

A Parent's Guide to Shropshire Council's Early Years Free Entitlement

All parents can get Early Years Free Entitlement regardless of nationality or how much they earn.

Early Years Free Entitlement is available for many children from the start of the term following their third birthday until they start school. See below to check when your child will become eligible.

What is my child entitled to?

- 570 hours of free entitlement each week over a 12 month period
- Between 7:00am and 7:00pm
- In sessions of at least 2.5 hours
- Over a minimum of 38 weeks of the year
- With a maximum of 2 collaborating providers

Where will the places be offered?

You can use this at a childcare provider that is registered with Ofsted to offer early education and therefore, accepts the nursery education funding for your child.

This may be:

- A pre school/playgroup
- A nursery attached to a school
- A private/voluntary day nursery
- An independent school

*Check with our Family Information Service to find out if the childcare provider you are thinking about using is registered to offer early education.

Are there any additional charges?

Providers may charge for meals as long as it is agreed in advance with parents. If this is not affordable, you should be given the option of bringing in a packed lunch for your child.

Providers can not charge you for additional services if your child is only accessing the entitlement.

How does the system work?

Shropshire Council pays the funding directly to the childcare provider for each child. This is paid over the school year, which is divided into three terms. The Government operates on school term times so Early Years Free Entitlement does not cover the holidays.

Many children go to a maintained nursery school (nursery attached to a school) before they reach compulsory school age. If your child attends school for less than 15 hours then you can claim the rest of the funding at another provider.

What if my child is already in full time nursery or another provider that offers Early Years Free Entitlement?

If your child is eligible for Early Years Free Entitlement, the appropriate amount will be deducted by the childcare provider from any fees that you are paying.

Things to remember

You do not have to claim the maximum 15 hours per week; you need to decide how many hours will be suitable for you and your child

Be honest about any special needs your child may have and share your concerns with the staff. They can access additional help to support your child.

Can I use the Early Years Free Entitlement at more than one setting?

Yes, you can. If a child is attending 2 different settings it is very important that both providers are made aware of this, as the funding may have to be split between the two settings.

It is still only possible to claim up to a total of 15 hours, but parents must decide how many hours are claimed for at each setting, and then inform both settings of the decision.

The dates below will help you to work out when your child will become eligible for the funding.

A child born in the period	Will become eligible for a free place
1st April to 31st August	1st September following child's 3 rd birthday (Autumn* school term)
1st September to 31st December	1st January following child's 3 rd birthday (Spring* school term)
1st January to 31st March	1 st April following child's 3 rd birthday (Summer* school term)

How do I find out about early years providers in my area or general information about the Early Years Free Entitlement?

For more information about the Early Years Free Entitlement providers in your area and what you need to do to access your free place, please contact our Family Information Service.

Further information and contacting us

For further information regarding providers registered to provide Early Years Free Entitlement contact Lisa Robinson on 01743 254422 or lisa.robinson@shropshire.gov.uk

How to complain if you are dissatisfied with the way in which a Private, Voluntary or Independent nursery education and childcare provider has administered your Early Years Free Entitlement

Shropshire Council has a duty to make available sufficient free part time places for every eligible child in their area. Working in partnership with Shropshire's childcare sector made up of private, voluntary and independent settings, it commissions them to provide 15 hours of Early Years Free Entitlement per week, for a minimum of 38 weeks per year. All settings must comply with "Shropshire Council Local Agreement with Providers receiving funding from the local authority for the provision of the free entitlement for two, three and four year olds January 2012". All guidance in the Code of Practice is statutory and providers must adhere to it in order to remain on the Directory of Providers.

Should you, as a parent of a 3 or 4 year old, feel that your child's Early Years Free Entitlement is administered incorrectly by your chosen provider, you should put your concerns to us by contacting:

Neville Ward
Early Years Education and Childcare Manager
Learning and Skills
Shropshire Council
Shirehall
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

01743 254552

neville.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

When your complaint is received, we will:

- Acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days of receipt
- Provide details of the Development Officer who will be responsible for investigating the issues you have raised and give you a date by when a response will be provided
- Investigate your concerns and will probably want to contact you for further information or clarification.
- We will make every effort to resolve your complaint as soon as possible.

Parents should note that:

1) If your complaint is regarding a contractual arrangement that you have signed an agreement to with the setting, the local authority **will not** be able to become involved as contracts are legally binding documents. Our advice would be for the parent to contact their nursery setting and ask for a copy of their contract and for the provider to explain any queries a parent may have.

2) We would always advise parents to talk to the setting firstly to try and resolve the problem directly with them. If parents are still unsatisfied we would then advise you to go through the provider's complaints procedure.

3) The role of the Development Officer is to ensure that Early Years Free Entitlement is administered correctly and that settings adhere to statutory guidance

4) If the complaint results in the setting being considered for de-validation, the formal process for this course of action will then be undertaken. We would ask you to send all documentation in respect of the complaints procedure with the provider. This would include any invoices and correspondence.

How to complain if you are dissatisfied with the way in which Shropshire Council has administered your Early Years Free Entitlement

We are committed to ensuring that providers receive the information, advice and guidance they require to meet the requirements of the national Code of Practice and this local agreement.

Our complaints procedures are provided as an integral part of our commitment to putting the customer at the heart of everything that we do. Should you have reason to complain about the way in which we have administered your Early Years Free Entitlement, you should put your concerns to us by contacting:

**Neville Ward
Early Years Education and Childcare Manager
Shropshire Council
Shirehall
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND**

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