**Case Study: A blended delivery model: Delivering the new extended free entitlement (EFE) through a partnership between two community nurseries**

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

The new EFE 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 the [**FAQs**](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/sites/default/files/FAQs%2030%20Hours%20Free%20Early%20Education%20Entitlement.docx)section ofthe toolkit.

Currently 94% of three year olds and 99% of four year olds nationally are using some or all of the current free early education offer (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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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 well-being 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 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 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 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 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 free 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 projectcurrently 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 providersin the projectalready 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 two sites (two providers)**

The partnership that will deliver the blended model was one of 21 in the project.

The key partners are a two community nurseries set in community centres in a north London borough that has a significant challenge with creating new places due to space issues and lack of providers in certain geographical areas. Both of the provisions are rated as good by Ofsted. For ease, they will be referred to here by their initials: SCCN and KGCCN.

The two community centres are within the same area of the borough and are about 15 minutes walking distance apart. The principal local primary school is common to them and from September 2017, the nursery and reception through to year 2 classes will be housed in an annex close by one SCCN, with years 3-6 remaining in the principal building opposite the other nursery.

The initial intention was to include the principal primary school in the partnership and they were approached, but did not respond.

**The current offer at the two nurseries**

* SCCN is based at a well-established community nursery and currently delivers the universal offer to 22 three and four year olds and the two year old free early education entitlement to 18 children in the eligible cohort. The nursery is open from 10am - 4pm and they have a strong relationship with a childminders network through which they can additionally offer paid places between the hours of 8am - 10am and 4pm - 6pm. The nursery provision has, until recently, been subsidised by the local authority and this funding is being phased out, leading to the necessity to develop a sustainability plan, part of which is the expansion of the entire early years offer, including EFE, the universal offer and two year old places. There is already a limited holiday time offer for three and four year olds in place at the centre.
* KGCCN is also based at a community centre and is located on the top floor with no immediate access to an outdoor space. The nursery opens from 9am - 4pm daily and delivers the universal offer to three and four year olds from 9am - 12 noon and the two year old free early education entitlement from 1pm - 4pm.

The setting can accommodate 24 children at any one time, although there is room to increase numbers were more toilets to be installed. In total, 16 two year olds and 25 three year olds are currently attending the provision.

The nursery has a strong community ethos and provides affordable extended places for parents who are in training. The parents who access these for their children will not be entitled to the new EFE and the nursery want to ensure that this supported pathway to employment remains open.

They also have the possibility for expansion in a building in a park across the road the community centre, although some building and outdoor adjustments would be required and the provision would have to be set up and put away. There is also an option to open all year round in the main community centre building but that would require a staffing restructure and different terms and conditions for the staff to initiate a 52 week contract.

There is, in principle, agreement on a partnership based, in the beginning, between the two nurseries to deliver an all year round, all day offer to children who are entitled to the new EFE. The final framework for an offer will be put in place leading up to September 2017. The 8am – 6pm offer over 50 weeks EFE will be made available to three local primary schools and all local parents who work, whilst maintaining the community ethos of both centres.

**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:

* SCCN could extend its day and open from 8am – 6pm and build on the current limited offer of holiday provision to three and four year olds
* The community centre in which SCCN is based has a main hall into which the nursery provision could expand with some capital investment in suitable toilets for young children
* SCCN nursery enjoys an extensive outdoors space (and KGCN does not have any)
* KGCCN is willing to extend its hours in the morning to open at 8am
* KGCCN has space that is vacant throughout the holiday periods
* The two nurseries have a similar community ethos
* There is an opportunity to capitalise on the ability of both to transport their Ofsted early years registration to either site and assist with the provision of an extended offer
* A walking bus between the two settings could be organised if the provision were to be on split sites
* There are opportunities to offer extended places to children from other local schools.

The conclusions that were reached were:

* The optimum model for delivery of the new EFE was to make available a stretched offer across the two community centre sites
* 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 EFE offer, as well as ensuring that affordable paid places could be made available at both centres
* Although the children will attend to settings, it is important to keep children’s wellbeing at the centre of the delivery model and, therefore, to minimise their movement between sites and ensure their key worker is with them in the transfer between sites
* A close working relationship between the two nurseries 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 partnership would be much improved by the principal local primary school joining it
* There is also the opportunity to bring local childminders into the frame in order that they deliver the EFE in the earlier and later parts of the day and/or to children who would benefit from being in a smaller environment.

**The blended offer**

The model will consist of:

* SCCN will offer the EFE 8am – 6pm to children who are registered with their setting
* KGCCN will deliver the EFE 8am - 1.30pm and SCCN deliver the offer 1.30pm – 6pm with a walking bus between settings; the key people from KGCCN will accompany the children between the settings in order to have a smooth transition for the children from one to the other and an effective handover for the staff
* SCCN will deliver the full 8am – 6pm provision in the holidays
* SCCN will engage with the principal local primary school to discuss the opportunity for their children to have an all day, all year round EFE offer either on the school new site or in their own building

The arrangement will meet the needs of parents who want full day and/or parents who only want three or four days per week all year.

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

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

There is 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)