Early Years Funded Hours: Quick Reference Guide

Hampshire County Council
Virtual School

This short guide will provide a brief overview of Early Years Education (EYE) funded hours entitlement for children in care.

A more detailed guide to Early Years funding is available via our Virtual School Moodle:
Hampshire Virtual School Moodle: Early Years Resources

- ***What are Early Years Education (EYE) 'funded hours'?***

Early Years Education (EYE) funded hours are government-funded hours for children to attend EY education (preschools, nurseries or childminders) before they begin formal schooling. Depending on the age and circumstances of the child, different amounts of hours are available via government funding.

For Children in Care (CiC), they may be entitled to the following funded hours:

- **Up to 15 (term time) hours per week, from the term after they turn 2 years old** until they start school (up to 570 hours per year in total).
- **Up to 30 (term time) hours per week from the term after they turn 9 months old** until they start school (up to 1140 hours per year in total). **This is only available via an application process and where certain eligibility criteria, including working parents/carers, is met.**

Term time hours are calculated based on the child attending for 38 weeks per year.

Please see the following page for a breakdown of EY funded hours entitlements by age-band.

- ***What are 'stretched' hours (children attending through the school holidays)?***

Term time hours are calculated on the child attending for 38 weeks per year. In EY settings which are open through school holidays, children may attend for more that the term-time only weeks of 38. **Children are still only entitled to up to 570 total hours of funded EY education per year** (up to 1140 hours if approved for additional hours). Therefore, if a child attends EY education for more than 38 weeks of the year, their EY hours entitlement will be ***stretched*** across the weeks they attend; **they will therefore receive *less* funded hours per *week*, but will still have *the same annual* entitlement.**

- ***Does Hampshire Virtual School provide Early Years funding?***

Hampshire Virtual School does not hold, manage nor have access to any direct funding for children in care in EY settings. EY education funding is administered **directly to settings via the local authority in which the *setting* is located**. Hampshire Virtual School can advise, guide and advocate only and cannot provide funding.

Further links:

Early education and childcare - GOV.UK

Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK

Services for Young Children | Hampshire County Council (Hampshire EY funding queries)

Guidance on EY Funded Hours for CiC by Child's Age:

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Age Band	EY Funded Hours
3- and 4-Year Olds	**15 hours 'universal' funding: All 3- and 4-year-olds** are entitled to 15 hours per week of funded EY education over 38 weeks per year (570 hours annually), regardless of family income or circumstances. This is referred to as 'universal' EY funding. This is not dependent on the child's looked-after status. This starts from the term after the child turns 3. For example, a child who turns 3 in November would be eligible for 15 hours of universal funding from the following January. As this is a universal entitlement, EY settings should register the child for EY funded hours via their normal registration process. They should, however, also log that the child is looked after to trigger EYPP funding. **Extra 15 hours for working parents and carers**: If the foster carer (or parent, if child is residing with them) is in paid employment (outside of fostering) and other eligibility criteria are met, the child may be eligible for an additional 15 hours, making a total of 30 hours per week. An application process is required. For children in foster care, please see I am a foster carer | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council under the '**Working Families Entitlement**' box. *For children residing with a parent or connected carer, application is via the standard Working Parent scheme: Free Childcare for Working Parents: Overview - GOV.UK*
2 Year Olds	**15 hours Early Learning for 2-year-olds (formally disadvantaged 2-year-old) funding: Looked after 2-year-olds** are entitled to 15 hours per week of funded EY education over 38 weeks per year (570 hours annually). **This is part of the Early Learning for 2-year-olds entitlement**, which includes children in care. This can be accessed from the term *after* the child turns 2. For children in care **attending Hampshire settings,** the setting should log the 2-year-old child as 'looked after' on the online portal. SfYC will then check that the child is looked after by Hampshire as part of the registration process. **In Hampshire, a separate application process and code is not needed.** (For CiC educated **out of county,** an application process **may be needed**. Please check with the setting's local authority regarding their processes for Early Learning for 2-year-olds/ disadvantaged 2-year-old funding). **Extra 15 hours for working parents and carers:** If the foster carer (or parent, if child is residing with them) is in paid employment (outside of fostering) and other eligibility criteria are met, the child may be eligible for an additional 15 hours, making a total of 30 hours per week. An application process is required. For children in foster care, please see I am a foster carer | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council under the '**Working Families Entitlement**' box. *For children residing with a parent or connected carer, application is via the standard Working Parent scheme: Free Childcare for Working Parents: Overview - GOV.UK*
9 Months up to 2 Years	**There is no automatic entitlement to funded EY education funded hours for children in care in this age band.** **Up to 30 hours for working parents and carers:** If the foster carer (or parent, if child is residing with them) is in paid employment (outside of fostering) and other eligibility criteria are met, the child may be eligible for up to 30 hours per week of EY funded education from the term after they reach 9 months old. An application process is required. For children in foster care, please see I am a foster carer | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council under the '**Working Families Entitlement**' box. *For children residing with a parent or connected carer, application is via the standard Working Parent scheme: Free Childcare for Working Parents: Overview - GOV.UK*