Early Years Education "Stretched Offer"
Information for Parents and Carers

Early Years Education "Stretched Offer" – what is it?
In *Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare*, published in January 2009, the Government set out plans to increase flexibility through making it possible for parents to 'stretch' their free early years education provision for eligible 3 and 4 year olds by accessing fewer hours across more weeks of the year. The 38 week free early years education delivery will remain as the minimum number of weeks for the offer with the maximum being provided up to 51 weeks (dependent on providers' opening times) which will be known as a "stretched offer". This will enable those parents whose children attend for childcare and early years education to do so across a full year; enabling parents to budget and balance work or other commitments consistently.

Is my child eligible, and when can he/she start?
The "stretched offer" began as a pilot in January 2012. The areas chosen for the pilot were: Basingstoke, Gosport and the New Forest. In the three areas, the pilot works with approved Hampshire early years education providers that are registered with Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education). They include day nurseries, preschools and quality assured childminders in a Hampshire approved childminder network. All children are eligible from the term after their third birthday.

It is planned that, by September 2012, all Hampshire approved early years education providers will be able to offer a "stretched" provision if they wish to do so. Providers are required to continue to develop good partnership arrangements with the parents of children who attend and to regularly consult with them, and those on waiting lists, to ensure that their early years education offer continues to meet the needs of the community they serve.

What are the "offers" for free early years education and how will they be delivered?
Hampshire County Council will have two "offers": **"standard"** and **"stretched"**. Each child's maximum free entitlement for both the "standard" and the "stretched" offer is **570 hours per year**. The year starts the **term after the child's third birthday (or fourth) birthday.** It is expected that all Hampshire County Council approved early years education providers will offer the "standard offer" and some may choose to offer the "stretched offer"; and that the offers available will be publicised to parents.

Standard Offer - described **Maximum number of hours per child 570 hours**	**Stretched Offer - described** **Maximum number of hours per child 570 hours**
• Maximum 15 Hours per week over 38 weeks (Academic Year) • Only accessed in school terms • Funding cannot exceed 570 hours per child's birthday year • Parents can choose to use a maximum of two approved early years education providers • Parents must confirm the hours required with the early years education provider through a parent declaration form for each school term i.e 3 times a year • Parents must pay for any additional hours or services over and above the free 15 hours per week.	• Providers may offer the 570 hours per child's birthday year over a maximum of 51 weeks (or less) • Providers cannot offer the "stretched offer" alone and must still provide the "standard offer" of 15 hours per week over 38 weeks (Academic Year) • Funding cannot exceed 570 hours per child's birthday year • Providers will choose from a number of options provided by Hampshire County Council for stretching the offer • Providers will determine the "stretched offer" available based on consultation with parents and their operational requirements • Parents can choose to use a maximum of two approved early years education providers

	• Parents must confirm the hours with the early years education provider through the parent declaration form – at the start of their child accessing early years education and then annually • The provider confirms to parents the number of hours that are part of the "stretched offer" and produces free invoices indicating the free early years education hours. • Parents may pay for any additional hours or services over and above the free early years education hours.

For parents who currently take up the free entitlement and pay for additional hours with their child attending over a full calendar year at their early years education provision, the "stretched offer" will mean no change.

For parents who only take up the free entitlement and do not have any additional hours, the "stretched offer" would allow them to spread their child's free hours into school holiday periods. This would provide children with consistent early years education across the year. In both situations, the benefit will be that the early years education provider can raise consistent invoices across the year instead of high bills over the school holiday periods.

The current Hampshire County Council early years education scheme provides free entitlement based on the child's attendance:

- Child attends for three or more days a week - 15 hours for 38 weeks or 570 hours divided by the number of weeks and hours the setting is open to provide early years education.

Where attendance is less than three days the following applies:

- Child attends for one day a week – 10 hours (or the maximum the child attends if less than 10 hours)
- Child attends for two days a week - 15 hours

For both "offers" the County Council suggests that parents should also be able to split their child's attendance between two approved early years education providers. It is, however, the parents' responsibility to complete the 'parental declarations' for each early years education provider, confirming the number of hours their child will attend at each and alerting the providers that their child is attending two provisions.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. My child is three (or four) years old and is not attending a nursery, pre-school or a childminder but I would like them to receive the free part-time early years education. What do I need to do?
If you are not aware of the service providers in your area, contact the Hampshire Childcare and Family Information Team on 0845 603 5620 or email childrens.services@hants.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can search for local childcare and early years education services by visiting the Family Information Directory: www.fid.hants.gov.uk.

***2*. My child does not attend an early years education provision in the Basingstoke/Gosport/New Forest area but I want to be able to take up the "stretched offer" where we live.**
The "stretched offer" will be available across all of Hampshire from September 2012. However, it will be up to the individual early years education provider as to whether this is available. We have asked that providers consult with their parents to ensure that they meet the needs of the community they serve. Let your provider (nursery, pre-school or quality assured childminder) know what your preferences are before September in order to help them plan their delivery. Please let your provider know that you would like to consider the "stretched offer" and suggest they may like to contact Services for Young Children (SfYC) to discuss how their provision might offer this. Providers do not have to provide the "stretched offer" and you may need to consider a different provider to meet your needs if this is the case.

3. I am still unsure what the "offers" are. Who can I ask?
In the first instance, speak to the manager or supervisor of the nursery or pre-school your child attends. If your child receives their early years education from a quality assured childminder in a Hampshire County Council approved network then talk to them. Help is also available from the Hampshire Childcare and Family Information Team on 0845 603 5620 or email childrens.services@hants.gov.uk. Alternatively visit the Services for Young Children website: www.hants.gov.uk/childcare - 'Early Years Education' for further details.