

# Free Early Education

for two, three and  
four year olds



# Free Early Education for two year olds

The Free Early Education for two year olds (FEE2) offers eligible children up to 570 hours per year of high quality early education.

This starts from the term after their second birthday up to the end of the term in which they turn three (up to when they claim for the Free Early Education (FEE) for three and four year olds).

## How do I qualify?

To be eligible for a place on the FEE2, families must meet any one of the following from either Criteria A or B:

### Criteria A:

- Income support
- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the 'Guaranteed' element of the state pension credit
- Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit – provided they do not have an annual gross income of more than £16,190.00 (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs).

### Or Criteria B:

- child looked after by the Local Authority
- child left care through Special Guardianship, or through an Adoption or Residence Order

- child with current statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), or an Education Health and Care Plan
- child in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

## When can my child access a free place?

The earliest a child can access their free place is the term after their second birthday.

The table below shows the dates of birth and the earliest time your child could take up their free place:

A child born between:	Is eligible from:
1 January – 31 March	1 April – Summer Term
1 April – 31 August	1 September – Autumn Term
1 September – 31 December	1 January – Spring Term

## Where can my child access a free place?

Free childcare places can be accessed at a range of participating Ofsted registered childcare providers\* in the London Borough of Barnet. Places are available in:

- childminders
- pre-schools
- day nurseries
- children's centres (that offer childcare)
- nursery schools.

\* Please note not all childcare providers offer free places in the FEE2 scheme.

## How do I apply?

You can apply online at [www.barnet.gov.uk/free-childcare](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/free-childcare)

You will need your National Insurance number to complete an application as we need this to check your eligibility.

Alternatively, an application can be made on your behalf by an early years practitioner or from one of these agencies:

- children's centres
- health visitors or other health professionals
- social worker
- Jobcentre Plus
- London Borough of Barnet (LBB) Children's Service practitioner
- childcare provider

## What happens next?

You will receive confirmation within two weeks of your application to notify you whether or not your child is eligible for a FEE2 place.

You can look for suitable participating childcare providers on our website located at: [www.barnet.gov.uk/free-childcare](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/free-childcare)



# Free Early Education for three and four year olds

The Free Early Education (FEE) offers all three and four year olds up to 570 hours per year of high quality early education.

The FEE hours can be taken as flexibly as your childcare provider is able to offer. Children become eligible the term after their third birthday.

## When can my child access a free place?

The table below shows the dates of birth and the earliest time your child could take up their free place:

A child born between:	Is eligible from:
1 January – 31 March	1 April – Summer Term
1 April – 31 August	1 September – Autumn Term
1 September – 31 December	1 January – Spring Term

## Where can my child access a free place?

All you need to do is choose an Ofsted registered childcare provider\* that offers the FEE and discuss with them how they deliver this service.

Places can be taken at:

- childminders
- pre-schools
- day nurseries
- childrens centre's (that offer childcare)
- independent nursery schools
- local authority nursery schools or nursery classes.

## How do I find out which childcare providers participate in the scheme?

You can find details of participating childcare providers at [www.barnet.gov.uk/free-childcare](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/free-childcare).

You can also contact Barnet FYi and request lists of all registered childcare providers that offer the FEE.

Once you have chosen a childcare provider, they will make a claim on your child's behalf at the start of each term. You will not receive any funding; all payments will be made directly to your childcare provider.

\* Please note not all childcare providers offer free places in the FEE scheme

## How can my child receive their FEE hours?

Most childcare providers offer free places in blocks of 15 hours per week (term-time only). Some may offer 'stretched places' where they offer less hours per week for example 12 hours per week, for 47.5 weeks per year. You should ask your chosen childcare provider how they are offering the FEE hours as it will vary. However, Barnet Council expects all childcare providers to offer the following types of sessions to any parent who wants to access the entitlement:

- three hours a day over five days of the week, or
- five hours a day over three days of the week, or
- 10 hours a day, and five hours on another day.

It is important to note that, if your child attends for more than 15 hours outside their FEE hours or you choose to take up additional services offered on a voluntary basis, you will be expected to pay the childcare provider at their set rates.

## What if I want my child to attend more than one childcare provider?

If you want to split your FEE hours and claim ten hours at a nursery and five hours with a childminder you can. You must agree and complete a parental contract

in advance with your chosen childcare providers, stating that you are attending two childcare providers and that both are claiming the FEE in respect of your child. Each contract must state how many hours are being claimed in each childcare provider, which is up to a maximum of 15 hours in total. Please note though that a childcare provider is not obliged to offer this.

## What if my child attends a specialist unit or special school?

The hours attended will form part of your FEE entitlement. This funding will be allocated to the specialist unit or school. If your child attends less than 15 hours, any hours left over can be taken at a second childcare provider (if agreed in advance).

## What if my child attends the childcare provider for more than 15 hours per week or all year round?

The FEE is free at the point of delivery. This means that you are able to access your free hours and not be expected to take up any additional hours if you choose not to. If you are using the childcare provider for more than the free hours per week, then the childcare provider can charge for the additional hours of care. The rate for the additional hours is a private matter between you and the childcare provider. Your invoice should show that you have received for example 15 hours, free with no monetary value attached to it. Charges should only be made for additional hours over and above the free hours or additional services purchased.

Throughout the remainder of this leaflet the free hours are referred to as 15 hours per week for 38 weeks per year (term-time only) as the majority of childcare providers deliver the offer in this way.

### Do I have to pay for other fees such as registration fees or deposits?

No. If you are accessing just your FEE hours you cannot be expected to pay for a registration fee or deposit for the place. The “Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities” states that; meals, optional extras or additional hours of provision outside of the place, is not a condition of children accessing their place. To download a copy of the Statutory Guidance please refer to [www.barnet.gov.uk/free-childcare](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/free-childcare)

If your child takes up extra activities such as dance or language lessons then you can expect to be charged for this. However, this should be an optional activity and it should not prevent you from accessing a free place.

### What about lunch fees?

If your child is attending all day or over the lunch period, the childcare provider is entitled to charge a fee for supplying lunch. However, you must not be required to pay for lunch to access a free place. Please discuss with the childcare provider the option of providing a packed lunch for your child.

## Parental contracts

You will be asked to complete a parental contract by your childcare provider in order to claim the free entitlement. This will show how many hours you will take up with this childcare provider. It will also ask you to declare whether your child is attending a second childcare provider and if so, how many hours per week. The childcare provider may also have terms and conditions that you are required to agree to. These may include issues such as notice periods if you choose to leave the childcare provider. Please ensure you are told of any fees and charges, before you take a place with a childcare provider.

### How is the place paid for?

All participating childcare providers are sent paperwork to make a claim to Barnet Council for funding on a termly basis. Funding is paid directly to childcare providers. The paperwork is completed on a set date (Headcount Day) at the beginning of the term. The childcare provider records all the eligible children in their setting on that date and returns the form. Barnet Council will cross reference all the claim forms for any duplication to ensure that no more than 15 hours is being claimed for any child. Childcare providers are required to notify the council if a child leaves the setting.

### What if my child is sick or we take a holiday during the term?

Children are allowed a maximum of two weeks absence per term. If your child has more than two weeks absence because of holidays or sickness then the childcare provider must notify Barnet Council. If children have a lengthy absence, funding for that place can be withdrawn.

If children have poor or erratic attendance, the childcare provider is obliged to notify Barnet Council. Depending on the circumstances, hours may be reduced or funding withdrawn so that another eligible child can access their FEE place. The childcare provider is within their rights to ask the parents to make a payment for that place to recover any losses.

### What if my child starts at a childcare provider late in the term?

A child may start at any point within the term. The number of hours that can be claimed for your child will depend on the number of hours that may have been previously claimed by another provider. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure they inform the new provider of any previous claim submitted for their child under the FEE scheme.





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For more information on the Free Early Education  
for two, three and four-year-olds please contact:  
**Barnet FYi 0800 3898312**  
or visit [www.barnet.gov.uk/free-childcare](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/free-childcare)