eligibility criteria please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section of the toolkit in [**Overview**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/overview-dfes-30-hours-mixed-model-partnership-toolkit).

Currently 94% of three year olds and 99% of four year olds nationally are using some or all of the current EFE entitlement (the universal offer)[[1]](#footnote-1), although there is some variation locally, with lower uptake in more deprived areas.

Children whose parents do not meet the criteria for the new EFE will continue to have access to the universal offer.

**What is a blended offer?**

A blended offer is where a partnership of providers share the delivery of the offer between them. The partnership might include:

* schools
* private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, including sessional and specialist, providers e.g. for children with SEND and those who currently only deliver out of school (OOS) provision
* childminders
* children’s centres (CCs).

The key principles are to maximise the use of space in buildings across the day and year, and use a pool of staff available locally to achieve efficiency in delivery. Children’s wellbeing is also at the heart of a blended offer.

In some cases of a blended model, children stay in one building and staff from two providers deliver a joint offer. In another approach, the children move between buildings in the course of the day or year. Finally, there might be a situation where both staff and children move across sites.

For more information about partnership delivery please see the [**Overview**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/overview-dfes-30-hours-mixed-model-partnership-toolkit) and [**Partnerships**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/partnerships-dfes-30-hours-mixed-model-partnership-toolkit) sections of this toolkit.

**Why a blended offer?**

The Department for Education (DfE) 30 Hours Mixed Model Partnership project (the project) demonstrated that one of the challenges for providers of the EFE for three and four year olds is finding sufficient space to deliver the offer themselves solely on their own site and remain sustainable. There are different challenges depending on the current business model of a provider and some of these are:

* Sessional delivery model: schools and pre-schools have traditionally had a delivery model based on two sessions per day, term-time only (TTO). This is a 15 hour per week offer since the 570 hours of entitlement are split over 38 weeks. In this scenario, the majority of settings will take the maximum number of children their space permits and, therefore, even where only 80% of children are entitled to the new offer, there simply will not be sufficient space to accommodate the number of children as before. In the case of schools, the intake to reception class is factored on maximising the number of children in nursery class(es) and a reduction in the number of nursery children could cause risks to the school because of a consequential lowering of the number of children in reception class. This sessional offer can also involve parents purchasing additional hours which can be the basis of the sustainability of the provision
* Sessional model for mixed age groups: some providers in the project are currently delivering a sessional model for a mixed age group over a short day TTO and were community nurseries that additionally offered affordable childcare for low income parents. This took the form, for instance, of a session for three and four year olds in the morning, one for two year olds entitled to the early education entitlement for that age group in the afternoon and spaces for paying parents from 9am – 4pm. In this case, the sustainability of the provision was at risk if they were to deliver the new three and four year old EFE alone
* Full day all year round: other providers in the project currently deliver an all year round offer that combines sessions or full days of EFE for three and four year olds and the availability of paid additional hours all year round. In this situation, the concern of providers was the potential reduction of income if the local hourly funding rate was considerably lower than their charge for paid hours. (For more information on the proposed new National Funding Formula[[2]](#footnote-2) please see the [**FAQs**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/sites/default/files/FAQs%2030%20Hours%20Free%20Early%20Education%20Entitlement.docx) document in the [**Overview**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/overview-dfes-30-hours-mixed-model-partnership-toolkit) section of this toolkit)
* Sessional TTO model already delivered in a loose collaboration with childminders: a number of sessional TTO providers in the project already had established but loose collaboration with childminders to deliver additional hours over and above the current universal offer. In order to remain sustainable when the new EFE entitlement is introduced, they were planning to extend their own hours of delivery but did not want to undermine the businesses of local childminders.

**An example of delivering a blended model: delivering full day and all year round early education on three sites (two providers)**

The partnership that will deliver the blended model was one of 21 in the project. It is between a nursery school and CC (with combined leadership but on two sites across the road from each other) and a nearby primary school.

This partnership is led by the nursery school and CC and involves the planning of an extended day and all year round provision for entitled three and four year olds, potentially on the three sites that also could be open to children from other local schools.

The project combines the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) expertise and delivery capacity of nursery school/CC and site availability of both partners. Both partners have Outstanding early years provision.

**The process**

An analysis of current provision, issues arising from the delivery of the new EFE entitlement and space availability was undertaken. The challenges and opportunities identified were:

* The primary school currently offers sessional only provision for three and four year olds and needs to plan for the delivery of the additional hours but changes in local demography have opened up available space in the school nursery building from September 2017; the school have issues with filling their reception class which has been, in part, because they do not offer full-time places or OOS for the nursery class age group
* The nursery school also delivers a combination of full-time (core school hours) and part-time places TTO and it will have a shortfall of places from September 2017; the space is available out of core school hours and during the holiday periods
* The CC deliver the two year olds early education entitlement to 16 full-time equivalent (FTE) children the intention is to provide an extended day and all year round provision for the children accessing the funded entitlement whose parents are working and wish to pay for additional hours and to offer paying places for other local children: space is available in the building during term-time and in the holidays
* There is an opportunity to capitalise on the ability of the CC to transport its Ofsted early years registration to the school site and provide additional hours on the school premises
* A walking bus between the two settings could be provided if some provision were to be on the CC site
* There are opportunities to offer extended places to children from other local schools.

The conclusions that were reached were:

* The optimum model for delivering the new entitlement in order to provide the best and high quality offer for three and four year olds was to make available a stretched offer on two sites (the CC and primary school in the first instance);
* A stretched offer would maximise the possibility of continuing a mix of universal places (570 hours per annum) and places for children entitled to the new enhanced offer;
* It was important to keep children’s well-being at the centre of the delivery model and, therefore, to minimise their movement between sites
* The proposed extended offer for two year olds would facilitate a smooth transition to the new entitlement and offer stability to children by their being able to experience all their early years education in familiar surroundings with a continuity of staff
* A close working relationship between the school and the nursery school and CC would benefit the joint management of a child’s early education (For more information, please see the [**Joint Management of EYFS**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/sites/default/files/Joint%20management%20of%20learning%20and%20development.docx) section of this toolkit).

**The blended offer**

The model will consist of:

* The established nursery class provision 9am - 3pm at the primary school during term time that will offer a combination of universal and core school day places
* The established nursery school provision 9am - 3pm at the nursery school that will offer a combination of universal and core school day places
* An extended day and all year round provision offered on the primary school and nursery school/CC sites provided by CC staff under the umbrella of the CC Early Years Registration
* Holiday weeks’ provision offered on the school and/or CC sites

In order to provide consistency for children, those who attend the primary school will normally access the extended day and holiday time provision at the school site. The nursery school children whose parents wish them to attend all day and all year round would have priority access to the extended provision at the nursery school or CC sites but there will be an additional offer of an extended day at the primary school site to smooth pick up arrangements when parents have older children attending the primary school OOS provision.

This offer can be built on to include children from other local primary schools in an extended offer either on their own sites or at the CC site.

**The legalities and other practical matters relating to a blended offer**

There are a range of issues that need to be tackled in order to make such an arrangement to work smoothly, effectively and safely. Please see the [**Partnerships**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/partnerships-dfes-30-hours-mixed-model-partnership-toolkit)section of this toolkit for more information and helpful tools.

1. The current entitlement (the universal offer) is 570 hours per annum of free early education for all children commencing the term after their third birthday. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The details of the proposals and the projected hourly rates for each local authority can be found at: <https://consult.education.gov.uk/early-years-funding/eynff> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)