**Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Delivery in Mixed Model Partnerships**

**Early Education Funding**

Early education funding for three and four year olds is allocated to local authorities by the Department for Education (DfE).

Local authorities are required by legislation to deliver funded early education through:

* early years providers and childminders registered on the Ofsted early years register
* childminders registered with a childminder agency which is registered with Ofsted
* schools taking children age three and over and which therefore are exempt from registration with Ofsted as early years providers.

Local authorities are required to fund places for three and four year old children at any provider judged ‘requires improvement’, ‘good’, or ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted. Providers who receive a judgement of ‘inadequate’ are likely to have their funding withdrawn by the local authority.

**EYFS Statutory Framework**

The EYFS statutory framework sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to five years old. All schools and Ofsted registered early years providers must follow the EYFS framework, including childminders, preschools, nurseries and school reception classes. It forms the basis of independent inspections of providers by Ofsted.

The EYFS supports an integrated approach to early education and childcare. It gives all professionals a set of common principles and commitments to deliver quality early education and childcare to all children from birth to the term after their fifth birthday.

As well as being the core document for all professionals working in the foundation years, the EYFS framework gives parents confidence that, regardless of where they choose for their child’s early education, they can be assured that the same statutory commitments and principles will underpin their child’s learning and development experience.

The EYFS sets out expectations for children in the areas of learning and development such as:

* communication and language
* physical development
* personal, social and emotional development
* literacy
* mathematics
* understanding the world
* expressive arts and design

It specifies certain assessment requirements, such as a two year old progress check that must be shared with parents, and the early years profile assessments that are completed in reception.

The safeguarding and welfare requirements make demands in terms of safeguarding and child protection policies, procedures and workforce development. It covers health and safety issues such as first aid training, assessing risks, ensuring safety of the children in the setting and on outings and the ratios of staff to children.

**Advantages and challenges**

The necessity for providers to adhere to the EYFS statutory framework has clear advantages for the mixed model approach to caring for three and four year olds:

* where children are accessing two or more settings, it should provide a level of consistency with a minimum set of standards in place in each of these
* providers of early education undergo the same inspection process and are likely to share the same goals in reaching the highest possible judgement of quality
* children can benefit from access to different experiences, environments, stimulation and early educators within a broad curriculum.

However, there are also likely to be some challenges in ensuring that the child experiences the least disruption and maximum benefit from attending two or more settings:

* while the EYFS standards are clear, they are not prescriptive and certain aspects are open to interpretation by the setting. For example, some settings may favour a formal approach to learning while others may favour a discovery based or child-led atmosphere; this could be confusing for the child
* there is a risk that the child may experience the same activities in different settings and become bored
* the child’s individual needs could be overlooked. For example, he/she will need opportunities to learn and be active as well as to relax and rest at times that suit them. This is especially important if he/she is accessing two settings in one day, but the timetable followed by the settings may not accommodate this
* the child could experience different approaches to behaviour management in each setting which could be confusing and unsettling
* there is a risk that each setting will want to assess the child’s progress and although this should always be achieved through careful observation by adults who know the child well, there is a chance that the child may experience assessment ‘overload’.

Most of these challenges could be overcome through staff committing to ensure the child has the best experience when attending their settings and by good joint planning and communication. Providers should aim to keep the child’s best interests at the heart of their decisions and imagine what it is like for a child access multiple settings.

Good information sharing protocols are very important in here for the same reasons highlighted in the document [**EYFS and children with special educational needs and disabilities**.](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/sites/default/files/EYFS%20and%20children%20with%20Special%20Education%20Needs%20and%20Disabilities.docx)