

Free nursery places in Camden

The Government is introducing two new policies this year which will affect free nursery places in Camden.

The first is a new offer of 30 hours' free early education for working parents who meet certain criteria and the second is a new way of allocating how Councils spend the money they get from the Government for early years provision overall.

Details of these changes were published in December 2016 and are due to be put into practice in April 2017. All three and four year olds will remain entitled to 15 hours of free early education (15 hours a week for 38 weeks, up to the total of 570 hours).

These new policies mean a decrease in funding for Camden and the removal of flexibilities that have enabled the Council to fund an additional 15 free hours in school and Council-run nurseries. If we were to continue with our current 'enhanced offer' of 30 free hours, at the same time as implementing the new national policies, it would leave a funding gap of more than £5 million which we can no longer afford to fill.

This means the Camden 'enhanced offer' for all three and four year olds in school and Council-run nurseries will need to change. The time to develop and agree a revised offer for Camden families has been very tight - but a public consultation about a revised offer targeted at the children of non-working parents who have met the criteria for the national offer of funded early year places for 2 year olds is now open. There are 2 consultations, one with more technical questions for providers and one about the Camden's proposed new early years offer for parents. You can find these consultations on the Council website at:

www.camden.gov.uk/earlyyearsfunding

The final decision about Camden's revised early education offer will be made by the Council's Cabinet in April. This means that schools will only be able to make a provisional offer of 15 hours to all children and will determine eligibility for both the Government entitlement for the children of working parents and any additional offer that Camden may decide to fund in the future.

We are aware that the uncertainty about the number of hours for which your child will be funded makes it difficult for you to plan your childcare arrangements and we assure you that we will do everything we can to minimise the difficulty caused by the extremely tight timeframe allowed for us to respond to changes in national policy.