

# Provider Agreement 2026-27

(incorporating the Local Code of  
Practice)

Terms and Conditions for  
providing early years  
entitlement places  
in Nottingham City

Children's and  
Education  
Directorate

Early Years  
Team



## Foreword

Nottingham City Early Years Team supports the provision of early years entitlement places for eligible children. This document outlines the terms and conditions for provider's delivering early years entitlement places in the City, in line with the latest statutory guidance. It is imperative that you familiarise yourself with this document so that you are aware what is expected of you and what you should expect from Nottingham City Council as your local authority. If you are unsure of your position, please seek independent legal advice.

If this Agreement is not signed and returned to the Local Authority, then there is no binding agreement that requires the LA to fund the provider for the provision of early education and childcare.

This Agreement is made between the Local Authority and the Provider for the provision of free early education and childcare. The terms and responsibilities outlined in this document shall be binding upon both parties.

The key areas of importance for the 2026/27 Provider Agreement are:

- Census x 3 a year clause 6.27
- Transparency re admissions policy clause 2.7
- Updated rates - page 30
- Adjustment forms updated for EYPP claims clause 6.37
- Name change 'Families Receiving Additional Support' to 'Early Learning for 2 Year Olds'
- Section 5 – Quality
- The updated Further Information and Documentation Pack

A Support Worker or Manager from the Early Years Team will always be available to provide advice, guidance and challenge. As stated at clause 5.13, please notify us if you are having an Ofsted inspection to enable a member of the team to be present at feedback. (for group-based settings).

Based on evidence of effective Continuous Professional Development opportunities that lead to better outcomes for children, we continue to offer training packages linked to the EYFS, at no, or low, cost and we hope that you will continue to take full advantage of these opportunities. Combined with CPD opportunities, Networks and on-going communications we will together work towards contributing to the Best Start in Life national strategy (BSIL) .

We look forward to working with you throughout the coming year.



Kathryn Bouchlaghem, Head of Service - Early Years

# Contents

	Page Number
Section 1 - Introduction	4
Section 2 - The Early Years Entitlements	5
Table 1: Funding Periods	6
Table 2: Maximum Entitlement per Funding Period	6
Charging	6
Section 3 – Eligibility Criteria for the Early Years Entitlements	9
Table 3: Age Eligibility for Early Years Entitlement Places	9
Eligibility Criteria for Early Learning for 2 Year Olds	10
Eligibility Criteria for 3 and 4 Year Olds – The Universal Entitlement	11
Eligibility Criteria for the Working Parent Entitlements	11
Eligibility Codes and Reconfirmation	12
The Grace Period	13
Table 4: Grace Period Dates and LA Audit Dates	14
Eligibility Criteria for Working Parent Entitlements for Children in Foster Care	14
Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)	15
Eligibility Criteria for EYPP Funding	15
Possible Use of Your EYPP Allocation	16
Section 4 – Flexibility	17
Partnership Working	18
Patterns of Delivery	18
Section 5 – Quality	20
Providers with an Ofsted Enforcement Action	22
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	23
Safeguarding	24
Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership	25
Section 6 – Finance	26
Providers Registering for Funding	26
Table 5: Process for Providers to Register for Funding, by Ofsted Grade	28
Funding the Early Years Entitlements for Eligible Children	29
Early Years Funding Formula & Local Hourly Rates	29

	Page Number
Funding for the Early Years Pupil Premium	30
The Claims and Payment Process – Parent Declaration Form	31
Data Collection – Headcount	31
Table 6: Portal Submission Timeline for the 2026/27 Financial Year	32
Making Payment	32
Table 7: Payment Schedule Timeline for the 2026/27 Financial Year	34
Claim Adjustments	35
Authorised and Unauthorised Absence	35
Table 8: Rethinking ‘Did Not Attend’	36
Changes to Provider Details	36
Unforeseen and Planned Closures	36
<b>Section 7 – Auditing and Compliance</b>	<b>37</b>
Completion of Registers	38
UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018	38
Data Protection, Audit and other offences including the Computer Misuse Act 1990	39
<b>Section 8 – Termination and Withdrawal of Funding</b>	<b>40</b>
Suspension	41
Variation	42
Waiver	42
Insurance and Indemnity	42
Appeals Procedure	42
Complaints	43
<b>Section 9 – Useful Contacts</b>	<b>44</b>
<p>Please note that a ‘Further Information and Example Documentation’ Pack is available to complement this Provider Agreement and support the delivery of early years entitlement places locally.</p> <p>Please note, all this documentation has been updated for 2026/27, so please ensure you use the latest versions of these documents.</p>	

This Provider Agreement reflects the Department for Education's Model Agreement Template and incorporates local practice guidance on the delivery of the early years entitlement in Nottingham City. The term Local Authority abbreviated to LA , refers to Nottingham City Council and is used interchangeably throughout.

## Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1 Nottingham City Council must secure a free place for every eligible child in their area with no mandatory charges. To support this duty, Nottingham City offers childcare providers and schools the opportunity to offer early years entitlement places to eligible children and to secure quality, these early years entitlement places must be delivered by either;
  - Early Years Providers other than a childminder registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register
  - A childminder registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register
  - A childminder or childcare provider registered with a Childminder Agency which is itself registered with Ofsted
  - Schools taking children aged 2 and over and which therefore are exempt from registration with Ofsted as early years providers
  - Schools taking children under 2 which are separately registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register (including independent schools).
  - Independent schools where the early years provision is inspected separately by a independent inspectorate.
- 1.2 All providers who wish to offer early years entitlement places must comply with all relevant legislation and insurance requirements and agree to these terms and conditions in order to be included on the Directory of Providers (DoP) and claim the early years entitlement funding (as per the arrangements LA's are permitted to attach to the delivery of early years provision, under Section 9 of the Childcare Act 2006).
- 1.3 To support the administration and delivery of early years entitlement funding for eligible children, Nottingham City Council is required to have regard to a range of guidance, including the Early Education and Childcare, Statutory Guidance 2026, which is reflected in the detail of this Provider Agreement, which also incorporates the local Code of Practice for the delivery of these places.
- 1.4 This agreement covers the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027 funding period.
- 1.5 Nottingham City Council has the right to 'unilaterally vary' the agreement to reflect changes in legislation and departmental guidance. References to legislation will be to that legislation as amended from time to time, without express change in the Provider Agreement.

## Section 2: The Early Years Entitlements

- 2.1 This Provider Agreement relates to the following early years entitlements:
- The 15 hour entitlement early learning for 2 year olds (formerly families receiving additional support)
  - The 15 hour entitlement for parents of 3 and 4 year olds (the 'universal entitlement')
  - The 30 hour working parent entitlements for children aged 9months+
- 2.2 All families with eligible children must be offered their early years entitlement place with no conditions of access and it must be completely free to the parent at the point of delivery.
- 2.3 Early years entitlement places for eligible children are a minimum of 570 hours per year, which must be taken over no fewer than 38 weeks in any year, for up to 15 hours per week. For the 30 hour working parent entitlement, this increases to 1,140 hours per year, which must be taken over no fewer than 38 weeks in any year, for up to 30 hours per week .
- 2.4 Parents can 'stretch' their early years entitlement hours, which means taking fewer hours per week over more than 38 weeks, subject to the maximum number of hours a year (570 or 1,1140 hours) not being exceeded. In this circumstance, the funded hours per term per child may vary, but Table 2 illustrates the maximum entitlement per funding period that can be claimed per child. Providers should note that whilst their annual payment will be correct, the payment over the term could be above or below actual hours accessed that term where the parent stretches their offer. Financial planning and accounting should take account of this. Refer to Section 6: Finance for more details.
- 2.5 The early years entitlement hours cannot be condensed and the maximum early years entitlement that can be claimed within any one week must not exceed 15 or 30 hours, depending on which entitlement the child is accessing.
- 2.6 Providers should deliver the free entitlements consistently to all parents, whether in receipt of 15 or 30 hours and regardless of whether they opt to pay for optional services or consumables. This means that providers should be clear and communicate to parents' details about the days and times that they offer early years entitlement places, along with their services and charges. This is to ensure parents make an informed choice of provider and understand the entitlement hours are available free of charge. Those children accessing the free entitlements should receive the same quality and access to provision as privately paying children.
- 2.7 The Provider must publish their admissions criteria, (such as what age groups the provider takes, any priority for children with SEND or looked after children, and both how and when to apply for a place). The Provider must ensure parents understand which hours/sessions can be taken as free provision, what optional extras are available to them, and the types of reasonable alternatives they have if they choose not to take up these extras.

Table 1 – Funding Periods

The funding periods are:

Autumn Term:	1 <sup>st</sup> September – 31 <sup>st</sup> December
Spring Term:	1 <sup>st</sup> January – 31 <sup>st</sup> March
Summer Term:	1 <sup>st</sup> April – 31 <sup>st</sup> August

Table 2 – Maximum Entitlement per Funding Period

For funding purposes, the maximum entitlement per funding period, per eligible child accessing any 15 hour early years entitlement, is as follows:

Autumn Term	Maximum of 210 hours	[14 weeks x 15 hours]
Spring Term	Maximum of 180 hours	[12 weeks x 15 hours]
Summer Term	Maximum of 180 hours	[12 weeks x 15 hours]

For funding purposes, the maximum entitlement per funding period, per child accessing the working parent entitlement, is as follows:

Autumn Term	Maximum of 420 hours	[14 weeks x 30 hours]
Spring Term	Maximum of 360 hours	[12 weeks x 30 hours]
Summer Term	Maximum of 360 hours	[12 weeks x 30 hours]

## Charging

**Provision must be offered within the national parameters on charging practices set out in section A1 of the Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2026.**

- 2.8 Government funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of free, high quality, flexible childcare. The 15 or 30 hours must be able to be accessed free of charge to parents. There must not be any mandatory charges to the parents in relation to the free hours. It is not intended to cover the cost of meals, other consumables, additional hours or additional services.
- 2.9 Providers can charge parents for the following extras in connection with the free hours but these charges must be voluntary for the parent:
- Consumables to be used by the child such as nappies and suncream
  - Meals and snacks consumed by the child
  - Extra optional activities such as celebrations, events, specialist tuition (for example music classed or foreign languages) or other activities which are not directly related or necessary for the effective delivery of the EYFS framework.

Providers can also charge parents for any additional private paid hours according to their usual terms and conditions, provided taking up private paid hours is not a condition of accessing a free place.

- 2.10 The costs of chargeable extras should be published on provider websites or, where they do not have any website, on local authority Family Information Services. These should be clear, up-to-date and easily accessible to parents, to enable parents to make an informed choice of provider. They should set out, for each setting, the amounts charged for all the chargeable extras listed, as well as the pattern of hours that parents can take the entitlements. The DfE template on how to set out these costs can be found in the Further Information and Example Documentation Pack.
- 2.11 Providers must ensure their invoices and receipts are clear, transparent and itemised and break down separately into:
- The free entitlement hours
  - Additional private paid hours
  - Food charges
  - Non-food consumables charges
  - Activities charges

This is to allow parents to see that they have received their early years entitlement hours complete free of charge and understand fees paid for additional hours. Providers will ensure receipts contain their full details so that they can be identified as coming from a specific provider for the purpose of audits and any payments made in relation to Universal Credit.

- 2.12 Parents must be able to opt out of paying for chargeable extras and the associated consumable or activity for their child. For activities and extra services, providers should be made aware that participation in any optional extra activity should be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. In these circumstances, local authorities should ensure that children who do not participate in optional activities continue to receive provision that complies with the EYFS.
- 2.13 Providers should be mindful of the impact of charges on families, particularly the most disadvantaged. Providers who choose to offer the free entitlements, are responsible for setting a policy on providing parents with options for alternatives to additional charges. This policy must offer reasonable alternatives that allow parents to access the entitlement for free, including allowing parents to supply their own, or waiving the cost of these items.
- 2.14 In all cases, these chargeable extras must not be a condition of taking up a free place. All parents, including disadvantaged families, must have fair access to a free place. A local authority should intervene if a provider seeks to make additional hours, optional services or optional consumables a mandatory condition of taking up a free place.
- 2.15 Providers should deliver the free entitlements consistently, so that all children within a setting accessing any of the free entitlements receive the same quality and access to provision, regardless of whether they choose to pay for additional hours, voluntary extra services, meals or consumables.
- 2.16 Providers must not charge parents for the following in connection with the entitlement hours:
- Top-up fees (any difference between a provider's normal charge to parents and the funding they receive from the local authority to deliver free places)
  - The supply of or use of any materials, including, but not limited to, craft materials, crayons, paper, books, instruments, toys, or other equipment or learning resources that are necessary for the effective delivery of childcare
  - Business running costs, including, but not limited to, rent, mortgage payments, staff wages, cleaning materials, disposal of waste materials, insurance, or utility bills such as energy, gas or water

- Non-refundable Registration fees as a condition of taking up a child's free entitlement place
- Non-refundable deposits as a condition of taking up a child's entitlement place
- Non-refundable retainer fees in relation to entitlement places
- Additional support costs for children with SEND as part of their entitlement hours or as a condition of accessing an entitlements place
- General charges, including but not limited to, non-itemised enrichment charges, sustainability charges, business continuity charges, additional charges, enhanced ratios, hourly rates, or any other supplementary charges on top of the free hours
- Any additional fees that are not specifically identified and itemised as being for chargeable extras as described in 2.9
- Use funding to cover debts incurred by the parent or for lack of notice of leaving for the early years entitlement hours/sessions.

## Section 3: Eligibility Criteria for the Early Years Entitlement Places

Table 3 – Age Eligibility for Early Years Entitlement Places

A child will be entitled to the relevant early years entitlement place when they have attained the relevant age and the child or parent has met any additional criteria. Age eligibility to establish when a child is entitled to access an early years entitlement place is based on their date of birth

For a child born between:	They will be eligible for an early years entitlement place from:
1 <sup>st</sup> September and 31 <sup>st</sup> December	1 <sup>st</sup> January or beginning of the Spring Term following their turning 9 months old, 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> birthday
1 <sup>st</sup> January and 31 <sup>st</sup> March	1 <sup>st</sup> April or beginning of the Summer Term following their turning 9 months old, 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> birthday
1 <sup>st</sup> April and 31 <sup>st</sup> August	1 <sup>st</sup> September or beginning of the Autumn Term following their turning 9 months old, 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> birthday

\* Children will receive early years entitlements funding up until the term after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday (e.g. – If a child turns 5 in the Summer Term, they will receive funding until the end of the Summer Term).

\* If a child is attending a Reception Class in School, they will no longer be entitled to early years entitlements funding, with the exception of the child accessing a place at an Independent School where they are not charging for Reception places.

- 3.1 Nottingham City Council must ensure that a child has a free place no later than the beginning of the term following the child and the parent meeting the eligibility criteria for the free entitlement.
- 3.2 Providers must check original copies of documentation to confirm the parent meets the eligibility criteria (where relevant) and that the child has reached the relevant age before the child starts their place for all free entitlements. The provider must retain paper or digital copies of documentation to enable Nottingham City Council to carry out audits and fraud investigations. Documents must be stored securely and deleted when there is no longer a good reason to keep the data.
- 3.3 Providers must 'see' evidence, such as an eligibility letter for early learning for 2 years olds or a valid eligibility code for the working parent entitlements, to enable them to confirm the parents meet the eligibility criteria before an early years entitlement place is offered. Please ensure that child's names on eligibility letters, code checks and enrolment forms are consistent with the documentation being presented. Should a parent apply for the relevant eligibility checks after their child has been attending an early years entitlement place with a provider and they are found to be eligible, funding cannot be backdated. Equally, should a parent be found to be ineligible after starting a place, Nottingham City Council cannot fund the ineligible early years entitlement hours that have already been offered.

## Eligibility Criteria for Early Learning for 2 Year Olds

- 3.4 An early years entitlement place for early learning for 2 year olds is not a universal entitlement. A child will be entitled to these early years entitlement hours from the term after both:
- The child has attained the age of 2 and
  - The child or parent meets the eligibility criteria as stated in the Statutory Guidance.
- 3.5 Children are eligible for 15 hours of early years entitlement provision (per week, for 38 weeks per year, or 570 hours per year) if the parent(s) claim one of the following benefits:
- Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
  - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
  - Universal Credit – if a parent is entitled to Universal Credit and they have an annual net earned income equivalent to and not exceeding £15,400, assessed on up to three of the parent's most recent Universal Credit assessment periods
  - Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (support for asylum seekers)
- 3.6 Children may also be eligible if the child:
- Is looked after by a LA
  - Has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) prepared under section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014
  - Is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance under section 71 of the Social Security and Contributions and Benefits Act 1992
  - Is no longer looked after by a LA as a result of an adoption order, a special guardianship order or a child arrangement order which relates to either or both of the following;
    - With whom the child is to live
    - When the child is to live with any person
- 3.7 A child is also eligible for 15 hours free provision if their parents have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and have income below specified income thresholds.
- 3.8 To check eligibility, parents must apply through the Families Information Service (FIS) to see if they meet the eligibility criteria.
- 3.9 Providers should encourage and, if necessary, assist, parents to apply for an eligibility check online. The information the parent needs to provide is:
- Full name, gender and date of birth of the child
  - Full name, address and date of birth of the child's parent
  - National Insurance number or National Asylum Seeker Service (NASS) number unless the child is in the care of the LA.
- 3.10 If eligible, parents will be issued an eligibility letter to confirm the eligibility criteria has been met and an early years entitlement place can be offered.
- 3.11 Providers must ensure that children on the early learning for 2 year old entitlement who have met the eligibility criteria and taken up their free place can continue to receive a free place until the point they become eligible for the universal entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds, even if the child or parent cease to meet the eligibility criteria during this time.

- 3.12 Where households meet the eligibility criteria for both 2-year-old entitlements, they must be recorded as taking up 15 hours of early learning for 2 year olds entitlement and then 15 hours of the working parent entitlement. They will need to reconfirm eligibility every 3 months for the working parent entitlement.

The provider should offer entitlement places for the early learning for 2 year olds on the understanding that the child remains eligible, and can remain in their place regardless of whether their family circumstances change, until they become eligible for the universal entitlement for 3- and 4- year-olds. Children who are eligible for both the working parent entitlement and the early learning for 2 year olds, must receive their first 15 hours of funding under the early learning for 2 year olds scheme.

## Eligibility Criteria for 3 and 4 Year Olds - The Universal Entitlement

- 3.13 All 3 and 4 year olds , including those moving to England from another country, are eligible for 15 hours of early years entitlement provision (over no fewer than 38 weeks per year), from the start of the term after the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, as illustrated in Table 3.
- 3.14 There are no additional eligibility criteria for the universal entitlement, other than the child's date of birth, and no reconfirmation is required.

## Eligibility Criteria for Working Parent Entitlements

- 3.15 The following eligibility criteria for working parent entitlements applies to:
- The 30 hour entitlement for eligible working parents of 3 and 4 year olds (30 hours per week, 38 weeks per year or 1,140 hours per year)
  - The 15 hour entitlement for children aged 2 of eligible working parents (15 hours per week, 38 weeks per year or 570 hours per year, increasing to 30 hours per week, 38 weeks per year or 1,140 hours per year from September 2025.
  - The 15 hour entitlement for children aged 9 – 23 months of eligible working parents (15 hours per week, 38 weeks per year or 570 hours per year, increasing to 30 hours per week, 38 weeks per year or 1,140 hours per year .
- 3.16 A child will be entitled to the relevant working parent entitlement, from the term after:
- The child has attained the relevant age, as detailed in Table 3 and is under compulsory school age and
  - The child's parent has a current positive determination of eligibility from HMRC (ie, a valid eligibility code)
- 3.17 The child's parent(s) will need to meet the following eligibility criteria:
- The parent of the child (and their partner where applicable) should be seeking the early years entitlement place to enable them to work
  - The parent of the child (and their partner where applicable) should also be in qualifying paid work. Each parent or the single parent in a lone parent household will need to expect to earn the equivalent of 16 hours at the national minimum wage rate over the forthcoming quarter
  - Where one or both parents are on certain forms of family leave from work (including maternity, paternity or shared parental leave) or in receipt of certain forms of statutory pay in connection with sickness or parenting, they are treated as though they meet the minimum income requirement – this

only applies for specified periods for those parents on family leave that was started because of the birth or adoption of the child in free childcare.

- Where one parent (in a couple household) is in receipt, or could be entitled to be in receipt, of specific benefits related to caring, incapacity for work or limited capability for work, they are treated as though they are in paid work
- Where a parent is in a 'start-up period' (ie they are newly self-employed), they do not need to demonstrate that they meet the income criteria for 12 months in order to qualify for the working parent entitlement

If either or each parent's net income exceeds £100,000, they will not be eligible for the working parent entitlement.

- 3.18 To check eligibility and to apply for the working parent entitlements, this must be done through the Government's online Childcare Service <https://beststartinlife.gov.uk/childcare-early-years-education/15-and-30-hours-support/> If eligible, parents will be issued an 11-digit eligibility code unique to that child. If not eligible, parents can access the review and appeals process managed by HMRC if they disagree with the eligibility outcome.
- 3.19 Eligibility for the working parent entitlements is determined by HMRC through this online application. The only exception to this is children in foster care.

## Eligibility Codes and Reconfirmation

- 3.20 Alongside the eligibility code, which is the child's unique 11-digit number, and original copies of documentation, a provider must acquire written consent from, or on behalf of, the parent to be able to receive confirmation and future notifications from Nottingham City Council of the validity of the parents eligibility code. To gain written consent, an example Parent Declaration Form can be found in the 'Further Information and Example Documentation' Pack.
- 3.21 Nottingham City Council will confirm the validity of eligibility codes to allow providers to offer free places for eligible children aged 9 months and above. Nottingham City Council will provide a validity checking service to providers to enable them to verify the eligibility code. The Eligibility Checking Service allows Nottingham City Council to make instant checks for code validity. Once written consent is received, providers should promptly verify the eligibility code via the Capita Headcount Portal.
- 3.22 As stated at clause 3.3, a working parent entitlement place should not be offered to the parent until the eligibility code has been validated. A parent can reserve this place with a childcare provider before their code is validated, but the code must be validated via the Department's Eligibility Checking System before the child can actually take up their early years entitlement place.
- 3.23 The 'validity start date' is the date on which the parent has been made eligible by HMRC and been issued with a code. The 'validity end date' is the parent's 'deadline' for reconfirming and the date their code becomes invalid if they do not re-confirm or are found to be ineligible (after which they will then be in the 'grace period').
- 3.24 In the event that an eligibility code cannot be validated through the Headcount Portal, the parent will need to contact HMRC directly to access support.
- 3.25 Parents should apply for their eligibility code during the term that their child turns the relevant age so that funding can begin at the start of the following term. Parents can get an eligibility code before their child turns the relevant age, but they can only start claiming their early years entitlement place the term

after their child's age relevant birthday, or the term following the date the eligibility code was issued (whichever is later).

- 3.26 Where a parent becomes eligible for the working parent entitlement part way through the term, the parent can start claiming their additional hours the term following the date on which they received their code and had it validated.
- 3.27 Funding for the working parent entitlements will not start half-way through a term unless the child reached the relevant age and the date the eligibility code was issued was prior to the start of the funding period (1<sup>st</sup> January, 1<sup>st</sup> April or 1<sup>st</sup> September).
- 3.28 Parents accessing the working parent entitlements will have to re-confirm their eligibility approximately every 3 months to HMRC. Parents should receive reminders from HMRC in the weeks prior to their re-confirmation deadline but should not rely on this.
- 3.29 Where the parent's circumstances have changed or they do not re-confirm their eligibility and are therefore no longer eligible, they will enter the 'grace period'.

## The Grace Period

- 3.30 A child will enter the grace period when the child's parents cease to meet the eligibility criteria set out in the Childcare (Free of Charge for Working Parents) (England) Regulations 2022, as determined by HMRC (or where the child is in foster care, the responsible LA).
- 3.31 The grace period date is the last date on which parents should receive their working parent early years entitlement place after falling out of eligibility. The grace period end date will automatically be applied to eligibility codes. The parent can continue to access their working parent early years entitlement place until their grace period end date, as shown in Table 4, and Nottingham City Council should continue to fund a place for a child who enters the grace period as set out in the Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for LA's, 2026. This ensures continuity of a place for the child, parent and provider, giving the parent time to find alternative employment and re-confirm their eligibility before the grace period ends.
- 3.32 A parent can take up a working parent entitlement place in their grace period if their eligibility code is valid on the termly deadline (31<sup>st</sup> August, 31<sup>st</sup> December or 31<sup>st</sup> March), even if they fall out of eligibility in the period after the termly deadline but before a provider's term start date.
- 3.33 Children should not start a new working parent entitlement place at a provider during the grace period. This includes:
- Where a parent falls into their grace period before the child has started a place
  - Where a parent falls into their grace period whilst their child is in a place, and the parent seeks to move the child to a different provider.
- 3.34 If the parent does not re-confirm their eligibility by the end of the grace period, their working parent early years entitlement place and funding will cease.
- If the child is 3 or 4, then they will then be able to access the 3 and 4 year old universal entitlement (15 hours) only.
  - If the child is 2, they may be able to access the entitlement for families of 2 year olds receiving additional support.
  - If the child is 9 – 23 months, they will cease to receive funding under the early years entitlements

- 3.35 A grace period will not continue beyond the age that a child has reached compulsory school age.
- 3.36 Nottingham City Council will be able to access information about whether a child has ceased to meet the eligibility criteria and entered the grace period via the Portal's Eligibility Checking System. The grace period end date will automatically be applied to eligibility codes. Providers can also check which parents are due to reconfirm their eligibility or are operating in their grace period via the Expiration Dashboard in the Headcount Portal.
- 3.37 Nottingham City Council should complete audit checks to review the validity of eligibility codes for children who qualify for the working parent entitlements at 6 fixed points in the year, both at half term and at the end of term across the year (in line with the dates given in Table 4).
- 3.38 It is Nottingham City Council's responsibility to notify providers where a parent has fallen out of eligibility and inform them of the grace period end date. Providers will be notified via the Portal. HMRC directly links to the Capita Portal and will be refreshed daily. Providers can check all parents coming up to their reconfirmation dates and those operating in the grace period, by using the Expiration Dashboard. Red = in grace period, Amber = due for re-check and Green = code up to date.

Table 4 – Grace Period Dates and LA Audit Dates

Date parents eligibility code becomes invalid	LA Audit Date	Grace Period end date
1 January – 10 February	11 February	31 March
11 February – 31 March	1 April	31 August
1 April – 26 May	27 May	31 August
27 May – 31 August	1 September	31 December
1 September – 21 October	22 October	31 December
22 October – 31 December	1 January	31 March

## Eligibility for Working Parent Entitlements for Children in Foster Care

- 3.39 A child in Foster Care is entitled to the early years entitlements if the child has attained the relevant age, is under compulsory school age and the following criteria are met:
- The LA is satisfied that the foster parent engaging in paid work other than as a foster parent is consistent with the child's care plan, placing the child at the centre of the process and decision making.
  - That, in single foster parent families, the foster parent holds additional paid employment outside of their role as a foster carer
  - In 2-foster-parent families, both partners hold additional paid employment outside of their role as a foster carer or one partner is working outside of their role as a foster carer and the other is on certain forms of family leave from work (including, maternity, paternity or shared parental leave) or in receipt of certain forms of statutory pay in connection with sickness or parenting.

- 3.40 The process for children in Foster Care is managed by the LA, not HMRC. The Child's Social Worker needs to initiate this process where appropriate. If successful, the Foster Parent will receive an eligibility code from the LA rather than an 11 digit code issued by HMRC. Providers must validate this in the same way as any other eligibility code, prior to the child taking up a working parent entitlement place.
- 3.41 Foster parents accessing the working parent entitlements will have to re-confirm their eligibility every 3 months, but this reconfirmation will be with the LA rather than HMRC and as for all working parent entitlements, where circumstances have changed or eligibility is not reconfirmed and therefore the foster parent is no longer eligible, they will enter the 'grace period'.
- 3.42 Foster parents who are unhappy about decisions made by the LA should seek resolution through their Social Worker or through the LA complaints process.

## Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

- 3.43 Nottingham City Council should promote equality and inclusion, particularly for those families who receive additional support, including looked after children and children in need by removing barriers of access to places and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential.
- 3.44 The provider should ensure that they have identified the relevant children in their setting as part of the process for checking Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) eligibility. They will also use EYPP and any locally available funding streams or support to improve outcomes for this group.
- 3.45 Ofsted are responsible for monitoring the impact of EYPP funding.
- 3.46 In order for the LA to undertake EYPP checks with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), providers can request potentially eligible parents complete the Parent Declaration Form giving their name, Date of Birth and National Insurance number. An example Agreement can be found in the 'Further Information and Example Documentation' Pack.
- 3.47 Providers will enter these details on the Early Years Provider Portal against the child's name and the Early Years Team will submit the parent details to the DWP and the Eligibility Checking Service will check if the family meet the EYPP eligibility criteria.
- 3.48 Providers will be informed on a termly basis which children attracted EYPP funding. Funding will be calculated termly, based on the number of hours attended for a child whose family is confirmed as eligible.

## Eligibility Criteria for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) Funding

- 3.49 Any child accessing an early years entitlement place may attract EYPP funding if their family are in receipt of at least 1 of the following:
- Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
  - Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
  - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
  - Universal Credit (the household income must be less than £7,400 a year after tax, not including any benefits the family receives)

- 3.50 They may also attract funding if the child is:
- Currently being looked after by a LA in England or Wales
  - Has left care in England or Wales through:
    - An adoption order
    - A special guardianship order
    - A child arrangement order

## Possible Use of Your EYPP Allocation

- 3.51 The Early Years Team provide a range of Evidence Based training courses. These have been developed in conjunction with Early Years practitioners using previous research and evaluation, which includes Ofsted inspection feedback and trends as well as EYFSP data linked to Nottingham City. To accommodate all learning styles, the courses are delivered in a variety of ways including online and blended learning as well as face to face. They range from bite sized or half day sessions to specialised Networks and conferences, offering a wealth of CPD opportunities for your staff. More information on these CPD opportunities can be accessed at <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears/section-pages/cpd-training/>
- 3.52 In the event of closure, Providers will need to gain approval from Nottingham City Council for permission to dispose of, or transfer, assets purchased with any funding given by the LA. This includes equipment that has been bought with EYPP money. If the equipment was purchased for a specific child, who is still accessing early years provision but at a different setting, this piece of equipment should ideally be offered and gifted to this setting to continue supporting the child in the first instance. Alternatively, it is hoped that such equipment would be transferred in good faith to another setting rather than sold. If neither of these options are taken and the setting has received permission from the LA to dispose of the assets then the equipment can be disposed of or sold by the setting.

## Section 4: Flexibility

- 4.1 It is expected that the early years entitlements are delivered in a way which is useful for parents and meets their needs and in a way that maximises and safeguards child development.
- 4.2 In addition to the requirements under 'Charging' in Section 2, providers also should ensure that all parents receive full information at the point the child first accesses provision at the setting about:
- The range of early years entitlement hours and their admissions criteria
  - All charges and fees payable for additional hours and services on offer by the provider. It should be made clear to parents that these services are optional (please see Section 2 – Charging)
  - Details of bills and invoices, which should clearly show that the early years entitlement hours are delivered at no charge to the parent and then show fees and charges relating to additional hours and services that parents have decided to take for their children (please see Section 2 – Charging)
  - Other services in their area if they can't meet the parents needs or details of the Families Information Service
  - The providers' complaints procedure.
- 4.3 The provider should work with Nottingham City Council and share information about the times and periods at which they are able to offer the free entitlements to support Nottingham City Council to secure sufficient stretched and flexible places to meet parental demand in the Nottingham City Council area.
- 4.4 Where a child receives their early years entitlement at more than one setting, the parent needs to indicate on the Parent Declaration Form how many hours per week they claim their early years entitlement place at each setting.
- For working parents of 3 and 4 year olds accessing the 30 hour entitlement, their Parent Declaration Form should state at which setting they wish to claim the universal entitlement (15 hours) should they fall out of eligibility (an example Parent Declaration Form can be found in the 'Further Information and Example Documentation' Pack).
  - For working parents of 2 year olds accessing the 30 hour entitlement, where they are eligible for both the additional support and working parent see clause 3.12 in regards to how these hours are split and funded.
  - For working parents of 9 – 23 months and 2 year olds who are only entitled to working parent 30 hour funding, the Parent Declaration Form should state how many hours they wish to claim at each setting (an example Parent Declaration Form can be found in the 'Further Information and Example Documentation' Pack).
  - Parents in receipt of Disability Living Allowance and able to claim Disability Access Funding for their child, should also indicate which setting they wish to receive this funding if the child accesses their early years entitlement at more than one setting. This funding can only be paid in full to one setting each year.
- 4.5 Where a child has appeared on more than one settings headcount, double claims will be checked.

## Partnership Working

- 4.6 The LA should work in partnership with providers to agree how to deliver places and partnerships should be supported by LA's on four levels between;
- LA's and providers
  - Providers working with other providers, including childminders, schools and organisations
  - Providers and parents
  - LA's and parents.
- 4.7 The LA promotes partnership working between different types of providers, including childminders, across all sectors and encourages more providers to offer flexible provision, alongside other providers.
- 4.8 Providers should work in partnership with parents, carers and other providers to improve provision and outcomes for children in their setting. The Early Years toolkit <https://childcareworks.org.uk/early-years-toolkit/> has been developed to help providers set up or join a partnership, maximise the benefits of working together and tackle the challenges joint working can bring.
- 4.9 Providers should discuss and work closely with parents to agree how a child's overall care will work in practice when their free entitlement is split across different providers, such as at a maintained setting and childminder, to ensure a smooth transition for the child.

## Patterns of Delivery

- 4.10 Provision must be offered within the national parameters on flexibility as set out in Section A2 of the Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for LA's:
- No session to be longer than 10 hours
  - No minimum session length (subject to the requirements of registration on the Ofsted Early Years Register)
  - Not before 6.00am or after 8.00pm
  - A maximum of two sites in a single day
- 4.11 Nottingham City Council will not fund any early years entitlement hours outside these parameters.
- 4.12 Providers need to decide which delivery model will best meet the needs of the families and communities they serve and which makes sound sustainable business sense for them as a provider.
- 4.13 Providers can deliver early years entitlement places:
- Over up to 52 weeks of the year if the parent is stretching their child's entitlement
  - Outside of maintained school term times
  - At weekends
- 4.14 There is no requirement that early years entitlement places must be taken, or delivered, on particular days of the week or at particular times of the day.
- 4.15 There is no requirement for providers to be open for at least 38 weeks of the year, or that providers must offer all the early years entitlements, in order to receive funding.
- 4.16 Providers can only claim for the weeks that they are open to deliver the early years entitlements.

- 4.17 If a provider is not delivering the full early years entitlement hours, they should inform parents in writing, explain what they can offer and what the full entitlement is.
- 4.18 Providers can choose not to deliver early years entitlement places.
- 4.19. Providers should ensure that parents understand which hours or sessions can be taken as free provision. Not all providers will be able to offer fully flexible places, but providers should work with parents to ensure that as far as possible the pattern of the entitlement hours are convenient for parents' working hours. Providers should ensure that children are able to take up their free hours in continuous blocks if they wish to, and there should be no artificial breaks in the entitlement hours. For example a provider should not offer 10am to midday and 1pm to 3pm as entitlement hours and offer only private paid hours in between.
- 4.20 Providers should have a written agreement with all parents that take up an early years entitlement place. A sample Parent Declaration Form can be found in the 'Further Information and Example Documentation' Pack.

## Section 5: Quality

- 5.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework is mandatory for all schools that provide early years provision and early years providers registered with Ofsted or with an Ofsted-registered Childminder Agency in England. The EYFS sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.
- 5.2 Provision must be offered in accordance with the national parameters on quality as set out in Section A3 of the current Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and the EYFS statutory framework. Nottingham City Council is clear and consistent in its expectations of continuous quality improvement.
- 5.3 LA's are required by legislation to deliver the early years entitlements through the provider types listed at clause 1.1.
- 5.4 The LA can only rely on the Ofsted (or an independent inspectorate where relevant) inspection outcome of the provider or the childminder agency, or the childminder agency's reasonable opinion of the childminder, as the sole benchmarks of quality, as set out in paragraph A3.12 of the Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance for local authorities, when securing quality for the free entitlements.
- 5.5 The LA must fund places in accordance with the national parameters on quality as set out in Section A3 of the [Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance for local authorities](#) and the [EYFS statutory framework](#).
- 5.6 The LA is not required to fund places at providers who do not meet the quality standards outlined in Chart A below, but may choose to do so in appropriate cases, for example to ensure sufficiency of free places.

**Chart A:** Circumstances in which the LA are not required to fund providers for the delivery of the free entitlements following inspection and receipt of a 'specified grade'

<b>For providers inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006 (early years provision registered in the early years register, such as private, voluntary and independent providers or any provision for under-2s)</b>	Latest inspection took place on 9 November 2025 or earlier: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For Early Learning for 2-year-olds – 'requires improvement' or below for overall effectiveness</li> <li>For all entitlements – 'inadequate' for overall effectiveness</li> </ul>
	Latest inspection took place from 10 November 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For Early Learning for 2-year-olds – 'needs attention' or below in leadership and governance or safeguarding is 'not met'</li> <li>For all entitlements – 'urgent improvement' in leadership and governance or safeguarding is 'not met'</li> </ul>
<b>For independent schools inspected by Ofsted (where the provision is not registered in the early years register)</b>	Latest inspection took place on 4 January 2026 or earlier: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For Early Learning for 2-year-olds – 'requires improvement' or below for overall effectiveness</li> <li>For all entitlements – 'inadequate' for overall effectiveness</li> </ul>
	Latest inspection took place from 5 January 2026: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For Early Learning for 2-year-olds – 'needs attention' or below in leadership and governance or safeguarding is 'not met'</li> <li>For all entitlements – 'urgent improvement' in leadership and governance or safeguarding is 'not met'</li> </ul>

<p><b>For independent schools inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (where the provision is not registered in the early years register)</b></p>	<p>For all entitlements regardless of the date of inspection – ‘not met’ for leadership and governance or ‘not met’ for safeguarding</p>
<p><b>For providers inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (where the provision is registered in the early years register)</b></p>	<p>Latest inspection took place on 4 January 2026 or earlier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Early Learning for 2-year-olds – ‘requires improvement’ or below for overall effectiveness</li> <li>• For all entitlements – ‘inadequate’ for overall effectiveness</li> </ul> <p>Latest inspection took place from 5 January 2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Early Learning for 2-year-olds – ‘needs attention’ or below in leadership and governance or safeguarding is ‘not met’</li> <li>• For all entitlements – ‘urgent improvement’ in leadership and governance or safeguarding is ‘not met’</li> </ul>

- 5.7 The LA are required to fund places for children eligible for a free place at new providers until the provider’s first full inspection report is published, or at a childminder or childcare provider registered with an agency, until the agency’s first full inspection report is published.
- 5.8 The LA should fund providers with an Ofsted inspection judgement of ‘met’ until their Ofsted quality inspection judgement is published. The LA should not fund providers with an Ofsted inspection judgement of ‘not met’
- 5.9 In the case of childminders attached to a Childminder Agency, the childminder wishing to deliver early years entitlement places will be operating under an Agency, which complies with the DfE requirement, and the Agency must have an ‘Effective’ Ofsted grade. If the Childminder Agency notifies the LA that, in the opinion of the Agency, the provision of a particular childminder is not of a satisfactory quality, the LA is not required to fund that childminder.
- 5.10 In the case of Childminder Agencies receiving a second consecutive ‘ineffective’ inspection judgement, LA’s should continue to fund a Childminder Agency’s providers if the Agency has assessed them as being of acceptable quality and Ofsted has not identified any concerns about the Agency’s assessment arrangements.
- 5.11 Following the publication of the inspection report, providers not meeting the quality requirements outlined in this section, could have their funding suspended/withdrawn by the LA. A requirement of funding in such circumstances will be the participation in the LA’s Provider Support Framework (PSF), quality improvement process and engaging in support from the LA’s Early Years Team.
- 5.12 The provider must agree to Nottingham City Council’s staff accessing the setting by mutual consent.
- 5.13 When inspected by Ofsted the provider should inform the Early Years Team of the date and time of the Ofsted feedback to enable a member of the team to be present if possible (with the exception of childminders).
- 5.14 **LA’s have a legal duty to secure information, advice and training on meeting the requirements of the EYFS, meeting the needs of children with SEND and on effective safeguarding and child protection for providers who are rated less than ‘Good’ by Ofsted, newly registered providers or providers on the Childcare Register who are assessed at Not Met by Ofsted.**

## Providers with an Ofsted Enforcement Action

In this section, the Ofsted enforcement actions referred to are as follows:

- Requires Improvement (RI) or Inadequate Ofsted Grade
- 'Needs attention' or below in leadership and governance or safeguarding is 'not met'
- Welfare Requirements Notice (WRN)
- Ofsted Registration Suspension
- Cancellation of Registration

### **Provider with 'Needs Attention' or below in Leadership and Governance or Safeguarding is 'Not Met' or a Welfare Requirements Notice**

- If a provider receives a 'Needs Attention' or below in Leadership and Governance or Safeguarding is 'Not Met' or are issued with a WRN, funding will not be automatically withdrawn. Nottingham City Council and the provider will work together to follow the procedures detailed below. However, if at any time Nottingham City Council believes that children are at risk within the setting, it may immediately take action to suspend funding and the provider will co-operate with Nottingham City Council's reasonable instructions in connection with transferring children and families to other providers, if required, and, where appropriate.

5.15 For providers in receipt of early years entitlement funding, the following actions will apply if they receive a 'Needs Attention' or below in Leadership and Governance or Safeguarding is 'Not Met' or a Welfare Requirements Notice

The provider will:

- Inform the LA of the Ofsted judgement following inspection
- Provide the LA with a copy of the relevant notice and/or inspection report card when received from Ofsted
- Devise and share with the LA an action plan clearly demonstrating how the Ofsted actions/recommendations will be fulfilled and the timelines
- Meet with the LA to monitor and review the action plan within the timelines specified by the LA

### **Providers who have had their registration suspended by Ofsted**

5.16 If a provider has their registration suspended by Ofsted, funding will be suspended until such point Ofsted lift the suspension. The provider will co-operate with Nottingham City Council's reasonable instructions in connection with transferring children and families to other providers.

The provider will:

- Notify the LA of the suspension
- Provide the LA with the notice to suspend and associated actions
- Devise and share with the LA an action plan clearly demonstrating how the Ofsted actions will be fulfilled and the associated timelines
- Meet with the LA to monitor and review the action plan within the timelines specified by the LA.

At the point Ofsted lift the suspension on registration, the provider must notify the LA and provide a copy of the relevant Ofsted notification. Once received, the LA will contact the provider in writing to outline the process for reinstating funding. This will be based on individual provider circumstances with regards to any additional actions imposed by Ofsted.

### **Providers who have had their registration cancelled by Ofsted by emergency order or by issuing a notice to cancel – Notification of Intention (NOI) followed by Notification of Decision (NOD)**

- 5.17 Where a provider has had their registration cancelled by Ofsted by emergency order, funding will be immediately withdrawn. The provider will co-operate with Nottingham City Council's reasonable instructions in connection with transferring children and families to other providers.

If the provider receives a NOI (following complaint or inspection), funding will not be automatically withdrawn. However, if at any time Nottingham City Council believes that children are at risk within the setting, immediate arrangements will be made to suspend funding and the provider will co-operate with Nottingham City Council's reasonable instructions in connection with transferring children and families to other providers, if required, and, where appropriate.

The provider will:

- Notify the LA of NOI
- Provide the LA with the relevant notice when received from Ofsted
- Devise and share with the LA an action plan clearly demonstrating how the Ofsted actions will be fulfilled and the timelines
- Meet with the LA to monitor and review the action plan within the timelines specified by the LA

If following a NOI a provider receives a NOD, funding will be suspended, and the provider will co-operate with Nottingham City Council's reasonable instructions in connection with transferring children and families to other providers.

- 5.18 The Early Years Team provides challenge, advice and intervention to 'lower' quality providers in order to support the development of the EYFS provision. The following link to the PSF page on the Early Years Website gives more information on the support structure and associated processes: <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears/section-pages/the-early-years-foundation-stage-statutory-framework-and-quality-improvement/provider-support-framework/>

## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- 5.19 Providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEND. The provider's arrangements should include a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEND.
- 5.20 Providers receiving early education funding must have regard to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years 2015 (SENDCoP). Providers must ensure owners and all staff members are aware of their duties in relation to the SEND CoP and the Equality Act 2010 and the EYFS Statutory Framework to meet the needs of children with SEND. This includes removing barriers that prevent children accessing early education and childcare and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential.
- 5.21 Providers must make information available about their SEND offer to parents to support them in choosing the right setting for their child with SEND.
- 5.22 Providers may be eligible for additional funding to provide suitable support for children identified as needing adaptation or personalisation to the curriculum to make good progress, on a case by case basis. This includes SEN Inclusion Funding, Disability Access Fund and funding from the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. Providers will check eligibility and use this funding to help them deliver support to these children. Providers may be required to provide evidence of how this funding has been used to support children in their setting. Children in receipt of the early education and childcare entitlements will be eligible for Disability Access Funding if the child is eligible for Disability Living Allowance. Information

about the Early Years SEND Inclusion Fund and Disability Access Fund (DAF) can be found at <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears/section-pages/equality-and-inclusion/early-years-send-fund-disability-access-funding/>

- 5.23 Providers are expected to identify a named SEND Co-ordinator (SENCO). The DfE recommends that the SENCO should hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification (or higher) in early years education. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/622894808fa8f526d8531647/The Role of the Early Years SENCO.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/622894808fa8f526d8531647/The_Role_of_the_Early_Years_SENCO.pdf))
- 5.24 Where a provider identifies a child as having SEND they must work in partnership with parents to establish the support the child's needs (5.37 page 86 SENDCoP 2015).
- 5.25 The LA should be clear and transparent about their role and the support on offer locally through the local offer to meet the needs of children with SEND as well as their expectations of providers. LA's must strategically plan support for children with SEND to meet the needs of all children in the local area as per the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years. As part of this requirement the LA, settings and other partners co-developed Provision Maps to provide a framework for early years provision in settings across the city to meet the needs of children with SEND. *[Nottingham City's Early Years Provision Maps | Ask Lion - Nottingham City Directory](#)*
- 5.26 Providers in Nottingham City can access support from the EYFS SEND Workers, based in the Early Years team, for general SEND support or, for specific children accessing provision, providers can refer to via the EY SEND Pathway <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears/section-pages/equality-and-inclusion/working-with-other-agencies-useful-information/>
- 5.27 Providers are not permitted to charge parents of children with SEND for additional support costs as part of their entitlement hours or as a condition of accessing an entitlements place.
- 5.28 Nottingham City Council advise SENCO's join the Early Years SENCO Networks and complete the annual SENCO Audit. Further information on the Networks can be found here <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears/section-pages/cpd-training/>

## Safeguarding

- 5.29 Nottingham City Council has overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area. They have a number of statutory functions under the 1989 and 2004 Children Acts, which make this clear, and the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance sets these out in detail.
- 5.30 The provider must follow the EYFS and have clear safeguarding policies and procedures in place that are in line with local guidance and procedures for recognising, responding, reporting and recording suspected or actual abuse and neglect. Providers must be alert to any issues or concerns with regard to the safeguarding of children in their setting and any reasons to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting. Providers must notify agencies with statutory responsibilities immediately should they have any concerns regarding a child's safety or welfare.
- 5.31 Providers must record as part of the registration process, the parents full name; date of birth; address and information of any other person with parental responsibility for a child.

- 5.32 Providers must record the names of all adults who may be collecting children, who are significant adults in a child's life.
- 5.33 Providers must ensure all staff and volunteers have police and suitable persons checks within the terms of arrangements currently in force via Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) guidelines.
- 5.34 Providers must notify the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day, in accordance with the LADO process, should they have any concerns or allegations about staff who work in any capacity within their organisation. Registered providers must also notify Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by anyone living, working or looking after children at the premises. They must do this within 14 days
- 5.35 The provider must have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) contactable for every session where childcare is provided (Childminders are the DSL). DSL's must ensure they complete relevant DSL training in accordance with the EYFS every 2 years. All staff are required to complete their safeguarding training in line with Annex C of the EYFS. Visit Nottingham City Early Years CPD website for more information <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears/section-pages/cpd-training/>
- 5.36 Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership (NCSCP) is the forum for agreeing how services, agencies, organisations and the community safeguard children and improve their wellbeing. The NCSCP, through its partner agencies, organisations and the community, is working to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people by protecting them from all forms of abuse and neglect. This is achieved by providing the procedures to be followed in relation to safeguarding children and young people, in addition to support, advice, information and training. Visit the NCSCP website for safeguarding information and resources <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/ncscp>
- 5.37 The provider is required to fully engage with Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership (NCSCP).
- 5.38 Nottingham City Council advise management attendance at the Designated Safeguarding Lead Networks. Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership contribute to the Networks and provide authoritative local and national safeguarding context. It is strongly recommended that DSL's attend these sessions and disseminate the information within their settings to ensure the highest standards of local safeguarding informed practice. For further information on the Networks, go to <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears/section-pages/cpd-training/>
- 5.39 Providers are subject to the Prevent Duty (December 2023) and should understand these requirements as part of their wider safeguarding and welfare responsibilities. In line with statutory guidance, LA's should not fund providers who do not actively promote fundamental British values or if they promote as evidence-based, views or theories which are contrary to established scientific or historical evidence and explanations. The LA will respond to concerns regarding fundamental British values, following advice from Ofsted.

## Section 6: Finance

This section sets out the documentation that Nottingham City Council need to receive from providers to support the delivery of the early years entitlements.

### Providers Registering for Funding

- 6.1 The following procedures are for providers wishing to receive funding for the early learning for 2 year olds, the 3 & 4 year old universal entitlement and any of the working parent entitlements and be placed on the Nottingham City's Directory of Providers (DoP).
- 6.2 The DoP is the list of all providers within Nottingham City that are eligible to claim funding for delivery of the early years entitlements. Nottingham City Council is required to keep this list. Only providers who appear on this DoP can claim the funding for the early years entitlements and providers on the DoP are identified on the Families Information website for parents seeking childcare. It is strongly recommended in promoting early years entitlements places, that you ensure your listing on the Families Information website is current and maintained by emailing [fis@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:fis@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)
- 6.3 Current Ofsted grades will determine the registration pathway required in order to be placed on the DoP (see Table 5 on page 28).
- 6.4 Early years provision is defined in Section 20 of the 2006 Act as the provision of childcare for a young child. A 'provider' in the private, voluntary and independent sector is defined as a:
  - Day Nursery
  - Playgroup and Preschool
  - Nursery Unit in an Independent School
  - Childminder
- 6.5 'Childcare' as defined in Section 18 of the 2006 Act, specifically excluded care provided for a child by a parent, step-parent, foster parent (or other relative) or by a person who fosters the child privately or has parental responsibility for the child. Early years provision by a childminder for a related child does not count as childcare in legal terms and early years entitlements funding cannot be claimed by, or spent on, childminders providing childcare for their own child or a related child, even if they are claiming for other children.
- 6.6 To be included on the Nottingham City DoP and comply with legislation on which providers can deliver the early years entitlements, providers must be:
  - Offering the early years entitlements at premises within the Nottingham City LA area
  - Early Years Providers other than a childminder registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register
  - A childminder registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register
  - A childminder or childcare provider registered with a Childminder Agency which is itself registered with Ofsted
  - Schools taking children aged 2 and over and which therefore are exempt from registration with Ofsted as early years providers
  - Schools taking children under 2 which are separately registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register (including independent schools).
  - Independent schools where the early years provision is inspected separately by an independent inspectorate.

- 6.7 Nannies and home carers are exempt from the requirement to register as a childminder under The Childcare (Exemptions from Registration) Order 2003 if they provide childcare for no more than 2 families in the parent's homes. They are currently not permitted to register on the Early Years Register and cannot therefore receive funding for early years entitlements places.
- 6.8 To receive early years entitlements funding, providers must meet the quality judgements as outlined in Section 5.
- 6.9 Failure to meet the requirements in this Agreement may result in the provider being removed from the DoP.
- 6.10 Section 8 of this Agreement outlines the Appeals Procedure if a providers' application to register for funding is declined.

Table 5 - Process for Providers to Register for Funding, by Ofsted Grade

Providers graded by Ofsted as 'Good', 'Outstanding', 'expected standard or above' in leadership and governance, safeguarding as met or 'Newly Registered'

Provider completes registration form and submits to Early Years Team as instructed <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/media/5aiozdmk/registering-interest-to-provide-funded-places.pdf>

Early Years Team provides support and advice regarding the early years entitlements, funding procedures and paperwork and the requirements contained within this Provider Agreement

Provider completes and signs the Provider Declaration Form, Portal User Form and BACs form and returns the documents to the Early Years Funding Co-ordinator

Provider added to DoP and to the Families Information Service (FIS) funded provider list

Providers graded as 'requires improvement' or 'needs attention' in leadership and governance with safeguarding as met (claiming 2 year old entitlement early learning only)

Provider completes registration form and submits to Early Years Team as instructed <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/media/5aiozdmk/registering-interest-to-provide-funded-places.pdf>

Provider participates in Nottingham City Council's Provider Support Framework process (see Section 5 - Quality)

Early Years Team provides support and advice regarding the early years entitlements, funding procedures and paperwork and the requirements contained within this Provider Agreement

Provider completes and signs the Provider Declaration Form, Portal User Form and BACs form and returns the documents to the Early Years Funding Co-ordinator

Provider added to DoP and to the FIS funded provider list

Providers graded as 'Inadequate' or 'urgent improvement' in leadership and governance or safeguarding is 'not met'

Providers are unable to register to receive early years entitlement funding until Ofsted has re-inspected them and the provider has achieved an improved grading.

## Funding the Early Years Entitlements for Eligible Children

- 6.11 Funding for the early years entitlements should be provided on a fair and transparent basis to providers in order to support sustainability and promote good practice, especially in relation to quality and flexibility. Funding should follow the child, rather than support empty places.
- 6.12 Funding will not be backdated for any early years entitlement places.
- 6.13 The key points in ensuring providers are funded on a fair and transparent basis are:
- Children must be counted on a termly basis in order to support participation-led funding
  - LA's will supply providers with an indicative budget at the start of the financial year which broadly reflects anticipated funding. Throughout the year, payments reflect actual participation, alongside a termly report on the portal to reflect actual levels of participation within the financial year.
  - When a child attends more than one childcare provider for their early years entitlement, Nottingham City Council should fund all providers on a pro-rata basis according to the number of hours attended.
  - Providers should not be penalised for children booked in for an early years entitlement session but then unexpectedly are absent for a single session or short period
  - Providers cannot claim for the hours that the child does not attend for extended periods of absence (more than 2 weeks) unless the absence is authorised and in agreement with Nottingham City Council
  - Providers cannot claim funding for lack of notice, administration or registration fees for the early years entitlement hours or impose unreasonable conditions and/or financial penalties which could create a barrier to accessing an early years entitlement place
  - Providers must ensure that parents read and sign the Parent Declaration Form at registration of a new place. The Declaration Form should be reviewed regularly and an example can be found in the 'Further Information and Example Documentation' Pack
  - Providers will be required, to make available upon request by Nottingham City Council, documents of accounts relating to the early years entitlement places, including attendance registers; parental invoices; and signed Parent Declaration Forms
  - Nottingham City Council takes no responsibility for loss of income from a provider who has failed to verify whether a parent is in breach of their Parent Declaration Forms before providing an early years entitlement place.
  - Funding for the early years entitlements cannot be claimed by childminders providing childcare for their own, or a related, child, even if they are claiming for other children.
- 6.14 The Nottingham City Council approach to funding for recurring or extended periods of authorised or unauthorised absence is outlined on page 35.

## Early Years Funding Formula & Local Hourly Rates

- 6.15 The Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations set out the framework for early years funding. These regulations are updated annually for each financial year. To fund early years entitlement places, LA's are required by legislation to use a locally-determined, transparent formulae to set the funding rates for all types of provider. Any proposed changes to the formulae must be consulted on locally.

- 6.16 Funding for the working parent entitlement for children aged 9 -23 months will be made available using a single hourly base rate, with no supplements. For the 2026-27 financial year, the hourly funding rate for this entitlement is £11.88 per hour.
- 6.17 Funding for the early learning for 2 years olds will be made available using a single hourly base rate, with no supplements. For the 2026-27 financial year, the hourly funding rate for this entitlement is £9.85 per hour.
- 6.18 Funding for the working parent entitlement for 2 year olds will be made available using a single hourly base rate, with no supplements. For the 2026-27 financial year, the hourly funding rate for this entitlement is £8.73 per hour.
- 6.19 Funding for the 3 and 4 year old universal entitlement and the working parent entitlement for 30 hours will both be made available using a single hourly base rate, plus a deprivation supplement for eligible children, which is a mandatory supplement under the statutory guidance. For the 2026-27 financial year, the hourly base rate funding for all 3 and 4 year old children is £6.05 per hour. The deprivation supplement applies to both universal and extended hours and is paid at £1.15 per hour per child, if the family attract Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) Funding.

For example, if the child attracts EYPP funding, they could be eligible for a combined £2.30 (£1.15 Deprivation and £1.15 EYPP) per hour for the universal 15 hours and they could attract the £1.15 per hour per child for the deprivation supplement for any extended hours, but not the additional £1.15 for EYPP, which is payable for the universal 15 hours only as explained below.

## Funding for the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

- 6.20 The DfE hourly funding rate for eligible EYPP children is £1.15 per hour per child for the 2026-27 financial year. Providers could receive EYPP for up to 15 hours per week, up to 38 weeks a year per eligible child (approximately an additional £655.50 per year). The rate is nationally set and there is no local discretion over the rate or eligibility criteria.
- For 3- & 4-year-olds, this applies to the universal 15 hours only, if the child is claiming 30 hours and attending more than one provider, the provider who is claiming universal hours will be allocated the EYPP.
  - For early learning for 2 year olds, this applies to these 15 hours only.
  - For families of 2-year-olds receiving additional support and the working parent entitlement for 2-year-olds, this applies to the 15 hours for families in receipt of additional support only. If the child is attending more than one provider, the provider claiming the additional support hours will be allocated the EYPP.
  - For 9 months - 2-year-olds claiming 30 hours working parent funding, this applies to a maximum of 15 hours only.

For children who split their entitlement across two providers and claim more than 7.5 hours at both providers, EYPP will be applied to 7.5 hours at both providers.

If this is less than 7.5 at one provider, EYPP will be applied to the provider claiming the most working parent hours first (up to 15) and the rest will be paid to the other provider. Example: provider one claims 10 hours, provider 2 claims 7 hours, EYPP will be distributed as 10 hours to the first provider and 5 hours to the second If they are claiming less than 7.5 at one provider.

For children who split their entitlement across three providers and claim more than 5 hours at 3 providers, EYPP will be applied to 5 hours at all.

If this is less than 5 hours at one provider, EYPP will be applied to the provider claiming the most working parent hours first (up to 15) and the rest will be paid to the other providers. Example: provider one claims 2 hours, provider 2 claims 5 hours and provider 3 claims 10 hours, EYPP will be distributed as 0 hours to the first provider, 5 hours to the second and 10 hours to the third.

## The Claims and Payment Process

- 6.21 The LA should clearly set out the documentation that they need to receive from providers to support payment and delivery of the early years entitlements and the timetable which providers should follow when submitting their documentation, this includes setting out the importance of timely and accurate census returns.

## The Parent Declaration Form

- 6.22 The PVI sector are required to submit claims for funding by use of the Early Years Provider Portal.
- 6.23 Claims for funding must be supported by a Parent Declaration Form, completed and signed by the parent. An example can be found in the 'Further Information and Example Documentation' Pack.
- 6.24 Providers must complete the Declaration Form with the parent as soon as the parent accepts the offer of a place, as it sets out the hours and patterns of access to the early years entitlement place that the provider and parent have agreed to for a defined period.
- 6.25 Providers must ensure the Parent Declaration Form is completed in full and a copy is retained for auditing purposes.
- 6.26 Providers must ensure that parents are aware that:
- All hours attended by the child must be entered onto the Parent Declaration Form
  - The child is only eligible for funding for a maximum of 15 or 30 hours per week, for 38 weeks of the year – 14 weeks in the Autumn Term; 12 weeks in the Spring Term; 12 weeks in the Summer Term
  - If a child is splitting their entitlement across more than one provider, the apportioned hours will be detailed on the Parent Declaration Form and funding claimed for and paid accordingly
  - Parents who wish to transfer a claim between providers can only do so at the half term or end of term point. Transfer during a funded term will only be considered in exceptional circumstances e.g. house move; employment move; individual personal circumstances
  - Parents are to be encouraged to complete the Parent Declaration fully to enable providers to submit claims to check for Disability Access Funding and EYPP eligibility checks, where appropriate.

## Data Collection – Headcount

- 6.27 Every year LA's receive funding from Central Government for early years provision. The amount is based on census data. Providers are required by legislation to complete the early years census on a termly basis and submit their census returns to the LA.

- 6.28 To ensure the funding from Central Government is allocated correctly, an accurate data collection process is required and in Nottingham City this is the Early Years Headcount. Data is collected from the PVI Sector through the Early Years Provider Portal, and from schools through a headcount report, every term about the attendance details of all eligible early years entitlement children. Providers should accurately complete and submit headcount and other necessary data returns by agreed dates to support Nottingham City Council to make payment.
- 6.29 Providers are given a secure password to enable them to access the Early Years Portal to submit claims for funding on a termly basis within set deadlines.
- 6.30 Headcount documentation is sent electronically for submission via the Nottingham City Council portal.
- 6.31 There is one headcount each term, with the portal being available as indicated in Table 6. Each term the provider is able to add or amend data for a specific period of time. Any child that starts attending the provision but leaves part way through a term can be funded for split weeks, providing the child's attendance does not exceed the total hours / weeks permissible for that term.
- 6.32 The provider should ensure they submit timely and accurate information, including but not limited to, headcount data (as per the portal closing deadlines detailed in Table 6), census data, parental declarations and invoices, as per the financial guidelines of their LA. Failure to do so may result in inaccurate, delayed or suspended funding.
- 6.33 The LA should not charge providers disproportionate penalties for providing late or incomplete information leading to additional administration in the processing of free entitlements. Any charges should be reasonable and proportionate to the inconvenience or costs incurred to the LA as a result of the lateness and LA's will ensure charges are clearly communicated to providers.
- 6.34 Providers can only claim for the number of weeks and hours that the parent wishes to be claimed and for which the child attends on a regular basis (see page 35 for details on acceptable absences).

Table 6 – Portal Submission Timeline for the 2026/27 Financial Year

Term	Portal opening date	Portal closing date
Summer 2026	23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2026	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2026
Autumn 2026	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2026	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2026
Spring 2027	4 <sup>th</sup> January 2027	22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2027

## Making Payment

- 6.35 Following headcount, data is imported into the Early Years Funding Module. The imported data is then 'cleansed' to eliminate double entries and crosschecks are carried out with neighbouring LA's and city providers to ensure children are not funded twice.
- 6.36 Prior to the actual payment, a report of the database will be sent to individual providers for confirmation that the data held on the system is accurate (Confirmation Report). This report forms

the basis of the balance payment. Therefore, it is very important that this data is carefully checked. Providers must inform Nottingham City Council immediately by amending the Confirmation Report, if a parent wishes to increase or decrease the amount of early years entitlement hours. These amendments must be received by the Confirmation Report deadline in order to be included in main payments.

- 6.37 Any adjustments required after the Confirmation Report stage must be sent using an Adjustment Form by the end of the current term. Adjustments are not included in main balance payments and will be paid or invoiced as appropriate within the first month of the following term. EYPP and deprivation supplements for eligible late claims will only be paid if this hasn't been assigned to another setting in the current term.
- 6.38 The provider must respond immediately to Nottingham City Council queries in respect of data including returning a Confirmation Report.
- 6.39 Funding is provided for up to 570 hours for eligible children from age 9 – 23 months, early learning for 2 year olds, 2 year olds eligible through the working parent entitlement and 3 and 4 year olds accessing the universal entitlement. Funding is provided for up to 1,140 hours per year for the working parent entitlements. (This is generally paid in line with the school term dates for each academic year (equating to 15 or 30 hours per week, 38 weeks per year) but parents can choose to access their entitlement flexibly over fewer hours per week and more weeks per year.
- 6.40 Nottingham City Council operates a monthly payment system for all providers. This works as follows:
- In the Summer Term 2026 we will estimate the total funding for the term (based on the Spring 2026 Terms actual payments). We will pay approximately 75% of the previous terms total sum, less any adjustments, across April, May and June with the balance payment, including supplement funding, being paid in July 2026. There will be no payment in August 2026.
  - In the Autumn Term 2026, we will estimate the total funding for the term (based on the Summer 2025 Terms actual payments). We will pay approximately 75% of the previous terms total sum, less any adjustments, across September, October and November with the balance payment, including supplement funding, being paid in December 2026.
  - In the Spring Term 2027, we will estimate the total funding for the term (based on the Autumn 2026 Terms actual payments). We will pay approximately 75% of the previous terms total sum, less any adjustments, across January and February with the balance payment, including supplement funding, being paid in March 2027.

Although estimates are based on approximately 75% of the previous terms total sum, please note that the Portal System will take into account:

- Any children who had end dates applied during the previous term will not be part of an estimate
- Any children where the System believes the child is no longer age eligible will be not be part of an estimate payment

Furthermore, depending on the age of eligibility, if this term is the term following the child's age relevant birthday, their estimate payment would automatically be calculated at the hourly rate of the entitlement they are moving onto rather than their previous entitlement's hourly rate

Table 7 – Payment Schedule for the 2026/27 Financial Year

Term	Estimate payment dates	Balance payment date
Summer 2026	Approx. 1 <sup>st</sup> of each month April – June 2026	Approx. 15 <sup>th</sup> July 2026
Autumn 2026	Approx. 1 <sup>st</sup> of each month Sept – Nov 2026	Approx. 15 <sup>th</sup> December 2026
Spring 2027	Approx. 1 <sup>st</sup> of each month Jan – Feb 2027	Approx. 15 <sup>th</sup> of March 2027

\*The approximation dates account for if the 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> of the month fall on a weekend or bank holiday.

\*Other than claim adjustments, main payments cannot be made outside of the above scheduled dates.

- 6.41 The local authority must pay any early years providers who request it, for free entitlements, on a monthly basis. This includes childminders.
- 6.42 Providers must be aware that the monthly estimate payments are Government funding and not the provider’s money until the term’s funding is reconciled with the actual hours the child has received. Any estimate payments made over and above the actual entitlement must be repaid to the LA as requested.
- 6.43 All funding is paid directly into the providers’ bank account via BACS.
- 6.44 Nottingham City Council will recover any funding where a provider has received more as an estimate payment than the actual take up of the early years entitlement hours. This will reflect the collective position across all the early years entitlements. For example, if your 3 and 4 year old estimate payments were higher than your actual participation, any balance due from other sources (such as funding for eligible 2 year olds) will be considered before issuing a payment/invoice.
- 6.45 Following each End of Term Report and processing of Adjustment Claims, providers will be made aware of any monies owed to Nottingham City Council in respect of this Agreement. Nottingham City Council will detail any monies owed to and give options for the provider to have these monies off-set against future payments, or have an invoice raised for the amount owed. Providers will have 10 days from the date of this correspondence to inform Nottingham City Council of their preferred option. If the Provider does not reply within the 10 days stated, Nottingham City Council will off-set monies owed against future balance payments in the following term (if no balance payment is due the following term, an invoice will be raised).

Nottingham City Council reserves the right to off-set any amount owed to Nottingham City Council by the provider (including previously owed monies or historical monies or aged debt) against future funding.

- 6.46 Childminders registered with a Childminder Agency and delivering the early years entitlements can have the associated funding paid directly to them or to them via the Childminder Agency. The funding will be paid to whichever party signs the Provider Agreement. Where the Childminder Agency receives the funding on behalf of the childminder, this must be passed to the childminder in full, with no element retained by the Childminder Agency.

- 6.47 Nottingham City Council will not fund inaccurate claims. Nottingham City Council cannot accept responsibility for errors arising from incorrect data submitted on the EY Provider Portal. Any such loss will be a matter for resolution between the provider and the parents involved.
- 6.48 In the unlikely event that any early years entitlement funding is paid in error by Nottingham City Council, this funding will be recovered in full from the provider.

## Claim Adjustments

- 6.49 Claims can be adjusted at any point during the funded term. If, following an audit, providers are found to have falsely claimed funding, providers will be invoiced to recover the amount.
- 6.50 Claims cannot be backdated to previous terms. Therefore, it is very important that the claims submitted for funding are accurate and on time.
- 6.51 Following the balance payment, any inaccuracies must be reported to Nottingham City Council immediately. Evidence of claims will be requested i.e. a copy of the register of attendance for a specified claim. It is at Nottingham City Council's discretion as to the funding of adjustments.

## Authorised or Unauthorised Absence

- 6.52 Providers must maintain accurate attendance registers including a record of notification of absence.
- 6.53 Providers must make parents aware that they are to contact the setting if the child is unable to attend.
- 6.54 Providers must notify Nottingham City Council immediately if a parent withdraws their child or the attendance pattern alters in any way. It is in the interest of the provider to ensure that there is a Parent Declaration Form in place as this may be taken into consideration if Nottingham City Council seeks to reclaim funding.
- 6.55 Providers must notify Nottingham City Council immediately if a child is absent (authorised or unauthorised) for more than 2 weeks during one term.
- 6.56 If the absence is for longer than 2 weeks in one term, funding may be stopped and reinstated following the end of the absence. Nottingham City Council will not fund a place where absence is recurring or for extended periods unless the absence is authorised and in agreement with Nottingham City Council in advance.
- 6.57 If the parent wishes to take additional week's holiday, they should be made aware that Nottingham City Council would not fund their child's place for this period. The parent will either; need to give up the place or come to an arrangement with the provider.
- 6.58 Providers will not be penalised for a child's unexplained absence for a session or short period when they have booked to attend the setting. However, where an absence is recurring over an extended period, the provider must make all reasonable efforts to establish a valid reason for the absence and promptly notify Nottingham City Council. A minimum of 85% attendance is expected during a term as set out on the Parent Declaration Form. Holiday taken during the term is allowed for up to a maximum of 2 weeks during the term and has to be in agreement with Nottingham City Council. Nottingham City Council will then consider all the known circumstances and use its discretion in deciding whether, and to what extent, it is appropriate to withdraw or reclaim funding in respect of the child.

- 6.59 Managing Attendance Guidance can be found in the 'Further Information and Example Documentation' Pack.
- 6.60 Safeguarding concerns; If providers have any thoughts or concerns that a child's absence might be due to, or at risk of, suffering harm they must follow the guidance as stated on the Early Years website and in Section 5.

Table 8 - Rethinking 'Did Not Attend' and Missed Appointments Matter

- An animation to encourage practitioners to identify children as 'was not brought' as opposed to 'did not attend' when they are not presented at medical appointments, was jointly commissioned by the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (NCSCB), Nottingham City Council, and NHS Nottingham City Clinical Commissioning Group.
- The animation is a powerful reminder that children do not take themselves to appointments, and for practitioners to reflect on the impact of missed appointments on a child's wellbeing.
- Watch the *Rethinking 'Did Not Attend'* animation, and share it with colleagues, friends and family: <https://vimeo.com/user21885323/review/261080642/976133564f>

## Changes to Provider Details

- 6.61 The Provider must notify the Local Authority in writing within 10 working days of any change in ownership, control, legal entity, or registration status.

In the event that the business is transferred to a different legal entity, the existing Provider Agreement will terminate immediately, and a new agreement must be signed by the incoming provider before any further funded places are delivered or funding claimed.

The original provider remains liable for any debts, overpayments, or contractual obligations incurred prior to the change in ownership or legal status.

## Unforeseen and Planned Closures

- 6.62 For unforeseen closures, early years entitlement funding may be claimed for up to 5 working days in total in any one term/funded period. This is applicable where providers have no choice to close where it would be illegal to remain open e.g. staff sickness, heating malfunction. In the case of severe adverse weather conditions, payments will be made at the discretion of the local authority.
- 6.63 For any planned closure e.g. staff training, public holidays or building work, the parent must be offered the child's early years entitlement hours at another time that is convenient to both the provider and the parent where reasonably practical.

## Section 7: Auditing & Compliance

- 7.1 The LA will carry out checks and/or audits on providers to ensure compliance with the requirements of delivering the early years entitlements. The LA should not carry out audit regimes which are disproportionate or are unnecessarily burdensome to providers.
- 7.2 Nottingham City Council will conduct regular audits on all settings on the Directory of Providers (DoP). A selection of providers will be audited on a termly basis to ensure compliance with the requirements of the delivery of the early years entitlements. All providers are audited on a cyclical basis, the timing will be determined by the outcome of any previous audits, any parental complaints or recent portal claiming concerns.
- 7.3 The provider should maintain accurate financial and non-financial records relating to free entitlement places and should give Nottingham City Council access on reasonable notice to all financial and non-financial records relating to free entitlement places funded under this Provider Agreement, subject to confidentiality restrictions. This includes administrative and financial records as referenced at 6.33, which should be retained for a period of 5 years.
- 7.4 Providers will be required to certify with each funding period's headcount, that the conditions and requirements of being in receipt of funding are met, as stated in this Agreement and the DfE's Statutory Guidance 2026.
- 7.5 For audit, providers will be contacted in writing to inform of the meeting date and time and which documents will be required at the audit. Included within the auditing process will be checks to ensure that:
  - Funding is being passed on in the form of an early years entitlements place at no cost to parents (as shown in the example invoice breakdown at clause 2.11)
  - Invoices to parents are clear and transparent
  - Parents have adequate information about the early years entitlements
  - Claims for funding are accurate and supported by an up to date signed Parent Declaration Form
  - The register is accurate for the children claimed for. Providers must keep a daily register clearly stating start time and leave times and relevant absent codes of children in receipt of an early years entitlement place (see page 39).
- 7.6 Following an audit, if it is evident that a fraudulent claim has been made, an invoice will be raised immediately to recover the government funding.
- 7.7 Providers must maintain a specific business bank account for their setting, details of which must be provided to Nottingham City Council with an understanding that Nottingham City Council will only pay funding into this account which must have dual signatory (except where the provider is a sole trader).
- 7.8 It is strongly recommended that owners or a responsible senior representative attend Business Meetings arranged by Nottingham City Council.
- 7.9 Providers must maintain an active internet connection and e-mail address and use good internet practice, so as to facilitate the exchange of information and guidance. Providers must notify the LA immediately of any changes to their email address and ensure at all times, that data relating to child information is password protected and secure in accordance with Data Protection.

## Completion of Registers

- 7.10 When completing the register for any early years entitlements children, providers should:
- Fill it in using a pen
  - Clearly indicate who is present on any given day; stating start time and leave times
  - Use consistent codes for non-attendance with an explanation. The following are the codes, not all will be relevant:
    - H - Holiday of 10 days or less
    - F - Holiday of more than 10 days (contact the Early Years Team for advice if a parent is asking for more than 10 days)
    - I - Illness
    - N - No reason supplied for absence/consider 'Was Not Brought' (Table 8 on page 36)
    - L - Late
    - R - Religious observance
    - Y - Provider is unable to open (for example due to poor weather or damage to building).
- 7.11 If it is found that there is an unexplained discrepancy between the attendance registers and the funding claimed, providers may be invoiced to recover the funding.
- 7.12 Providers may also need to record additional information in line with the EYFS.
- 7.13 Managing Attendance Guidance can be found in the 'Further Information and Example Documentation' Pack.

## UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018

- 7.14 The above legislation defines the rules which protect the personal data of an individual. Providers need to be aware of the requirements of the law and how this applies to them as a childcare provider.
- 7.15 Every organisation must register when legally required to do so and each organisation must hold records of processing and payment of any fees applicable by the organisation which have been paid to the Information Commissioners Office.
- 7.16 As a person or organisation holding personal data, it is the provider's legal responsibility to ensure that the data protection principles are adhered to and that your organisation has sufficient organisational and technical measures to ensure that the data you hold is secure. Providers must have a data protection policy in place at their setting, which includes details of how it is ensured that data is safeguarded. This should include ensuring that staff are aware of the policy and include training for staff on good data protection practice on an annual basis. A Data Protection Officer should be appointed where there is a legal duty to do so.
- 7.17 For more information, please visit the ICO website [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)
- 7.18 All Parent Declaration Forms and registers must be kept for a minimum of 6 years in case of an audit (electronic or paper copies). Copies of Birth Certificates and passports do not need to be kept but if they are, they must be kept in a secure place.

## Data Protection, Audit and other offences including the Computer Misuse Act 1990

- 7.19 When accessing the data about individual children on the Portal, providers must recognise the privacy of that data and at all times comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 7.20 Providers must ensure in particular that the use of the data to which they have access is consistent with the purpose for which access has been granted which is to deliver the early years entitlements for eligible children and that providers do not use the data for any other purpose.
- 7.21 Providers must ensure that data is processed securely and is not subject to any unauthorised use or disclosure. Information must not be retained any longer than the specified retention period.
- 7.22 Unauthorised use of Nottingham City Council systems is prohibited and is an offence of the Computer Misuse Act 1990.
- 7.23 Unauthorised disclosure of personal data knowingly or recklessly to another person is also prohibited and is an offence under Section 170 of the Data Protection Act 2018. There are further offences to the re-identification of de-identified personal data and alteration of personal data to prevent disclosure in sections 171, 172 and 173 of the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 7.24 Regular auditing of the system will be performed and any unauthorised use or breach of the conditions of use will result in access being revoked and could result in disciplinary and legal action.
- 7.25 Unless otherwise required by law, Nottingham City Council and the provider shall keep confidential all matters relating to any agreement made and shall make all reasonable efforts to prevent anyone else from disclosing matters to any other person.

## Section 8: Termination and Withdrawal of Funding

- 8.1 **Suspension of registration by Ofsted or Childminder Agency, or a breach of statutory requirements or safeguarding issues may result in the termination of the arrangement and withdrawal of funding.**
- 8.2 Nottingham City Council may terminate this Agreement forthwith by giving written notice to the Provider, specifying the grounds for withdrawal of funding. Where applicable, the notice will provide a remedy period of 30 days unless the breach involves safeguarding or irreparable issues.
- 8.3 The Provider may at any time terminate the Agreement by giving Nottingham City Council a minimum 90 days or a term's notice (whichever is the greater) in writing, where the Provider chooses not to continue to offer free entitlement places.
- 8.4 Where notice is given by the Provider in accordance with clause 8.3, the Provider shall give a minimum 90 days notice to the parents of all eligible children in receipt of the early years entitlements at the Setting to enable them to make alternative arrangements.
- 8.5 In the event of closure the provider must gain approval from Nottingham City Council for permission to dispose of or transfer assets purchased with any funding given by Nottingham City Council.
- 8.6 Nottingham City Council may terminate this Agreement forthwith by written notice in the following circumstances:
- Where the Provider or (as the case may be) any director or proprietor of it, changes its location or composition of staffing in a way which seriously affects the ability of the Provider to provide the free entitlement places (but maternity or paternity leave taken by staff of the Provider under statutory or contractual entitlements shall be disregarded for the purposes of this sub-clause);
  - Or has any director or proprietor (as the case may be) convicted of an offence involving dishonesty;
  - Or becomes bankrupt or makes a composition or arrangement with creditors or has a proposal for voluntary arrangement for a composition of debts or scheme or arrangement approved in accordance with the Insolvency Act 1986;
  - Or has an application made or notice of intention is given under the Insolvency Act 1986 to appoint an administrative receiver or administrator or an administrative receiver or administrator is appointed;
  - Or has a winding-up order made, or (except for the purposes of amalgamation or reconstruction) a resolution for voluntary winding-up passed;
  - Or has a provisional liquidator, receiver or manager appointed; or has possession taken by or on behalf of the holders of any debentures secured by a floating charge of any property comprised in or subject to the floating charge;
  - Or is in circumstances which entitle the Court or a creditor, to appoint, or have appointed, a receiver, a manager, an administrator or administrative receiver or which entitle the Court to make a winding-up order;
  - Or ceases to carry on the whole of its business or threatens to cease the same or becomes unable to pay its debts within the meaning of section 123 of the Insolvency Act 1986 or if the Local Authority reasonably believes that any of the events noted in this sub-clause, 8.6 may occur;
  - Or commits a breach of any of its obligation under this Agreement as a result of which the image and reputation of the Local Authority, the Department for Education or the Provider have been seriously adversely affected;
  - Or merges with or is taken over by a company or partnership (unless such merger or takeover has no significant detriment to the performance of the free entitlement hours);

- Or operates without the insurances required below.
- Where the Provider has committed a material breach of any of its obligations under this Agreement and the material breach is capable of remedy and the Provider shall have failed to remedy it within such period specified in a written notice to the Provider specifying the material breach and requiring its remedy. (A material breach would include but is not limited to any ruling by the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership, Ofsted or other competent authority that the Provider and/or its staff have been engaged in actions or behaviours that put at risk the safeguarding or welfare of children in its provision, not just those accessing the early years entitlements);
- Or the material breach is not capable of remedy.
- Where the Provider shall (i) have offered or given or agreed to give to any person any gift or consideration of any kind as an inducement or reward for doing, or forbearing to do, or for having done or refrained from doing any action in relation to the obtaining for execution of this Agreement or any other agreement with the Local Authority; or (ii) for showing or forbearing to show, favour or disfavour to any person in relation to this Agreement or any other agreement with the Local Authority or if any like acts shall have been done by any person employed by the Provider or acting on the Provider's behalf (whether with or without the knowledge of the Provider); or (iii) if in relation to any contract with the Local Authority the Provider or any person employed by the Provider or acting on the Provider's behalf shall have committed any offence under the Bribery Act 2010 or any amendment of them; or (iv) shall have given any fee or reward the receipt of which is an offence under section 117(2) of the Local Government Act 1972.
- In the circumstances specified in clause 8.11 following the service of a Notice to Suspend.

## Suspension

- 8.7 Without affecting Nottingham City Council's right to terminate for material breach at any time in the circumstances set out above in clause 8.6 it shall have the rights set out in this clause 8.7 and clauses 8.8 to 8.11. If the Provider commits a material breach of its obligations under this Agreement, Nottingham City Council shall be entitled to arrange for an investigation of the material breach within 30 days. During this period, the Provider will be informed in writing of the progress and any interim measures.
- 8.8 If Nottingham City Council consider (acting reasonably) that the material breach is of such seriousness or there is a threat to the health, safety or welfare of any eligible children then Nottingham City Council shall be entitled to serve on the Provider a Notice to Suspend.
- 8.9 If Nottingham City Council serves a Notice to Suspend, then the Provider shall cease providing the early years entitlement places from the date specified in the Notice to Suspend. Nottingham City Council will be entitled either to provide some or all of the early years entitlements or employ another Provider to do so on its behalf for as long as the Notice to Suspend is in force, and to divert payment of the early years entitlements funding to any Setting where the replacement early years entitlement hours are being delivered during this period.
- 8.10 Upon issuing a Notice to Suspend, Nottingham City Council will ensure that any investigation is carried out as quickly as reasonably possible. Investigations will be completed within 30 days unless an extension is agreed upon in writing. Following investigation, Nottingham City Council will consider, acting reasonably, whether or not the Provider is to resume provision of the suspended early years entitlements.
- 8.11 If Nottingham City Council considers that the Provider is not to resume provision of the early years entitlements, then Nottingham City Council will be entitled to give the Provider notice terminating this

Agreement with immediate effect. Nottingham City Council shall be entitled to withhold or divert funding pending the outcome of the investigation.

- 8.12 If Nottingham City Council issues a Provider with a Notice to Suspend or terminate funding for early years entitlement places, they will also contact the parents/carers of children in receipt of early years entitlement places with the Provider to inform them of this decision and provide details for the Families Information Service to support them in finding alternative early years entitlements provision.

## Variation

- 8.13 Where any matter is not specifically covered in this Agreement, the Parties will first be guided by the DfE's Early Education and Childcare, Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2026 or other relevant guidance to identify the correct position, but Nottingham City Council's decisions will otherwise be final.

## Waiver

- 8.14 The failure by either party to enforce at any time or for any period any one or more of the terms and conditions of this Agreement shall not be a waiver of them or of the right at any time subsequently to enforce them.

## Insurance and Indemnity

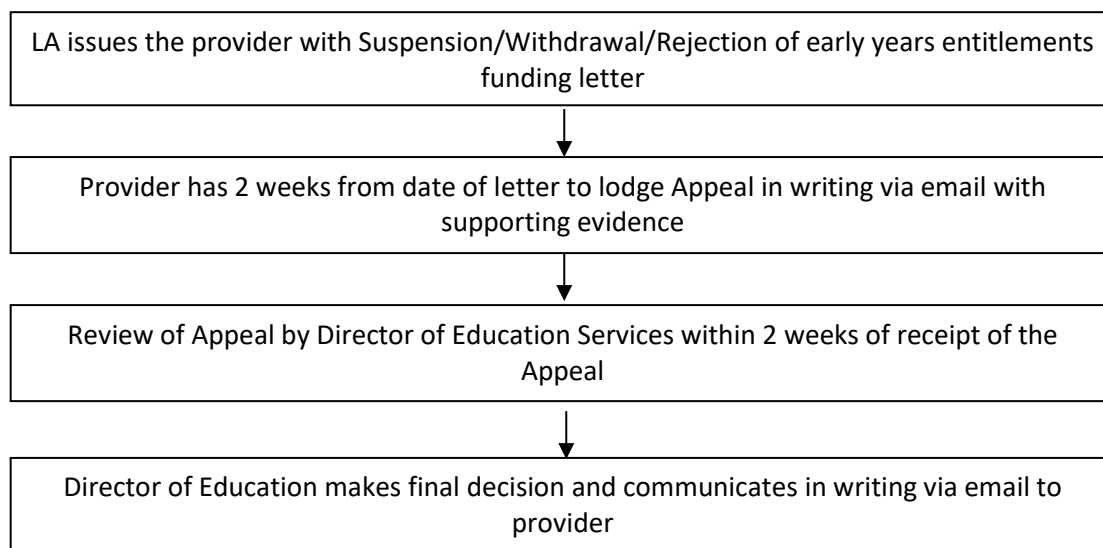
- 8.15 The provider shall be wholly responsible for the safe operation and conduct of the setting and will keep Nottingham City Council indemnified against all claims for losses and damages from third parties (and all associated reasonable costs and expenses) arising from any breach of this Agreement and the provision (or failure to provide) the early years entitlement places and activities it covers except where the claim is as a result of the act or omission of Nottingham City Council.
- 8.16 Nottingham City Council requires the provider to have in place and thereafter maintain the following 2 insurance policies:
- Employers liability insurance with a minimum level of indemnity of £10 million
  - Public liability insurance with a minimum level of indemnity of £5 million

The provider shall produce for inspection to Nottingham City Council documentary evidence to the reasonable satisfaction of Nottingham City Council that the insurance required under this Agreement is being maintained, before entering into this Agreement and any time thereafter, at the request of Nottingham City Council.

## Appeals Procedures

- 8.17 A provider may be denied approval to offer the free entitlements or have their funding withdrawn.
- 8.18 The provider can appeal against that decision. The LA is required to have a procedure for providers whose funding has been withdrawn despite the provider being of the required quality or awaiting their first Ofsted inspection and should publicise this complaints procedure.
- 8.19 The process for an Appeal is set out in the Flow-Chart below. The decision reached by this process is final.

- 8.20 Appeals should take the form of an email with the subject headed “FAO Director Of Education - Appeal Against Suspension/Withdrawal/Rejection of Early Years Entitlements Funding Decision”, with accompanying documentation and evidence listed as Appendices, and should be sent to: [eyfunding@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:eyfunding@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)



## Complaints

- 8.21 Providers should ensure they have a complaints procedure in place that is published and accessible for parents who are not satisfied their child has received their free entitlement hours in the correct way, as set out in this agreement and in Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for LA's.
- 8.22 Nottingham City Council is committed to providing the best possible services for citizens and customers. The Council's 'Have Your Say' comments, compliments and complaints process gives enables parents who are not able to resolve their concern directly with the provider, the chance to tell Nottingham City Council what they think of the services the Council provides. For more information, go to <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/your-council/contact-us/have-your-say-comments-compliments-and-complaints/>
- 8.23 The Local Authority has a complaints procedure in place for parents which can be found here: [Early Years - Nottingham City Council](#)
- 8.24 If a parent or provider is not satisfied with the way in which their complaint has been dealt with by Nottingham City Council or believes Nottingham City Council has acted unreasonably, they can make a complaint to the LA Ombudsman. Such complaints will only be considered when the local complaints procedures have been exhausted.

## Section 9 - Useful Contacts

Nottingham City Early Years Website:  
[www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears](http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/earlyyears)

Early Years Funding Team:  
[eyfunding@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:eyfunding@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

Nottingham City Council Families Information Service:  
0115 8765910  
[fis@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:fis@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

Nottinghamshire County Council Families Information Service  
0300 500 8080  
[enquiries@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@nottscc.gov.uk)

Nottinghamshire County Council Funding Team  
0115 9772510