**What is a blended offer and why take this approach?**

**What is a blended offer?**

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

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

The key features of a blended offer include: maximising the use of space in buildings across the day and the year; using a pool of locally available staff to achieve efficiency in delivery; and ensuring children’s wellbeing is at the heart of the model.

In some examples of a blended model, children stay in one building, but staff from two providers deliver the 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 partnerships 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 DfE 30 Hours Mixed Model Partnership project (the project) demonstrated that there are a number of challenges faced by providers in relation to delivering the extended free entitlement (EFE) for three and four year olds. Two of the most significant challenges identified through the project for providers are financial sustainability and finding sufficient space to deliver the offer themselves solely on their own site.

A blended offer can help to overcome these and other challenges. Challenges vary depending on the current business model of a provider for example:

* **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 with the 570 hours of entitlement 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 also can 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 were delivering a sessional model for a mixed age group over a short day, TTO, including community nurseries which 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 free early education entitlement (FEE) in the afternoon and some spaces set aside 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 delivered an all-year-round offer that combined sessions or full days of the free early education entitlement for three and four year olds with 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 Formula2 please see the FAQs 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 providersin the projectalready had established 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.