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## Early Years Education Funding – Important Information for Parents/Carers

Dear Parent/Carer

Since early February we have been meeting with childcare providers from around the County to brief them and raise their awareness of changes that are coming relating to Early Years Education Funding. Over the coming weeks and months they will be planning how to implement those changes. Clearly it is important that you too are aware of these and we hope that this letter will help, as a first step, to let you know what's happening and when.

### Change of Name

The simplest of the changes is that what we refer to now as Early Years Education Funding will from the start of summer term (after Easter) be called **Early Years Entitlement**.

### Summer Term 2009 – Hourly Claims & Lunch

You will I am sure know that at the moment children, from the term after they turn 3, are entitled to 5 @ 2 ½ hour free/funded sessions per week (total 12 ½ hours) for 38 weeks per year, during school term time.

In preparation for changes to that entitlement, which we will cover later in this letter, with effect from the start of summer term this year that will be counted and claimed by your provider in hours rather than sessions. This again should not be a significant change for you in that the format and system used to claim will remain the same the only change being that you will be requesting 12 ½ hours per week for the number of weeks in the term rather than a number of sessions per week. The entitlement remains at 12 ½ hours.

Clearly if your child attends more than one setting and you split your 12 ½ hours between them, you will need to be very careful when you advise them how many funded hours you want from each so that you access all but not more than your full entitlement.

At the same time, the start of summer term 2009, a provider can if they wish to do so include lunch periods as part of the funded 12 ½ hour entitlement. We must emphasise here that this is a decision for and at the discretion of individual providers, who if they say that they don't want to or cant do so given the short timescale involved, are entitled to make that decision.

You should also note that if lunch time is included as part of the funded entitlement providers are able to charge for food if provided, as this is an additional service beyond what is covered by the funding.

### **Extended and Flexible Entitlement**

The Early Years Entitlement is then being increased to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks and offered more flexibly to meet parent's needs and the Government has tasked local authorities to deliver this in two stages.

The first stage, to 25% of Devon's 3 and 4 year olds, will commence at the start of autumn term (September 2009). We are nearing the end of an exercise identifying the providers that we will invite to start offering the Extended and Flexible Entitlement from then. We will be writing to all providers as early as possible in summer term to tell them whether or not they are on that initial list.

All remaining providers will be included in order to provide universal entitlement with effect from September 2010.

We cannot at this stage say exactly how this extended and flexible entitlement will be provided and in any case it is likely to look very different from one provider to another as they find out what their parents need and how far they can change their service to meet those needs. It is worth though being clear that "flexible" does not mean providers meeting changing demands on a day by day/week by week basis. You will still be signing an agreement with them for a whole term and you will still be required to send your child for that number of hours on a regular basis for funds to be retained.

### **Communication and Support**

We recognise that communication of developments to providers and parents is very important and we are looking at a variety of ways that this can be achieved including via our web site, newsletters, centrally produced publicity materials and for providers, briefing sessions and one to one support. Meanwhile if you have any questions relating to this you should, in the first instance, speak to your childcare provider.

We are sorry for writing at such length but hope that you will agree that this was necessary for such an important issue that will, at some time, affect you all.

Yours sincerely

Marie Stone  
Finance Officer

Rob Cornock  
Business Support Manager