**Parent engagement to deliver the extended free entitlement for three and four year olds (EFE)**

**Working with parents to assess demand**

Evidence from the Department for Education (DfE) 30 Hours Mixed Model Partnership project (the project) suggests that there could be a high take up by eligible parents currently using the universal 15 hours early education entitlement for three and four year olds. It is anticipated that many parents will convert from paying for extra hours to take up of free hours. In addition, the project indicates that ineligible parents may see the new entitlement as an opportunity either to seek employment and thus become eligible or to extend their working hours.

Undertaking a demand survey will help providers and partnerships assess the impact on demand. the impact on demand Providers or partnerships may wish to consider undertaking a demand survey to assess the likely intentions of parents who already use their provision. See [**Demand Guidance**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/sites/default/files/Assessing%20demand%20guidance%20for%20providers.docx)for more details on how you could go about doing this and for some examples of surveys to use and questions to ask.

**Marketing**

Whilst there is likely to be a high level of interest shown in the new entitlement, it is important that the partnership is able to market the offer to parents and carers. Parents and carers will need to understand who is and who isn’t eligible, how to apply, the different models of early education and childcare that they could access etc. See [**Marketing the Partnership Offer**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/sites/default/files/Marketing%20the%20partnership%20offer.docx) for tips on how to develop a partnership marketing strategy.

**Managing parents’ expectations**

*Entitlement and eligibility*

Evidence from the project suggests that many parents are aware of the new entitlement and are already asking how they can access it. However, evidence also suggests that, at this stage, not all parents are aware of the eligibility criteria. It is therefore essential that any local marketing and promotion is clear about which parents will be eligible from the outset. It is also suggested that there is clear local information about the advice and/or support available for parents who are not eligible for the new entitlement.

Managing parents’ expectations about the entitlement is going to play an important part in the development of provision to meet the new legal requirements and parental need – see key messages below.

*Models of delivery*

The [**Delivery Models**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/delivery-models-dfes-30-hours-mixed-model-partnership-toolkit)thematic case studiesoutline a number of different partnership approaches to delivering the new entitlement. In one ‘blended’ model children move between providers, in another staff move and in another both staff and children move. Another model involves delivering part or all of the entitlement through outdoor learning and another model involves partnerships between childminders.

The case studies identify many benefits of each model but they also acknowledge that parents may have concerns, particularly where the delivery model is different to what the family has previously experienced. For example:

* In models where early education and childcare is shared across providers, will there be an adverse impact on children’s learning? How will staff plan learning so that there are no gaps and duplication is minimised? How can parents be assured that staff will identify and meet their child’s learning needs? Will staff share information sensitively in a way that maximises benefits for the child?
* In models where children are moving between providers, how will staff ensure the safety of children? How will children be transported from one setting to another?
* In outdoor learning models, how will the safety of children be ensured? What happens during adverse weather conditions? How will children be able to go to the toilet?

*Paying for top up*

All eligible children will be entitled to 1,140 hours per year – equivalent to 30 hours per week over 38 weeks. Many parents currently pay for additional hours to cover a longer day or during holiday periods. Within the extended entitlement parents will still be able to do this but paying for additional hours should not be a condition of accessing their extended entitlement.

*Flexibility and extended provision*

The 1,140 hours per year – equivalent to 30 hours per week over 38 weeks – can be taken as part of a stretched or extended provision (see table below). Not all providers will be able to offer flexibility but the benefit of delivering through a partnership is that options and flexibility can be maximised.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. weeks | Hrs per week | Hrs per day | No. weeks | Hrs per week | Hrs per day |
| 39 | 29.2 | 5.9 | 45 | 25.3 | 5.1 |
| 40 | 28.5 | 5.7 | 46 | 24.8 | 5.0 |
| 41 | 27.8 | 5.6 | 47 | 24.3 | 4.9 |
| 42 | 27.1 | 5.4 | 48 | 23.8 | 4.8 |
| 43 | 26.5 | 5.3 | 49 | 23.3 | 4.7 |
| 44 | 25.9 | 5.2 | 50 | 22.8 | 4.6 |

**Identifying and managing key messages**

During the early implementation stages of any new programme there is nearly always a level of confusion amongst stakeholders. It is important therefore that partnerships are clear about the messages they wish to convey to parents. As part of partnership[**Action Planning**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/sites/default/files/action%20planning%20guidelines.docx), it is suggested that the partnership spends time to identify the key messages pertinent to their partnership and consider who these messages need to be shared with and how they will do this. This will have the added benefit of ensuring that partners are also ‘on message.’ Where possible messages should be written down to ensure consistency.

*Entitlement and eligibility messages might include:*

* How eligibility can be checked
* Who is eligible?
* Clear guidance on how to apply – this should include any national (DfE) as well as local guidance
* Any support or advice available to ineligible parents including where parents can get [**Help with Childcare Costs**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/sites/default/files/Help%20with%20childcare%20costs.docx)
* Reassurance that the existing entitlement for three and four year olds will not be affected

*Different delivery model messages might include:*

* A summary of each model and how it will work
* The benefits to children and families for example of children spending time in different settings
* Outlining how a child benefits from the different learning environments provided by a childminder compared to a group setting
* Explaining to parents how communication between providers and with parents will be managed
* How settling in will work
* Whether there will be any changes to how parents can support the delivery of the EYFS curriculum
* How parents are expected to report absences – will she/he have to ring each provider separately or will there be a single point of contact?

*Paying for top up* *messages might include:*

* What are the options for paying for additional hours – not all providers will offer this so parents need to know who to approach if they want to pay for a top up
* How parents will be charged for top up fees. For example whether parents will receive their 1,140 free entitlement hours and then be charged top up fees or whether they can spread the cost across the year
* Whether there will be any additional costs and what these are for. For example:
  + - If the child is taking part in outdoor learning, explain what ‘outdoor kit’ they will need. Some outdoor learning providers charge an ‘enrolment fee’ to cover the costs of some of this kit.
    - What will be provided by way of food and snacks and whether parents are expected to provide this, whether the provider will provide this and whether there is a cost attached and whether parents have a choice regarding who provides/pays for food and snacks.

We advise you to check DfE guidance on top up fees as this is being finalised.

*Flexibility and extended provision messages might include*

* Any flexibility to deliver a stretched offer (provision beyond core hours or term time, see FAQs). For example is this offered by a single provider or via a blended approach
* Whether the stretched offer can be combined with paying for top up and how this will work financially