

Guide to Free Early Years Provision for 3 and 4 year olds



Supporting growing and learning



Working in partnership for the people of Herefordshire

Your Questions Answered

Every child deserves the best possible start in life. Research recognises that high quality care and education can improve a child's language and social skills and can have a major impact on their future education and life chances. Accessing high quality care and education also allows a child's parents or carers time to access work, training or skills to improve their family lives.

From the term after their 3rd birthday, children are entitled to a FREE part time place of 15 hours a week over 38 weeks of the year.



Where can I send my child to claim their FREE early years provision?

To any childcare provider in Herefordshire that is registered with Herefordshire Local Authority to offer free early years provision. This includes pre-schools/playgroups, full day care nurseries, accredited childminders, school nursery and independent schools.

You will need to check to see whether a place could be available for your child at your preferred setting. Places are subject to availability, we recommend that your child is in attendance at the beginning of the term in which they become eligible to access their full entitlement. See page 5 for eligibility dates.

You will be able to access free early years provision only if your childcare provider is registered with Herefordshire Local Authority and Ofsted.

All settings registered to offer free early years provision follow the Early Years Foundation Stage for children aged 0 - 5 years.

How do I register my child?

You will need to book a place for your child at a childcare provider in Herefordshire. You must ensure that the provider you prefer is registered to receive the funding for the free early years provision. Once your child is registered, your provider will claim the funding for your child and the money will be paid directly to them.

It is important to make contact with your chosen provider before you want your child to attend.

If your child is already registered with, or attending a provider that is registered with Herefordshire Local Authority, then you don't need to do anything. Your provider will be able to tell you whether or not they are registered to claim.



How many hours could my child be entitled to?

The free early years provision is for 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year during school term time.

Depending on the provider you choose the 15 hours could be taken flexibly to meet your needs. For example the free provision could be taken:

- As a minimum of 2.5 hours per day
- As a maximum of 10 hours per day
- Between the hours of 8am and 6pm
- The full 15 hours over no fewer than 3 days (this permits up to 12.5 hours over 2 days)
- At a maximum of 2 providers
- For a minimum of 2 consecutive weeks in a term

When will my child be eligible?

From the term following their third birthday:

A Child born between:	Funding Commences from:
1st Jan to 31st March	Summer term
1st April to 31st Aug	Autumn term
1st Sept to 31st Dec	Spring term

Please note term dates vary.

What happens if my local provider offers fewer than 15 hours a week?

It may be possible to share the 15 hours between settings, for example 9 hours at a pre-school and 6 hours at a day nursery or vice versa. You will be asked to sign a declaration to show how many hours your child is claiming at each setting.

What happens if my child attends more than 15 hours per week?

If your child attends more than 15 hours per week at one or more settings you will be expected to pay for any additional hours. Your billing should clearly identify which hours are your FREE early years provision and which hours or services you are paying for. You will be asked to sign a declaration to show how many hours you are claiming.

Will my Working Tax Credit be affected?

Claiming nursery funding for your child may affect your Working Tax Credit. Please check with the Inland Revenue and complete the necessary documentation with your provider.

How will my child get to playgroup, nursery or school?

You will have to make your own arrangements for getting your child to playgroup, nursery or school.

When can my child start school?

Please refer to the Herefordshire Council Information for Parents Handbook for further information.

What if my child has Special Educational Needs (SEN)?

All approved providers of free early years provision will work to the Code of Practice for children with Special Educational Needs. For further information please contact the Early Years Consultant Team on: 01432 260844

What types of setting are available?

Full Day Care Nurseries

Day nurseries care and educate children for the length of the adult working day. Children can attend part time or full time, depending on their own and their parents' needs. They follow the Early Years Foundation Stage and must adhere to all relevant legislation.

Maintained School Nursery Classes

Nursery classes are attached to primary schools but usually cover a wider catchment area. They are open during the normal school day, offering half-day sessions. Attendance at the nursery does not ensure or require your child to take up a place in the main school. They follow the EYFS as with other provisions.

Sessional Pre-schools and Playgroups

These settings open various hours and days. They may open in line with school hours and term dates in their community. They follow the EYFS and adhere to all relevant legislation.

Childminders

Registered childminders provide childcare in their own homes. Some network accredited childminders offer nursery entitlement funded places. Contact Herefordshire Council for further information. (See contact details for further information)

Nursery Units of Independent Schools

Such units are an integral part of an independent school and are open during term time.

What should I look for in a setting?

You can inspect the most recent Ofsted report at the setting or on www.ofsted.gov.uk. You can enquire whether the setting has or is intending to participate in a Quality Improvement Process. You should be given information about the setting and should be made welcome by the staff.

Visit the setting more than once to ensure that you feel comfortable with your choice.

For more information to help you decide on the best place for your child contact the Family information Service on: 01432 261681

Points to remember

- ALL the settings approved and listed with Herefordshire Local Authority will be working with children according to the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- ALL the settings will be inspected regularly by Ofsted and supported by the Local Authority.
- All the settings will follow the Code of Practice for children with Special Educational Needs.
- ALL settings should ensure their staff are properly qualified according to legislation, and regularly update this expertise with training.
- ALL settings have access to advice and support from the Local Authority.
- ALL settings can provide information on a wide range of topics including their policies and procedures. They must also carry public liability insurance.
- ALL settings are encouraged to be part of a local partnership of providers, to discuss early years education and the needs of the local community.
- ALL settings should be happy to arrange for parents to visit and see for themselves what is available for their child.

Who can give me more information?

For further information on when and how you and your child can access early years provision speak to your local setting or provider. Or contact Herefordshire Council.

**Family Information Service,
Blackfriars, Blackfriars Street,
Hereford, HR4 9ZR**

Tel: 01432 261681

Fax: 01432 260957

www.herefordshire.gov.uk

E-mail:

childcareinfo@herefordshire.gov.uk

Opening Times

Monday - Thursday 8.45am - 5.15pm

Friday 8.45am - 4.45pm

If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call: 01432 261681 or e-mail: childcareinfo@herefordshire.gov.uk