



Department  
for Education

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Email enquiry form:

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6<sup>th</sup> July 2017

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Dear colleague,

I wanted to introduce myself as the newly appointed Director for Early Years and Childcare at the Department for Education. I am delighted to have taken up this post at such a key moment in the delivery of 30 hours of free childcare, as well as our broader work to ensure that all children get the best start in life. I have been impressed with the enormous amount that Local Authorities have achieved in ensuring that all children have access to high-quality early learning. I was particularly delighted to see national take-up of the entitlement for disadvantaged two-year-olds reaching 71% in figures published on 29 June - thank you for your ongoing commitment to this programme.

As you can imagine, the Secretary of State, Justine Greening, and the new Minister for Children and Families, Robert Goodwill, who will be speaking at the Annual ADCS Conference later today, have both been very clear with me that successful delivery of 30 hours free childcare for working parents is a key priority for them. I am also aware of how popular the 30 hours offer is with working parents and why it is essential that you and your teams ensure there are sufficient places in your local area.

We are already seeing great success in our 12 early delivery areas, which are now providing 30 hours places to thousands of eligible children. Providers in these areas have responded positively to parental demand for 30 hours, and parents are benefiting from reduced pressures on family finances. My team and our delivery contractor, Childcare Works, are already sharing the learning from these areas with your teams and, in July, we will publish our independent early implementation evaluation, a package of case studies, updated operational guidance and a further FAQ document.

**The early delivery areas have also highlighted the importance of good communications with parents and providers** - please make sure that parents know that they have to apply for 30 hours before 31 August if they want a place in September. We do not want parents to miss out on a place because they didn't understand the process. You should encourage parents to visit the Childcare Choices website <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/> and to apply through the online Childcare Service.

**Please encourage your childcare providers to verify the eligibility codes that parents present quickly**, as this will enable you to manage your local market and gives providers certainty about how many places they have filled, and national tracking of the number of codes being checked against the number of applications made. We are pleased to see that the majority of local web services are in place but if your systems are not ready yet, your providers should have a plan for manually checking codes. If you have serious concerns about your system ahead of national delivery, you can contact [ECS.change@education.gov.uk](mailto:ECS.change@education.gov.uk).

**You also have a role in working with your local providers to track progress towards delivery, so I would be grateful if your teams could continue to respond to our monthly and termly surveys.** The findings we have received so far have been invaluable in assessing trends, enabling us to target further help, and demonstrating the enormous progress made across the country.

**I wanted to offer reassurance on the ‘guaranteed first term’ issue raised by your teams by confirming that, if parents lose eligibility before September they will be permitted to take up the additional 15 hours for the autumn term only and funding will be provided by the Department to cover the cost of this commitment.** This approach will not be repeated for subsequent terms as it is intended to provide certainty for providers for this key first term.

Further details on how the guaranteed first term and other crucial aspects of 30 hours delivery will work will be circulated to your teams shortly. This will include details on the application process for parents of eligible four year olds. That process will be made available to parents by the end of next week (14 July).

Finally, if you have concerns about your area’s ability to deliver sufficient places in September or later in the year, please get in touch with my team to discuss what additional support we may be able to offer you.

Thank you for all your excellent work.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Dyson  
Director of Early Years and Childcare