

Becoming an early education funded provider is one way of recognising the commitment to providing quality early learning experiences for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old children. To offer funded places to 3 and 4 year olds providers must be rated as 'requires improvement', 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. To offer places to eligible 2 year olds a provider must be rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted, unless the Local Authority has a proven childcare sufficiency need in a specific area. If a provider is newly registered, they are able to offer the places prior to their first inspection.

Joining the Directory of Approved Providers

The Early Education Funding (EEF) is administered by the Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Team (EYCST). When a provider is ready to offer funding, they will be issued with a letter confirming their DfE Unique Reference Number, which is different to an Ofsted number and is used to identify a provider on our EEF system. The Council will ask a setting to sign a Provider Agreement / Service Level Agreement and an External Access Form, which are legal documents covering the terms and conditions under which a provider will claim and EYCST will pay EEF funding. The provider will then receive a copy of this for their records and it will be renewed on an annual basis.

Delivering the Free Entitlement

Eligible children access the free entitlement the funding period after their second or third birthday. They can claim up to 570 hours of free early education each year; if they meet the criteria for the 30 hours of free childcare, they can claim up to 1,140 hours each year. No session can be shorter than half an hour and no longer than 10 hours in any one day. Early education sessions can be taken between 6am and 8pm and a child cannot claim more than 15 (or 30) hours in any one week. They can access their entitlement at a maximum of 2 sites in any one day.

Claiming the Free Entitlement

EEF is paid at a base rate per hour per child. This year's funding rates are available from the EYCST and are set annually. 3 and 4 year olds whose family claim benefits, which would entitle them to Free School Meals, also receive a Deprivation Supplement. These children also receive the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). Providers are not expected to reimburse these supplements to any eligible child.

When offering funding to 2 year olds, a child must **NOT** be offered / given a place until a provider has a copy of their confirmation letter / confirmation email with a TYF number on it. 2 year old funding is not backdated and will only start from the date the child's eligibility is checked (subject to the usual age arrangements).

EYCST will set up new providers on the Headcount Portal. Providers will receive a user name and password to allow them to register on the Headcount Portal. This means the provider will need an email address which only they can access. Guidance can be accessed using the link on the bottom of this document.

EYCST will ask providers to submit children's details and hours for the forthcoming term at the Forecast Task stage (which is usually at the end of a previous term). EYCST will then make providers a 100% payment based on your submitted forecast headcount data. (Childminders are required to have a separate bank account for their childcare business.) Once a provider has submitted at the Forecast Task stage on the Headcount Portal, EYCST will check it and if all is as expected, will make a payment (no later than four weeks after the Forecast Task has closed). EYCST will contact providers with any queries regarding claims.

EYCST then expects providers to submit all final data (changes to existing hours, new children and leavers) at the Actual Task stage. The final payment will be made together with any supplements, no later than four weeks after the task has closed. Providers will have a statement on the headcount portal after every task to confirm submitted data, which details how much funding is paid to providers and which children the funding is for. All reports must be checked and any discrepancies / queries communicated to EYCST before the end of a funding period (dates are communicated via the portal / E-Bulletin), as EYCST cannot make any changes outside of a funding period.

Providers can only submit data when a task is open. Once the Actual Task is closed no further changes will be accepted for the remainder of that term.

Providers should keep careful records of funded children as the Council's Business Support Team will audit on a regular basis and might ask to see them.

Providers must offer funded hours 'free at the point of delivery'; this means a provider cannot charge parents for them and refund the funding to them at a later date. Providers must not ask parents to pay the difference between the hourly rate the Local Authority pays providers and a providers' usual hourly rate. Providers must clearly show the hours as free on any invoice / statement they issue to parents. Providers cannot require parents to take up additional hours / services beyond their funded entitlement. Providers can make appropriate charges for lunch and optional extras (consumables) but these must not be a condition of a child taking up a funded place.

Childminders and their own Children

DfE guidance (December 2013) states that childminders may not claim funding for their own, or related, children. Early years provision is defined in Section 20 of the Childcare Act 2006 as excluding care provided for a child by a parent or step-parent (or other relative). Early education funding cannot be claimed by, or spent on, parents providing childcare for their own child, even if they are claiming for other children.

Eligibility Criteria for Free School Meals

Free school meals are available to children / pupils in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods).
- 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 guarantee element of Pension Credit.
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190).
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit.

The Local Authority is able to check an individual's child eligibility to Free School Meals. For more information, call EYCST on the contact details below. Your QISO will also be able to offer advice on accessing free EEF.

All parents accessing free funding should be asked to sign a parental declaration form outlining their early education entitlement arrangements. Sample parental declaration forms can be found on the Council's website.

Guidance and supporting information can be found using the link below and providers can either download or print off all guidance. **Please take the time to read this carefully:**

<http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/residents/education-and-learning/childcare/childcare-providers-support/early-education-funding-eef>. You can also access all guidance and supporting information from within the portal on both the Announcement Page (when you first log on) or on the Supporting Information page, by clicking [HERE](#) on either pages. Please be aware that you should regularly read these pages as data is updated before each task and informs you of all relevant information you will need for that Task.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the Early Years Learning & Childcare Team on 01422 392576 / 39 2695 / 392573 or email eef@calderdale.gov.uk.