

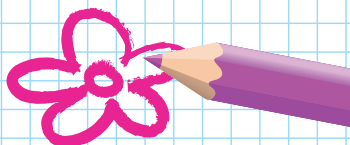
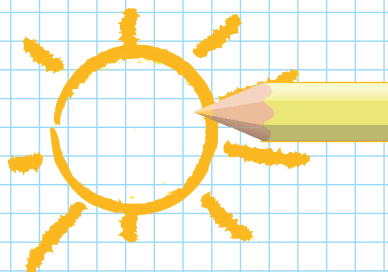
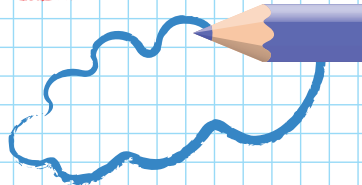
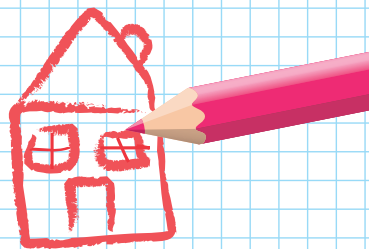
A parent's guide to:

Free

Early

Education

**for three and
four year olds**



Every child aged three and four is entitled to a free early education place.

This place should be completely free regardless of how much money a family has, whether they work or how much they earn.

How much time can my child have free?

- Up to 15 hours each week
- 38 weeks a year in school term times only or
- Up to a maximum of 570 hours spread over more weeks of the year; for example 11.4 hours for 50 weeks

You will need to check with your chosen provider what flexibility they are able to offer.

Where are free places available?

The free places are only available in school nurseries and settings that are registered by Ofsted and included in Children's Services' list of eligible providers. There are various locations a child can attend to access their free place. These are often called 'settings' or 'childcare providers' and include:

- Playgroups/preschools
- Private day nurseries
- Local Education Authority (LEA) nursery classes or nursery schools
- Independent schools
- Childminders who are approved to provide free entitlement





Will I have to pay for anything?

Settings are not allowed to charge you anything for the free place and should not ask for a deposit or administration fee to enable you to secure a place for your child.

They can charge for any additional time or services including meals, nappies, dance classes or music classes. However you do not have to take up any of these if you don't want them.

If you do need childcare for more than 15 hours a week or you need childcare during school holidays then you will have to arrange that with the setting and pay extra for those times.

How do I find a setting that offers free places?

- Search online at **www.localdirectory.bolton.gov.uk**
- Email **families@bolton.gov.uk**
- Ring Bolton Families Information Service on **01204 332170**
- Ask at your local Children's Centre

Arrange a visit with as many or as few settings as you like. Once you've found a place that is right for your child, the childcare provider will ask you to complete a simple form. It is called a parent declaration and enables Bolton Council to make the correct payments to the childcare setting.

How can I ensure the setting provides high quality early education?

Inspection reports for Ofsted registered settings can be found online at **www.ofsted.gov.uk** and settings will be able to show you a copy of their most recent report when you visit.

Our factsheet Guide to choosing quality childcare and early education in Bolton may be helpful when choosing a setting.

The aim is that all settings providing free early education should be good or outstanding. Settings that have not received a good or outstanding Ofsted inspection grade will be required to actively participate in a recognised Quality Improvement programme and demonstrate within 6 months that they are working at an improved level to be able to continue offering free places.

What if I can't find a free place for my child?

If you have contacted providers in your area and have been unable to find a free place please contact our Brokerage Service on **01204 338756** and we will try to find a suitable place.

It is important that we know of any areas in Bolton where places are difficult to find to assist future planning.





When is my child eligible for a free place?

Your child will be eligible for a free place from the beginning of the term after the child becomes three. The dates are set nationally and are shown in the following table:

If Child's 3rd birthday falls between

Child becomes eligible for the 'free entitlement'

1 September – 31 December

Spring Term

In January after their third birthday

1 January – 31 March

Summer Term

In April after their third birthday

1 April – 31 August

Autumn Term

In September after their third birthday

To benefit from the 'free entitlement' it is **essential** that the child is registered with your chosen setting by a specific date known as the headcount date.

What will my child learn in an early education and childcare setting?

Early education and childcare covers the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children age 0 to 5.

The EYFS concentrates firstly on three prime areas of learning:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

Learning from these areas then supports children's progression into four specific areas of learning:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

More information about EYFS can be found on the Families in the foundation years website www.foundationyears.org.uk/parents/

How do I complain if I feel my childcare provider is not providing the 15 hours completely free of charge?

Email Bolton Families Information service at families@bolton.gov.uk or telephone **01204 332170** and they will arrange for your concerns to be investigated.



Further questions

Are there any free early education places for two year olds?

There will be some free early education places for two year olds from September 2013.

Initially these places will only be available to children whose families meet the criteria required to be entitled to free school meals and to children looked after by the Local Authority.

My child attends a setting two full days per week. Will they still receive the full 15 hours per week?

Yes. The 15 hours can be taken over a minimum of two days between 7am and 7pm. If a child only attends for 1 day the maximum free entitlement would be 10 hours per week.

Does my child have to attend for a minimum number of hours per session?

Yes. The minimum number of free entitlement hours per day is 2.5 and the maximum number of free entitlement hours per day is 10.

Can my child attend more than one setting?

Yes. If a child attends more than one setting then the funding may be shared proportionately between the settings.

Do I have a right to a free early education place with a particular provider?

No. You only have the right to a free early education place for your child and places at individual providers will be subject to availability.

More information

If you have any other queries or require a list of Early Education providers or childcare settings in Bolton, please contact:-

Bolton Families Information Service

One Stop Shop, Town Hall, Bolton BL1 1RU

Tel: **01204 332170**

Email: **families@bolton.gov.uk**

Search on line for childcare and early education settings in Bolton at:

www.localdirectory.bolton.gov.uk

