

## **The Ten Year Strategy *Choice for parents, the best start for children* Implications for Nursery Education Providers in East Sussex**

### **Introduction**

1.1 The Ten Year Strategy *Choice for parents, the best start for children*, published on 2 December 2004, set out a clear vision for securing that every child gets the best possible start in life while giving parents more choice about how to balance work and family responsibilities.

1.2 It includes a comprehensive package of measures to transform provision for three and four year-olds by delivering an extended free entitlement, integrated with high quality affordable childcare from 8 am to 6 pm all year round. Key commitments include:

**From April 2006, the minimum free entitlement of 12.5 hours a week will be extended from 33 to 38 weeks for all three and four year-olds**

**From April 2007, the minimum free entitlement will be extended to 15 hours a week for 38 weeks, for the first cohort of children. And parents will be able to use the free entitlement flexibly across a minimum of three days.**

**From 2008, a new reformed regulation and inspection system underpinned by a new legal framework for early years and childcare will be in place, supported by an integrated quality framework.**

**From 2010, the new minimum entitlement of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks will be in place for all three and four year-olds, on the way to a longer term goal of 20 hours a week for 38 weeks.**

1.3 To support those commitments and the wider vision, the Government intends to introduce legislation to give local authorities a clear responsibility to plan and manage the delivery of local services. This will support the delivery of the guarantee that parents of children aged three and four years will be able to access wrap-around childcare, linked to free early education offer and available all year round from 8am to 6pm. By 2010, families in all areas will also have access to a Sure Start Children's Centre offering integrated services, providing information for parents and supporting local providers.

1.4 A new Code of Practice for Nursery Education Grant is intended to support local authorities and providers in responding creatively and positively to the vision set out in the 10 year strategy. It will set out the broad statutory framework and the key principles to which local authorities and delivery partners should have regard when delivering the free early education entitlement. It will be re-structured and revised to reflect the four key themes underlying the 10 year strategy:

- Choice and flexibility
- Availability

- Quality
- Affordability

- 1.2 The draft Code, which will detail arrangements of the revised NEG 'offer', was due to be circulated to local authorities and delivery partners for consultation/comment in February/March and was delayed. The 'purdah' on announcements caused by the election has delayed progress on the consultation and we still need feedback from the DfES on the questions raised so far.
- 1.3 Subject to consultation, the Government intends that the revised Code will come into effect from 1 September 2005. It is expected to remain in force until at least 31 March 2007.

### **First findings from current NEG providers**

**'From April 2006, the minimum free entitlement of 12.5 hours a week will be extended from 33 to 38 weeks for all three and four year-olds. This is for all children whether in mainstream or PVI sectors'.**

- 1.4 Independent schools will not be able to offer 38 weeks a year. This will affect all 17 independent schools currently registered with East Sussex.
- 1.5 Of our sessional providers in the Private and Voluntary sector, 29 may not be able to offer 38 weeks a year.
- 1.6 This has no impact on maintained sector provision (nursery and reception classes).
- 1.7 At this time, there are 46 groups (out of a total of 273 settings providing 8770 NEG places, which includes 9 childminders who provide 37 places) identified as not being able to meet a 38 week term. If this is a minimum requirement this could result in a loss of approximately 1365 places. This would seriously affect our ability to deliver NEG to all 3 and 4 year-olds.
- 1.8 Statistically during the summer terms we require (in the private and voluntary sector) approximately 6,100 NEG places for 3 and 4 year-olds. This is when there is the highest take-up by 4 year-olds; 3 year-olds currently average at requiring 3,600 funded places. There is a subtlety to this data as a full day care provision can provide a place for more than one child as a place is a part-time place. However there is a countywide average of full day care provision running at 95% take-up of available places and sessional pre-schools at 90% take-up of available places (provisional audit data April 2005). This demonstrates that there is not a great deal of capacity within some areas.

**'From April 2007, the minimum free entitlement will be extended to 15 hours a week for 38 weeks, for the first cohort of children. And parents will be able to use the free entitlement flexibly across a minimum of three days. '**

- 1.9 17 maintained nurseries do not provide 3 hour sessions.
- 1.10 47 settings within the Private and Voluntary sector only offer 2.5 hours per session.

- 1.11 The extended entitlement to 3 hours for the first cohort of children is from April 2007. It is more likely to be 2008/09 if implemented for all eligible 3 and 4 year-olds nationally.
- 1.12 At this time, there are 64 settings (both maintained and PVI sector) identified as not being able to meet the 15 hours a week for 38 weeks. The extension of the entitlement to 3 hours will have the biggest impact. Whilst many of the 47 settings highlighted may be able to extend their session times to 3 hours, they will not be able to offer the full 15 hour entitlement over a minimum of 3 days.

**‘From 2008, a new reformed regulation and inspection system underpinned by a new legal framework for early years and childcare will be in place, supported by an integrated quality framework’**

- 1.13 East Sussex has made a distinction between education provision and childcare provision. The County Council provides limited nursery education (only 17 nursery classes – no nursery schools) and runs one full-day care provision through the EYDC team and one full-day care provision through Sure Start. This will change as a consequence of the expansion of Children’s Centres.

It is expected that the DfES will start to negotiate with Capita (National Primary Strategy) on the quality framework from birth to the end of Reception which will include day care standards and assessment for learning – this will coincide with new OfSTED regulation and inspection arrangements; revised content to the curriculum; workforce development expectations; revised ratios of adults to children, and so on.

**Additional points to consider**

- 1.14 At present within East Sussex we ask our providers to have an hour break between 2 sessions: the suggestion from April 2007 is to allow parents to claim 5 hours a day over 3 days to use their full entitlement. If we still expect a break in the session providers will need to operate a 6 hour day. This is expected to be made clear in the draft Code of Practice.
- 1.15 There may be sustainability issues also for private and voluntary sessional providers who will only be able, if at all, to provide the minimum requirement of 15 hours a week.
- 1.16 There may be a financial implication to providers delivering 5 hours flexibly across 3 days, as at present no top up charge can be made for a funded session (ie providers charge £3.80 per extra hour, NEG gives £3.10 per hour, therefore providers could be out of pocket by £0.70 per hour for the proposed additional NEG funded hours).
- 1.17 East Sussex still relies on a high number of sessional groups and independent schools to deliver Foundation Stage education. The full impact will not be known until the new CoP is published, but if the extended hours/weeks are a minimum requirement, this will result in a number of closures (ie rural sessional groups that

rely on NEG for sustainability) which in turn could result in children not being able to access NEG at all unless other provision is developed.

## **Further actions**

- 1.18 The EYDC team will consult with each individual private and voluntary and independent provider identified so far to be clear on barriers to moving to 38 weeks and then to 15/20 hours. In addition all providers will be asked for confirmed information on weeks available and hours opened to ensure accurate data is held.
- 1.19 The EYDC team will calculate the predicted increase in places for 0-5 year-olds. The Childcare Places Plan will be redrafted to reflect the need to maintain stock where we are expecting to lose NEG places, which will include analysis of local geographic impact, current level of demand and capacity within the neighbourhood to absorb additional children into existing settings. Whilst there will clearly be some predictions of negative impact we may find that there can be a positive impact on sustainability especially in areas of over capacity.
- 1.20 All new applicants for `start-up' funding will need to meet the full revised offer (there is already no `start-up' funding for 2.5 hours per day only).
- 1.21 The revised `flexibility' of the general Sure Start grant may provide opportunities to provide revenue funding to `bridge' expansion of weeks and hours. Further calculations of the possible costs will be undertaken.