

30 HOURS OF FREE CHILDCARE



April 2017 • Issue 7

MONTHLY UPDATE

What is 30 Hours of Free Childcare?

The Childcare Bill 2015 is delivering the Government's election manifesto commitment to giving families (where parents are working and eligible) an entitlement to 30 Hours of Free Childcare for their three and four year olds.

Department for Education News:

[Early education and childcare - Statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

At the beginning of March the Department for Education (DfE) published the new Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for all local authorities, effective from September 2017.

[Early years entitlements: operational guidance](#)

In April 2017 the DfE published guidance for local authorities and providers to provide more detail around the expectations about how the free entitlements should be delivered.

[Model Agreement – Early years provision free of charge and free childcare](#)

The Model Agreement was published by the DfE in March 2017. Kent County Council is considering this for Kent providers and the Kent Provider Agreement will be released in May 2017.

Ahead of the release of the Kent Provider Agreement in May, we set out on page 2, Kent County Council's position in relation to flexibility and charging within the context of the Statutory Guidance and the Operational Guidance 2017.

We will be sharing more information about this at our 30 Hours seminars taking place in June.

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Flexibility and Charging:

The Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance, effective from September 2017 (Section A2.5) states:

Evidence shows that continuous provision is in the best interests of the child. Where it is reasonably practicable local authorities should ensure that children are able to take up their free hours in continuous blocks and avoid artificial breaks being created throughout the day, for example over the lunch period.

The Early Years Entitlements Operational Guidance (page 31) states:

Children should be able to take up their free hours as part of continuous provision and providers should avoid artificial breaks in the day wherever possible. For example, the lunch time hour/session should form part of the free provision where the child is attending a morning and afternoon session. Providers may wish to offer additional hours around the free provision hours.

Therefore, in the context of both Statutory and Operational Guidance, with effect from September 2017 Kent County Council will require providers, where it is *reasonably practicable* and *wherever possible*, to ensure that children are able to take up their Free Early Years Entitlements in continuous blocks and avoid artificial breaks being created throughout the day, for example over the lunch period. Where this is not *reasonably practicable and/or wherever* it is not *possible* in relation to business critical financial sustainability, providers may choose to make arrangements that ensure their ongoing viability from a business perspective, in which case they should ensure that prices are fair, transparent and clearly communicated to parents and carers’.

Kent County Council has a statutory duty to ensure that Free Early Years Entitlement places are delivered completely free of charge, therefore providers must not charge parents a fee for their child’s Free Early Years Entitlement place. KCC is aware, of course, that the Operational Guidance does not address how providers operate their private businesses over and above a child’s free hours. This is a matter solely between providers and parents, providing it does not affect the parent’s ability to take up their child’s free place.

Transition in the context of 30 Hours of Free Childcare:

Please follow [Transition and 30 Hours](#) to view the addendum to the Transition Matters document which will be made available at the Head Teacher Breakfast Briefings in May, and the 30 Hours Seminars in June.

We hope you will find this guide and checklist useful when you are planning for effective transition in the light of the introduction of 30 Hours of Free Childcare.

KELSI Website

We now have a new and improved 30 Hours of Free Childcare page on Kelsi.

This page is designed to provide you with the information you need with ease. Each of the headings will take you to your desired page.

30 Hours of Free Childcare:

- Eligibility Criteria
- Childcare Choices
- Provider Survey

District Information:

- Countywide and District Presentations

Guidance Documents:

- Changes to the EYFS
- Summary of key announcements
- Early Years Workforce Strategy
- Level 3 Early Years Educator

Q and A:

- Provider Q and A's

Monthly Updates:

- 30 Hours of Free Childcare News

Promotional Materials:

- Parent Leaflet
- Poster
- Postcard
- Images

Support to providers:

The Childcare Sufficiency Officers (CSOs) are well into their one to one visits to providers. If you have not yet scheduled a visit please contact your CSO as a matter of priority.

We have created a 30 Hours Toolkit to help support providers considering offering up to 30 Hours of Free Childcare. These packs are being given out by the CSOs during their visits, as well as other 30 Hours promotional materials.

We have uploaded to KELSI the [FAQs](#) following Seminars held in March

30 Hours Provider Information Seminars in June:

Further to the March seminars we are keen to ensure providers are fully supported to deliver the 30 Hours of Free Childcare, and are appraised of the details within the Kent Provider Agreement to be released in May, together with the eligibility checking process.

There will be one Seminar per district plus four evening Seminars, particularly to enable childminders to attend. Dates and venues will follow asap.

30 Hours Register of Providers:

From April 2017 the local authority is required to provide information regarding who intends to provide the extended 30 Hours entitlement. If you are not already on this register (having given your permission to be included) your Childcare Sufficiency Officer will be seeking your permission to be included if you plan to deliver up to 30 Hours of Free Childcare.

As from April 2017, **261 providers** have indicated they are looking to offer up to 30 Hours of Free Childcare.

[Provider Register.](#)

The 30 Hours of Free Childcare updates will be uploaded onto KELSI the last Friday of each month.

<http://www.kelsi.org.uk/early-years/30-hours-of-free-childcare>

Kent.gov website

The Kent.Gov website has been updated. By using “30 Hours of Free Early Education and Childcare” in the search box, the following links and headings will be found on the page.

- Free Early Education and Childcare Entitlement
- Tax-Free Childcare
- National benefits and Tax Credits
- Childcare Vouchers
- Who is eligible for the additional 30 Hours
- Providers offering the 30 Hours
- Tell us what you think about the 30 Hours

Marketing of 30 Hours of Free Childcare:

To enable providers who want to deliver 30 Hours of Free Childcare to parents we have produced a range of materials which is being made available in a number of different ways:

- Railings banners
- Leaflets for parents
- Poster – A3 and A4 versions
- Social Media or Website Images
- Digital Badge
- Postcard

Kent County Council has already been promoting 30 Hours of Free Childcare to parents by advertising online through Mumsnet and Netmums. Beginning early May you should also hear some 30 Hours adverts on Heart radio and see online adverts via Facebook.

To see how the various marketing materials can be accessed please visit the [KELSI Website](#).



30 Hours Email Address

We have an email address for any queries you may have; but please speak to your Childcare Sufficiency Officer in the first instance.

30HoursFreeChildcare@Kent.gov.uk

Parent and Provider Survey Update:

We have had the following responses from the surveys up to the 19th April 2017.

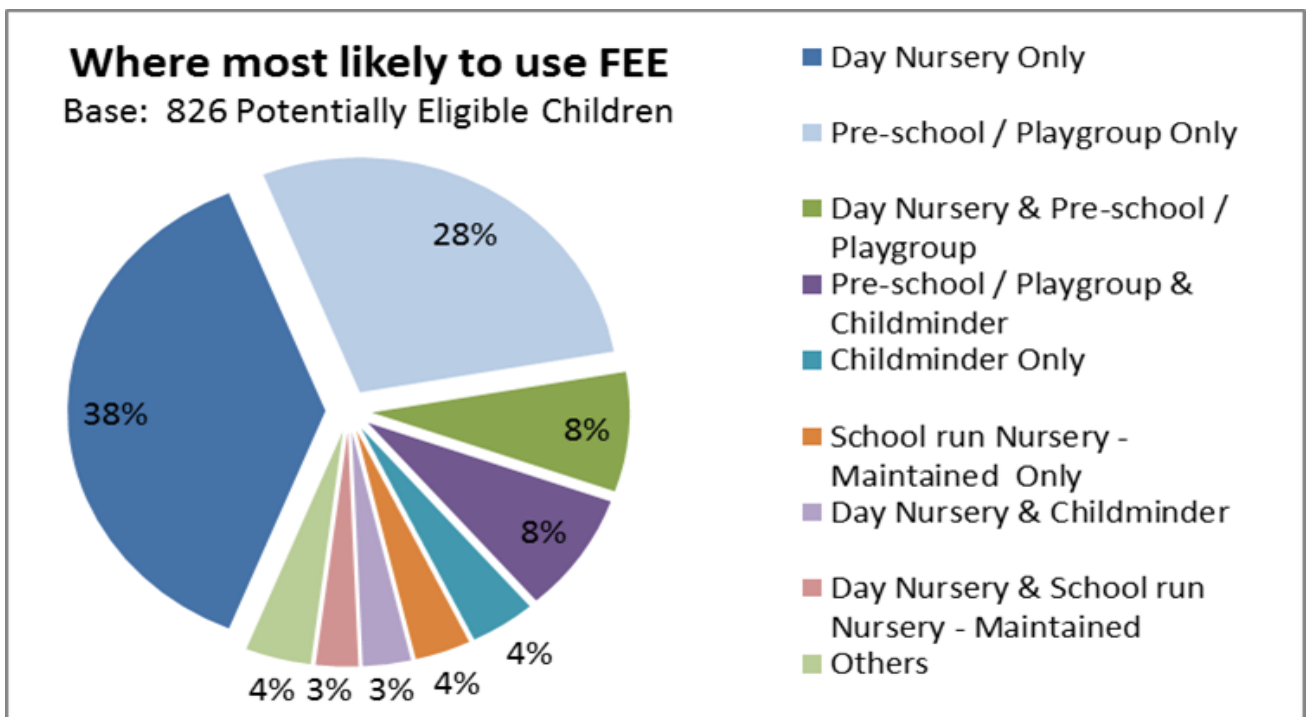
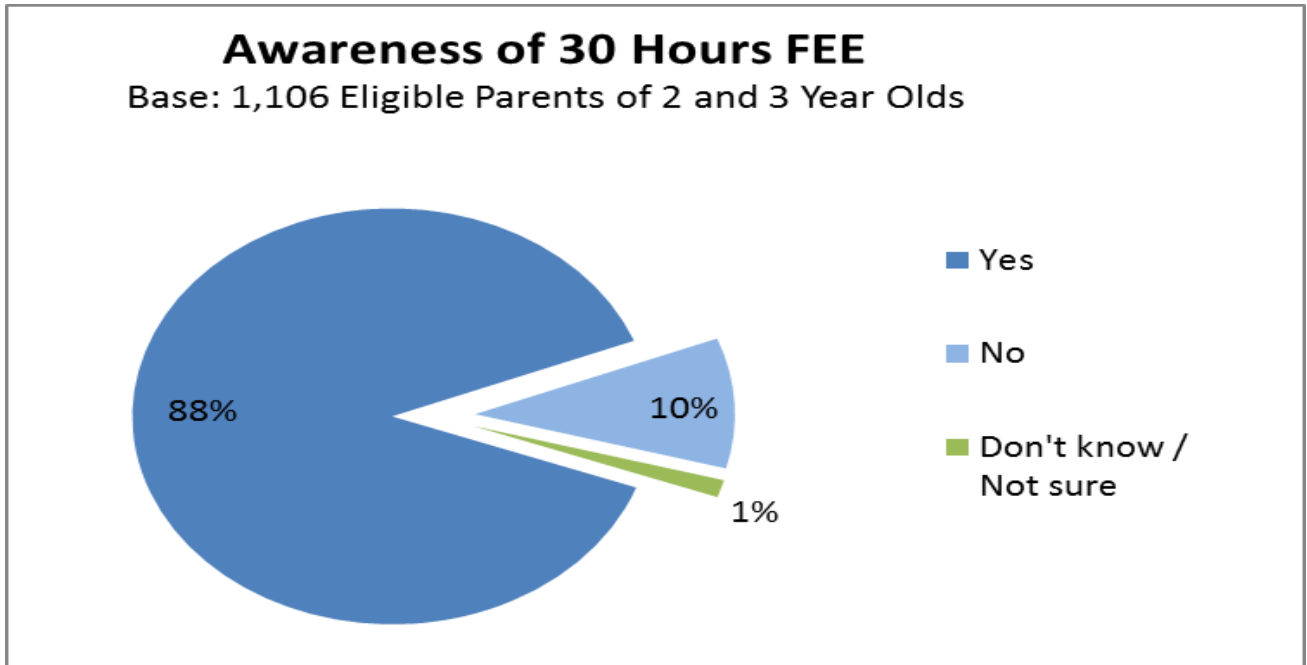
- ❖ Parent Survey: 1,688 responses, of these 1,117 were considered likely to be eligible.
- ❖ Provider Survey : 694 responses

See overleaf a summary of the Parent Survey.

Survey of Parents About 30 Hours FEE* Summary of Results

The information provided gives an overview of the response we have received to date. The first graph is based on eligible parents and the second graph is based on the children of eligible parents (some families have more than one child in the relevant age group). 1,117 eligible parents answered the questionnaire, of which 11 didn't answer the question about awareness of 30 hours – which reduces the base to 1,106.

The parent/carer survey will close at the end of May 2017.



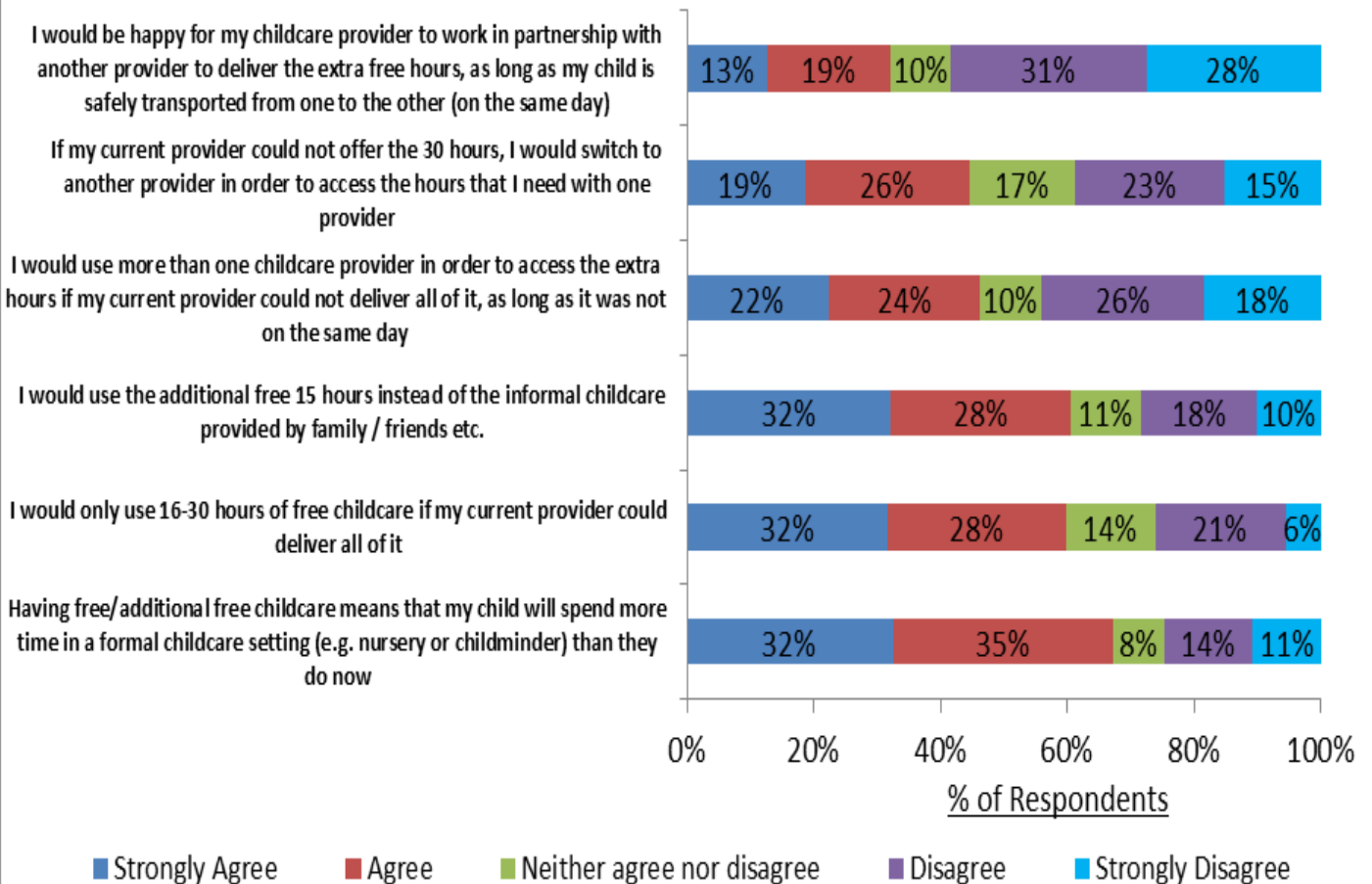
*FEE is defined as 'free childcare that is funded by the Government via Kent County Council'

Age of Child	Total Hours	FEE Hours	Increased FEE Hours	Net increase in Hours
<u>Base: children with 1+ hours per week of formal childcare/FEE</u>				
2 Years Old	22.3	14.5	26.4	4.1
3 Years Old	22.7	14.7	26.2	3.5
Total	22.4	14.6	26.4	4.0

The three year olds that are currently eligible for FEE are likely to increase their total hours of formal childcare by 15%, i.e. an additional 3.5 hours per week.

Agreement / Disagreement with Statements about Provision

Base: Eligible Parents of 2 and 3 Year Olds





The Eligibility Checking System:

HMRC's Childcare Choices system was due to go live on Friday 28 April but has in fact been released a week early, Friday 21st April 2017. Parents can check whether they could be eligible for a range of Government childcare offers, including 30 Hours of Free Childcare, via Childcare Choices at: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>, and can access the Childcare Calculator at: <https://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator>. Those who could be eligible for 30 Hours of Free Childcare and/or Tax-Free Childcare will be directed to the digital childcare service to apply.

This means if a parent/carer is eligible they will be issued with a code from the DfE. The childcare provider will then need to validate the code via the local authority's Eligibility Checking System before a place is offered to the child. We have been developing our interim checking system and are currently still testing this. We will update you as soon as this is ready.

In the meantime we are suggesting if a parent is eligible for the 30 Hours of Free Childcare and they have their Eligibility Code from HMRC to make a note of their details in preparation for having this validated once our local authority system is live.

Parents will be required to verify their continued eligibility for the 30 Hours of Free Childcare every three months directly with HMRC. If they are found to be no longer eligible the additional hours will cease at the end of a notice period. This is known as the Grace Period. The Government has agreed how long Grace Periods will be. HMRC will manage the notification to parents of the need to reconfirm their eligibility for the 30 Hours of Free Childcare every three months.

What can childcare providers do to help?

- Remind parents to bring their eligibility code, along with their National Insurance number and child's date of birth, otherwise you won't be able to verify their code and offer a place.
- Remind parents they will need to verify their continued eligibility when prompted by HMRC.

Childcare Choices



The Department for Education and the Treasury have launched the website Childcare Choices www.childcarechoices.gov.uk. This is a central point for current and upcoming Government childcare offers and support available to parents, including the Tax-Free Childcare scheme and 30 Hours of Free Childcare, the universal 15 free hours, tax credits, Universal Credit and childcare vouchers.

The website has a Childcare Calculator for parents to compare all offers and support available to them and check what works best for their family.

Parents/Carers will be able to use Childcare Choices to register for alerts for the Tax-Free Childcare scheme, which the DfE and Treasury have now confirmed will start from 28th April for parents of the youngest children.

They can also sign up for information about the 30 Hours of Free Childcare for three and four year olds, coming in from September, as well as sign up to email alerts that will notify them when they can apply and provide details of existing Government childcare offers.

Tax-Free Childcare Update

Parents will be able to apply for Tax-Free Childcare through the digital childcare service. Working parents of children aged under 12 can use Tax-Free Childcare, through the childcare service account, to pay for registered childcare. The Government will top-up the money that parents pay into the account. For every £8 parents pay in, the Government will add an extra £2. Parents can receive £2,000 per child per year, or £4,000 if disabled.

The eligibility criteria for Tax-Free Childcare are broadly aligned with 30 Hours Free Childcare. The main differences are that Tax-Free Childcare is available for children under 12, and is not available to parents in receipt of tax credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers. Parents in receipt of these can choose, as part of the childcare service application, whether they want to keep these benefits and apply for the extended entitlement only, or leave these and apply for Tax-Free Childcare as well as the extended entitlement

[Link to the Childcare Tax Calculator](#)

The HMRC have advised that they have already written to providers. You can register your details here: <https://childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/ccp/signup/entrypage>

If you need any assistance please contact your Childcare Sufficiency Officer.