



the National Parent Forum of Scotland

Early learning and childcare changes – what parents need to know

The National Parent Forum of Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government's announcement that families will be able to access additional hours of free childcare, with the entitlement coming into effect over the week beginning 11th August 2014. Over the next two years, annual funded provision for 3- and 4-year-olds will be extended to 600 hours (which equates to around 16 hours a week), and 2-year-olds who are looked-after or are from disadvantaged families will also be eligible for a funded place.

As well as offering an increased number of hours of early learning and childcare, the hours must be offered in a way that allows parents some choice and flexibility. Local authorities are required to increase the range of models of childcare they offer, and this must be based on feedback from consultations with parents. However, in the first year of this new system, local authorities may just offer one new model.

Local authorities may offer -

- places at nurseries, nursery classes in schools, playgroups, or child-minders through their own services or through partners in the private or third sector
- a range of hours a day, from 2 1/2 hours to 8 hours maximum, up to around 16 hours a week
- hours or days that are not always in school-term times.

Local authorities are required to develop plans to demonstrate how they are offering places and improving flexibility year on year, based on consultation with parents and local communities.

NPFS' view is that in order to achieve solutions that are tailored to local needs, it is essential that families are able to fully participate in the consultations and decision-making processes, and that they are involved as early in the process as possible. We welcome the opportunity to work closely with Scottish Government and local authorities to ensure that parents' voices are heard and taken into full account.


NPFS has been made aware of concerns from parents who are worried that their local authority has placed a cap on the number of places available at partnership providers, with priority being given to filling local authority places instead. There appears to be considerable variation across the country with regards to this issue and NPFS will be working with our representatives across the country to determine what local authorities are intending to do in relation to consulting with parents. We will, as always be offering our support to ensure that parents' views underpin the planning and delivery of early learning and childcare provision.

Useful links for parents:

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/parenting-early-learning/childcare

www.scottishfamilies.gov.uk/NationalCategoryDetail.aspx?ncid=8

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