**Case Study: A blended delivery model: delivering the new extended free entitlement (EFE) through building on existing relationships between a primary academy and teaching school, stay and play group, childminders and a university**

**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 early education and 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 by building on existing relationships**

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

The key partners are:

* Primary academy that is also a teaching school
* Stay and play group offering sensory play
* Ofsted registered childminder
* A university

All the partners have an existing relationship with the primary academy and teaching school.

The stay and play group is run on the primary academy and teaching school site with a focus on sensory activities for children aged 0 - four years.

The childminder has been practising for 13 years and her own grown-up children attended the school. She regularly brings and collects minded children to the school and has good connections with the other childminders in the area.

The school and the university have a relationship dating back five years. The university is the Higher Education (HEI) provider for School Direct and the primary academy and teaching school partner with them to co-deliver teacher training.

The primary academy and teaching school is based in an area of the midlands which is just below the national average in terms of deprivation (0.17% on the IDACI deprivation index). The pupils are drawn from a wide catchment area and there are relatively low levels of children eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). There is a high stability of families in the area and many households where both parents are working. This indicates there will be a good demand for the new EFE in 2017.

**The existing offer**

At present the primary academy and teaching school is open to all children from 7.30am - 5.45pm during term time via wrap around care. The school provides 60 part time places in the nursery class. Approximately 25% of nursery children access and pay for the wraparound provision that was introduced in 2016.

Early years wraparound provision is also attended by pre-school children who are three years old but not yet old enough to access the universal offer. Parents pay for these places.

The school have an ambition to provide 48 out of the 60 nursery places as full time options for three and four year olds who become eligible for EFE in September 2017. In order to accommodate this number of children they will need to purchase and install a standalone pre-school and associated wraparound unit to be located in the early years outdoor area.

**The vision**

The school had a clear vision from the start. They wanted to look beyond the logistics of accommodating additional children in the nursery and offering a full day of EFE. They took the opportunity to imagine what it would be like for children, parents and staff when the new EFE offer is rolled out.

For children, they realised that there needed to be opportunities within a full day to have sensory, fun-filled, open-ended experiences that enhance the early ears foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum, the stay and play group will provide this.

For parents they realised that they may need evening and weekend care and saw a role for the school in co-ordinating this with a network of local childminders. They thought of parents who work all week and wanted to give them some low cost, fun and messy experiences to enjoy with their children at the school. School staff and stay and play group will provide this on selected Saturdays. For school staff in the nursery, pre-school and holiday provision, there will be extra support from the university students on placement and they will be able to access the new training being developed jointly by the primary academy and training school and the university.

There appeared to be clear advantages for the school in working with partners, but for this project to sustain its momentum there needed to be benefits for the partners too:

* The stay and play group is an emerging local business, created and delivered by one of the parents at the school. This project gives her business valuable exposure, more delivery opportunities and the endorsement of a well-respected school.
* For the childminders, it provides more early education and childcare opportunities and the endorsement of their service by the school.
* The university will benefit from high quality, longer placements for their Early Childhood Studies students when the project rolls out, providing a more experienced, well-equipped workforce to meet anticipated increased demand for suitable staff in school and private settings.

**The blended offer**

Through a partnership with local childminders, a stay and play group and a University, this primary academy and teaching school are aiming to develop the following 1,140 hours of funded EFE for the children of eligible parents.

**A stretched offer**

Holiday time provision will be delivered within the school and will be provided for eligible three and four year olds (two to three weeks in summer holiday and one to two weeks at Easter and Christmas) using school staff and the stay and play group. Holiday care outside of these weeks and on inset days would be provided by the childminder and in due course, other local childminders.

**Extended days**

In addition to the wrap around provision available at school, children could also access out of hours and weekend care if required with the childminder or other childminders in the area.

**Enrichment**

The stay and play group would provide activities specifically for three and four year olds to provide messy and creative play based experiences for relaxation and fun at the end of an extended day.

The stay and play group would provide a session on selected Saturdays for parents who work in the week so they can enjoy messy creative play along with their children.

**Capacity and workforce development**

It is intended that an agreement to provide early years placements for Early Childhood Studies students at the university will be established. These students will complete two block placements working alongside staff in nursery, wraparound and pre-school provision increasing the knowledge and experience within the three and four year old range. This will in turn have a positive impact on the availability of suitably qualified early years practitioners for the sector over time.

**Do not compromise on quality**

One of the recurring themes in this partnership was the consistent emphasis they placed on quality, from quality of care and transitions for the children to the quality of relationships with parents. They showed concern for the service provided to the community and the professional development of staff.

**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.

For a visual representation of this partnership, please see the diagram on the following page.

**A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF EXTENDED FREE ENTITLEMENT MIXED MODEL PARTNERSHIP**

**Partnership supported by  
local authority   
early years team**

**PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**SCHOOL OFFER TO PARTNERS;**

* Use of school facilities
* Access to forest school and training
* Access to innovative CPD programmes
* Support and guidance

**University School of   
Education**

**Placements for   
degree students**

**Childminder   
representative   
for local area**

**Play group**

**Joint Early Years   
training   
programmes**

Pre-School   
care

60 place   
Nursery  
class

Wrap around   
care

Saturday   
club

Holiday care

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| KEY |  |
|  | Existing  provision |
|  | Proposed  provision |

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)