



CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Admissions Guidance for Free Early Years Places

September 2009

Early Years and Children's Centres Service
Learning, Culture and Children's Services
City of York Council

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Introduction

We believe that effective early years provision is one of the key ways to unlocking the potential of every young person in the City of York. National research shows that children who experience high quality early years provision are well placed to achieve better outcomes in school and beyond, and develop better social, emotional and cognitive abilities necessary for life-long learning.

In York we are very proud of our diverse range of early years provision on offer from all sectors - Private, Voluntary, Independent and Maintained. All our providers - private day nurseries, pre-school playgroups, childminders, independent nursery schools, nursery class attached to a maintained school or our nursery school - work to the same Early Years Foundation Stage¹ when delivering the free early years entitlement. This means that a parent can be safe in the knowledge that their child is receiving high quality provision inline with national government guidance, in whichever setting they feel best meets their child's needs.

Why review the existing admission arrangements for Free Early Years Places?

York's current Early Years Places/Nursery admission arrangements have applied since 2003. Prior to that, the authority conducted an extensive consultation exercise with all stakeholders, and Members agreed a set of guidelines on Free Early Years Place admissions for schools and other early years providers.

The guidelines are based on equal opportunity principles, so that children are admitted according to fair, open and clear criteria. As nursery provision is non-statutory, these guidelines are accepted as good practice and Headteachers and providers are *advised* to follow them so that they have a way of making allocations fairly for all children who may apply for places.

Our current Early Years Places admission guidance now requires updating in light of national strategies and policy developments to ensure arrangements which are fair, clear to understand and result in choice and accessibility for families with young children.

Through this consultation, we aim to set out clear expectations with our partners in the Private, Voluntary, Independent and Maintained sector in how they manage new admissions to Free Early Years Places in a way that ensures sufficiency whilst also meeting parents needs as effectively and efficiently as possible.

¹ Early Years Foundation Stage – Ensures a consistent approach to care and learning from birth to the end of the Foundation Stage. It has a play-based approach and focuses on stages of development rather than chronological, age based teaching and learning. The overarching aim of the EYFS is to help children achieve the Every Child Matters five outcomes: Staying safe, Being healthy, Enjoying and achieving, Making a positive contribution and achieving economic wellbeing

An interim consultation has recently been undertaken with providers and parents on issues relating to Free Early Years Places and Primary Admissions and responses received have been used to help draft this full consultation document.

Due to the national focus on curriculum and research concerning Early Years/Primary admission arrangements, we are proposing a phased consultation process pending future possible national changes regarding Primary admissions arrangements, with this consultation focusing on admission guidance for Free Early Years Places.

Current nursery admissions arrangements

The following current admissions criteria apply to Free Early Years Places for three and four year olds.

There are Free Early Years Places for all three and four year olds whose parents want one. Children may take up a free place:

- At a nursery class attached to a local school or at St Paul's Nursery School
- At their local pre-school playgroup
- At a private day nursery or independent nursery school
- With a childminder who is part of a registered network

All of the above are called 'providers'.

The Early Years and Extended Schools Partnership and CYC agreed the following guidelines on admissions criteria for three and four year olds taking up a Free Early Years Place in the city.

- Normally children will be admitted in age order, so that the oldest children are admitted first:
- BUT children with identified special needs, or in social need, may be offered a free early years place before an older child who doesn't have these needs.
- Three year olds should be admitted in line with eligibility dates established by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.
 - Children who have their 3rd birthday between 1st September and 31st December should be admitted from the beginning of the Spring Term
 - Children who have their 3rd birthday between 1st January and 31st March should be admitted from the beginning of the Summer Term.
 - Children who have their 3rd birthday between 1st April and 31st August should be admitted from the beginning of the Autumn Term.
- Children should be admitted from anywhere within the City of York Council area. This allows parents to use early years provision that is most convenient for the family, near their work or close to their childcare provider.
- As part of the Pathfinder project for the new flexible increase in entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds, parents can access up to 15 hours of free early years provision over a minimum of 3 days over 38 weeks of the year. Providers are supported to offer the increase in entitlement in a flexible manner, which accommodates parental needs. If a provider is unable to meet a parents needs themselves, we would expect them to liaise with their Shared Foundation Community Partners to try and meet these needs. Some children with special educational needs may require a different pattern of attendance.

- Children living within the City of York boundary, or within the normal area for City of York schools, have a higher priority for a place than children living outside the City boundary.
- Children living outside the City of York boundary who have attended a York pre-school provider for three terms before their third birthday will also be given prior consideration for a free early years place.
- Children with additional needs or vulnerable children qualify for additional hours (maximum of 15) if they are not already accessing the full entitlement.

Please Note – the eligibility dates for access to the free early years funding are provided by the DCSF and must be adhered to by all Local Authorities across the country.

The guidelines are based on equal opportunity principles, so that children will be admitted according to fair, open and clear criteria. People who provide free early years places do not have to follow these guidelines, but they should have a way of admitting children that is fair for all children who apply for places. Parents can ask to see admissions policies, which set down how providers make their decisions.

City of York Council only funds free early years places within the City. This policy is aimed at supporting York providers so that a range and choice of provision in the City is sustained.

Issues

There are a number of ways in which we think the above guidelines now need to be updated:

Vulnerability

We believe the guidelines should make reference, and give priority, to children who are 'vulnerable'. All the evidence suggests that those who start life at a disadvantage can benefit enormously from a high quality early years experience; the converse is also true. Supporting vulnerable children in this way underpins the 2020 DCSF target 'Eradication of Poverty' and also CYC's new Children and Young People's Plan. We propose to adopt the following definition of "vulnerability" as follows:

Children, young people and their families whose circumstances suggest that they may be at a disadvantage relative to their peers. Some vulnerable children are "children in need", within the meaning of the Children Act 1989, and this group includes children with a statutory entitlement to additional help or support such as children with disabilities, Looked After Children and children in need of protection.

We therefore propose to update the guidance to include vulnerable children under the reference to 'social need', adopting the definition of vulnerability as detailed above. This will help to ensure that 'vulnerable' children are considered as a priority alongside those identified with special needs.

Additional Priority Criteria

The other key issue which we would like to consult on is the reference to the fact that children should be admitted from *anywhere* within the City of York council area. This was initially introduced to promote equality of access and to allow working parents to secure a free early years place close to their workplace. However, the policy has in some cases meant that local children are unable to access local schools, including schools already attended by their siblings.

We therefore need to consult on whether we should amend the guidance to include additional priority criteria such as:

- 'Catchment' area i.e. give priority to children living closest to the provision as is the case for primary admissions and if so, should this apply only to admission into school nursery classes or should it apply to all Free Early Years Places across all sectors
- Having siblings already attending the school/nursery.

Open Meetings

We will be holding two open meetings during the consultation period to find out your views and provide an opportunity for you to have any questions or queries answered.

Dates/ venues to be confirmed

What happens next?

The consultation will run from Monday 14th September 2009 to Monday 16th November 2009.

All responses to the consultation process will be carefully analysed and used to inform the priority criteria. Any changes made will be included in the Guide for Parents – Nursery, Primary and Secondary Admission 2010/2011, to take effect from the following academic year 2011/2012.

Consultation Questions

1) Are you

A parent

A provider

a) If a parent, are you

Working
Full time

Working
Part time

Training/
Studying

Full time
parent/carer

2) We propose to use the following definition of “vulnerability” within the revised guidance, to ensure that ‘vulnerable’ children are considered as a priority alongside those identified with special needs:

“Children, young people and their families whose circumstances suggest that they may be at a disadvantage relative to their peers. This may, for example, include those from ethnic minority or Traveller communities; those with complex needs; those who experience or witness domestic abuse; and those growing up in poverty, such as those receiving free school meals or living in areas of relative disadvantage or with parents who are seeking work. Some vulnerable children are “children in need”, within the meaning of the Children Act 1989, and this group includes children with a statutory entitlement to additional help or support such as children with disabilities, Looked After Children and children in need of protection”.

Are there any other groups/ circumstances which you feel should be specifically identified within the above definition? If so, please specify below:

- 3) Children will be admitted in age order (with the oldest children admitted first) UNLESS a child has Special Educational Needs or is identified as 'vulnerable', in which case they will be considered as a priority.

Please indicate whether you feel the following criteria should also be included in the guidance, and if so, in which order:

1 = highest priority, 3 = lowest priority, X = criteria should not be included

Children living within the school catchment area.

Children living within the school catchment area who have siblings already attending the school/nursery.

Children who do not live within the school catchment area but have siblings already attending the provision.

Comments

- 4) If priority is given to children living within a 'catchment area' i.e. within close proximity to provision, should this be applicable to admission into school nursery classes only or should it apply to all Free Early Years Places across all sectors (i.e. pre schools playgroups, childminders, private day nurseries)?

School Nursery Classes only

All Free Early Years Places

5) Please use the following space to make any further comments.

Comments

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below:

Please acknowledge this reply.

Name : _____

Address: _____

_____ Post Code: _____

Completed responses should be returned in the attached envelope or sent to Freepost address below, by **Monday 16th November 2009**:

**Policy and Planning Team, Learning, Culture and Children's Services
FREEPOST NEA204, PO Box 404, York, YO1 6ZZ**

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

 **(01904) 551550**

More information

If you have any queries about the consultation, please call Nicola Sawyer on 01904 554220 or Rosemary Flanagan on 01904 554376

About You

This information is only collected to help plan services and will not be used to identify you.

Q1. Are you (please tick)

Male

Female

Q2. How many children do you have in these age ranges?

Under one
1 Year old
2 Years

3 to 4 Years
5 to 8 Years
9 to 10 Years

11-12 Years
13-14 Years
15 or Over

Q3. Are you (please tick)

Working full-time
Working shifts
Looking for work
Other

Working part-time
Studying or training
Full time parent/carer

Q6. Do you have a disability or additional needs?

Yes

No

Q7. Do any of your children have a disability or additional needs?

Yes

No

Q8. Please tell us your ethnic background (please tick)

Chinese

Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi

Black African
Black Caribbean
Black Other
Other

White British
White Irish
White Other

Q9. What is your home postcode? (this information will not be used to identify you)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

Please return it to the address on the covering sheet by Monday 14th November 2009