

*Childcare***Link**

www.childcarelink.gov.uk

0800 0 96 02 96

**Lines open 8am - 8pm weekdays,
9am - 12pm Saturdays**

**Free early education
places for three and
four year olds**

department for
education and skills

Early education for three and four year olds

The Government has guaranteed a free part-time early education place for every four year old for the three terms before they become of compulsory school age and is nearly doubling the number of places for three year olds.

Who can get a free place?

If your child is coming up to four years old and you are paying for a childcare or early education service, you will soon be entitled to a free part-time place for your child, or a reduction in fees if your child attends full-time. There are now additional part-time places for three year olds in all areas.

Check:

- is your early education provider a nursery, private nursery school, registered childminding group, pre-school or playgroup?
- is your childcare service inspected by registered nursery inspectors?
- is your childcare service part of the local Early Years Development and Childcare Plan (EYDCP) to deliver free places?

Ask your childcare provider for more information.

How will my child's free place be paid for?

If your education provider provides early years education and is part of your EYDCP, they will receive a grant enabling them to give your child a free part-time place. Your early education provider or Children's Information Service should be able to give you more information about fees and charges which may be charged for childcare outside of this free place.

What am I entitled to?

You are entitled to a free part-time place for your four year old for the three terms before they become of compulsory school age.

The early education place for four year olds can be in:

- a reception class in a primary school
- a nursery class in a primary school
- a state nursery school
- a private nursery school
- a pre-school or playgroup
- a day nursery
- a group of registered childminders (network).

You could be entitled to a free part-time place for your three year old.

This depends on where you live. Ask your local Children's Information Service about the availability of a

free early education place for your three year olds.

Free early education places for three and four year olds can be in:

- a nursery class in a primary school
- a state nursery school
- a private nursery school
- a pre-school or playgroup
- a day nursery
- a group of registered childminders (network).

Are all early education places free?

From September 1998 all four year olds have had an entitlement to three terms of free, part-time, early education before they become of compulsory school age. In addition, two thirds of all three year olds also have access to free early education and from April 2004 this will be extended to all three year olds.

To find out about your child's eligibility to free early education please contact your local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

What time will the part-time place be available?

Usually you will be offered five morning or afternoon sessions for around two and a half hours each.

You can often arrange them to suit your child. For example you might want two sessions a day for two days and then one session on another day. Or you might want one session a day for five days.

You cannot have more than two sessions on any one day.

If you work or have other commitments which mean your child needs more time in early education, then you may want to pay for more hours there. You could also pay for a childminder to drop off or pick up your child.

Starting school

Children will be able to start school in the term after their fifth birthday subject to the schools admissions policy which varies between LEAs.

Finding out more

Ask your local Children's Information Service (CIS) if you need to know:

- about free early education places for your three or four year old
- which services are registered to provide free places
- advice on combining services to benefit your child and match your working hours.

The ChildcareLink freephone service will provide details of your local CIS on 0800 0 96 02 96

Copies of this factsheet can be obtained from:

DfES Publications

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