



# **Flexible delivery of the free early learning and care entitlement**

## **Proposals of the North Somerset Strategic Schools Forum**

**Autumn 2009**



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# PAPER A – INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

1. From September 2010, all families with eligible three and four year olds will have an entitlement to 15 hours free early years provision – delivered more flexibly than the current offer over a minimum of 38 weeks a year. This entitlement needs to be offered to parents in a way which meets their needs and gives them real choices about how they access their free provision.
2. From September 2009 the DCSF has extended the free entitlement from 12.5 hours per week to 15 hours per week as a pilot for children from the most socially deprived areas.
3. As part of this the DCSF has issued a Consultation on the Draft Code of Practice on provision of the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds which incorporates nationally sets limits on how the free entitlement should be delivered to protect the developmental needs and maximise outcomes for the child and a national core offer for every parent who wants it. The Draft Code sets a clear role for local authorities as the broker between parental demand and provider capacity - ensuring that the flexible extension to the entitlement is workable for local authorities and providers.
4. The national limits are parameters which the local flexible entitlement should not operate outside. Local authorities should produce their own definition from within the parameters with a minimum core offer of flexibility.
5. The Early Years Formula Review Working Group (EYFRWG) has considered this issue and as a result has produced a recommended definition. This definition has been agreed by the Strategic Schools Forum (SSF) for consultation with all stakeholders.
6. Whilst the DCSF Code of Practice is only draft it was felt important that all stakeholders, providers and parents alike, understand what flexibility means in North Somerset for the pilot period at least. Consequently revisions to the North Somerset definition may be required in the future to meet DCSF criteria. The DCSF consultation can be found at:  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/Document3CODEFINAL230909jr.doc>  
The final date for responses to the DCSF consultation is 8 January 2010.

## PAPER B - METHODOLOGY

7. The SSF established an Early Years Formula Review Working group to consider issues related to early years funding.
8. The membership of the group is set out below and where members cannot attend substitutions are allowed to ensure the group can carry out the work.

Stefanie Metcalfe	Director - Secret Garden Nursery (SSF rep)
Michelle Badger	Owner – Castle Batch Community Pre-School
Michelle Bryne	Manager – Noah’s Ark Pre-school
Maureen Burgoyne	Owner - Clevedon Montessori Nursery
Dave Rowson	Bursar - Fairfield PNEU
Lizzie Weeks	Accredited Childminder
Anna Latham	Manager - Mendip House Nursery and Pre-school
Lesley Evans	Leader - St Anne’s Pre-school
Naomi Triggol	Bournville Primary

9. The group is supported by officers from the LA:

Louise Malik	CYPS Finance Manager (Chair)
Gale Bruce	School Development Advisor – Early years
Pam Kelly	Operations and Finance Manager
Anne Clubb	Education Funding Manager

10. The group was established in April 2007 to consider the reform of early years provision and meets on a regular basis for a series of both planned and reactive issues.
11. The group debate implications using options presented by the officers. From this, recommendations are reported to SSF and included in consultation documents. For those areas where there is no clear recommendation, options would be included.
12. All the proposals put forward by the Strategic Schools Forum (SSF) are on the basis of a consensus.
13. The outcome of this consultation will be reported to the SSF in February 2010 for consideration.

## PAPER C – DEFINITION OF FLEXIBILITY

14. The DCSF has issued a Draft Code of Practice on the provision of the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.
15. Local authorities are required to determine their own definition within the parameters set by the DCSF.
16. The table below provides information both in relation to the DCSF nationally set limits and the North Somerset proposed definition.
17. The framework tries to achieve a balance between:
- a. The learning benefits to children of high quality, regular provision;
  - b. The limited additional value in learning and development terms of longer days in early years provision and the practical experience of providers as to the times at which learning best takes place;
  - c. The practical need for sessions to be a minimum length to enable learning to take place;
  - d. The practical needs of providers to manage children beginning and ending sessions at different times;
  - e. The benefits to families as a whole of longer sessions enabling parents more easily to work and to better balance work and family life;
  - f. The likelihood of increased take up from more flexible access to the free entitlement – with attendant learning benefits for children;
  - g. The importance to children of limited disruptions to their early years provision, meaning that they spend time regularly with both other children and staff whom they know.

	DCSF nationally set limits and national core offer	North Somerset proposed framework
<b>Weekly entitlement:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The full 15 hours over no fewer than 3 days (equating to no more than 12.5 hours in 2 days, or 10 hours in a single day)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A maximum of 15 hours a week taken over a minimum of 3 days if delivered over 38 weeks or less.</li> <li>• If the entitlement is taken up for a period of more than 38 weeks in a year, the number of hours per week is reduced pro rata.</li> <li>• The only exception would be for with special educational needs.</li> </ul>

<b>Length of offer over year:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum of 38 weeks – but may be made available over a longer period.</li> <li>• Parents may choose to take their entitlement with a provider offering fewer than 38 weeks of provision – but if they do so in preference to an available provider offering 38 weeks of provision, the local authority is not obliged to offer the rest of the child’s entitlement elsewhere in these circumstances.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum of 38 weeks but it can be made available over a longer period.</li> <li>• Parents may choose to take their entitlement with a provider offering fewer than 38 weeks of provision – but if they do so in preference to an available provider offering 38 weeks, the local authority will not be obliged to fund a provider to make up the additional weeks.</li> </ul>
<b>Minimum session length:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No session shorter than 2.5 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 hours is preferred but 2.5 hours would be acceptable only where issues such as availability of premises do not enable 3 hour sessions</li> </ul>
<b>Maximum hours in a day:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No session longer than 10 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 hours in one day</li> </ul>
<b>Number of Providers:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A maximum 2 providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A maximum of 2 providers at anyone time except where the third provider is a specialist SEN provider or the child is looked after by the local authority.</li> </ul>
<b>Times of day during which delivered</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not before 8am or after 6pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm</li> <li>• Minimum funding unit of 30 minutes.</li> </ul>
<b>Core offer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 hours a day over 5 days a week</li> <li>• 5 hours a day over 3 days a week</li> <li>• 6 hours + 6 hours + 3 hours over 3 days a week (pending consultation)</li> <li>• 9 hours + 3 hours + 3 hours over 3 days a week (pending consultation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 hours a day over 5 days a week</li> <li>• 5 hours a day over 3 days a week</li> <li>• 6 hours + 6 hours + 3 hours over 3 days a week</li> </ul>

## PAPER D – RECOMMENDATIONS

18. The recommendations of SSF are detailed below:

- Agree North Somerset proposed framework of flexibility to cover maintained, independent, private, voluntary settings and childminders as set out in Paper C.
- Implement proposals for the pilot phase from September 2009 and beyond provided they are within the parameters of the DCSF agreed definition of flexibility.