

FAQ – Maximising take up of the 15-hour entitlements for families receiving additional forms of support (FRAS)

Renaming of the entitlement

Q: Why have you chosen a more generic name for the entitlement? Won't this mean working parents get confused about what they are eligible for?

A: Whilst we appreciate that the new name is more generic than the previous names, feedback and research shows that names that include reference to the eligibility criteria are often seen as stigmatising or confusing for some eligible parents who don't identify with the description used.

Ensuring that all children get the best start in life is a key priority for the Secretary of State and for the Department. Destigmatising the name will help LAs drive take up and support you in your efforts to increase GLDs in your area. Using language more rooted in learning and education aligns with the Department's ambition to support disadvantaged children's school readiness.

We want the name of the entitlement to draw parents in, but don't expect it to be used in isolation. Descriptions of the entitlement should include the number of hours available and set out the eligibility criteria so that parents can understand whether they may be eligible for the offer.

Q: Why doesn't the name tell parents how many hours they can get?

A: We want the name of the entitlement to draw parents in and for it to be simple and non-stigmatising. We know that a reference to a specific number of hours can be confusing for parents, particularly where the hours may be stretched over more than 38 weeks.

Parents eligible for this entitlement remain eligible for 570 hours funded early learning a year, taken as no more than 15 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year. We would expect that where the name is used, whether in written or spoken communication, for information about the entitlement is provided, including the number of hours available and how these can be used.

Q: We have used our current name for the entitlement for many years. Why are you asking local authorities to use this new name?

A: Feedback gathered for parents and parent-representative organisations tells us that they find it difficult to navigate the different sources of information on entitlements, particularly where different names are used to describe the same offer. This is a particular challenge for parents who may live or work on the border between different local authority areas. By using one name across central and local government, we hope to reduce this confusion and make it easier for parents to understand what offers are available.

Q: What support is available for local authorities to design new communications?

A: We're committing to support local authorities to ensure all children get the best start to life and have a range of [campaign resources](#) designed to engage parents.

Improving data

Q: How will minimum expectations work / how will you calculate minimum expectations for each local authority?

A: Minimum expectations are calculated based on the average take up rate of local authorities who have statistically similar population demographics, as of Autumn 2025. To identify these local authorities, we use the [Local Authority Interactive Tool](#). Your stretching goal is a mid-point between this figure and the maximum take up rate of local authorities with statistically similar populations to yours.

Whilst the minimum expectations are not intended to function as a formal target, we do expect local authorities to work towards meeting their minimum expectation and would encourage you to move towards the stretching goal where possible to ensure that as many disadvantaged families are accessing vital early learning as possible.

Q: When will you tell us what our minimum expectation is?

A: We will communicate the minimum expectation and stretching goal for your local authority alongside a scorecard for the Autumn 2025 term in the coming weeks.

Q: Part of the rationale for introducing minimum expectations was in response to feedback on improving transparency about how DfE assesses local authorities' performance internally, how will you be using these minimum expectations?

A: Driving take up is a key part of the Department's drive to ensure every child gets the best start in life and to support LAs to meet their GLD targets. The department intends to work closely with local authorities to monitor the implementation of Best Start local plans, share effective practice and ensure local authorities are appropriately supported to drive improvements to outcomes for children and families by 2028 and meet your ambitious GLD target. We will test our plan for doing this with local authority representatives in due course. Any assessment made on LAs delivery of the 2YO disadvantage entitlement will be integrated as part of this wider approach.

We collect data on take up of FRAS on a termly basis and routinely analyse this to understand patterns of take up and identify local areas that may be facing particular challenges and where an offer of support may be beneficial. Where local authorities are not meeting their minimum expectation, we may reach out to you for a conversation about your local barriers and to understand what support may be helpful to address this. Where local authorities are exceeding their stretching goal,

we may reach out to you to understand how you work with disadvantaged families so that we can facilitate sharing this information with other authorities.

Q: Parents eligible for both FRAS and the working parent entitlement are choosing the working parent entitlement. This affects our take up rate for FRAS, how are you accounting for this?

A: Section A1.11 of the Statutory Guidance is clear that local authorities are aware that a child meets the eligibility criteria for both Early Learning for 2-year-olds and the working parent entitlement, they must fund the first 15 hours under Early Learning for 2-year-olds. Parents who meet both sets of eligibility criteria are not eligible to receive the full 30 hours of funding under the working parent entitlement.

We appreciate that local authorities find this challenging to deliver and we are continuing to explore ways to streamline this process. We have introduced new data into the DWP List (lists of families potentially eligible for 'Early Learning for 2-year-olds') that identifies families who are likely to meet the criteria for both entitlements and have provided best practice guidance that confirms that parents are not required to complete an application for FRAS and therefore we would encourage local authorities to use the data available to them in the Parental Declaration Form or linked to a Working Parent Eligibility Code, to check eligibility for the Early Learning for 2-year-olds entitlement. We are aware that some third-party system providers are providing functionality that supports this, we would encourage local authorities to speak to their individual providers about the functionality they need and what support is available.

Q: You are setting minimum expectations for take up. How will you support local authorities to meet these?

A: We want to work with local authorities to understand what support is most useful to help you maximise take up of entitlements by disadvantaged families.

Driving take up is a key part of the Department's drive to ensure every child gets the best start in life and to support LAs to meet their GLD targets. Local authorities should set out what actions they are taking to maximising take up in their local BSiL plans and use metrics to measure progress towards these.

The department intends to work closely with local authorities to monitor the implementation of Best Start local plans, share effective practice and ensure local authorities are appropriately supported to drive improvements to outcomes for children and families by 2028 and meet your ambitious GLD target. We will test our plan for doing this with local authority representatives in due course. Any assessment made on LAs delivery of the 2YO disadvantage entitlement will be integrated as part of this wider approach. Any assessments, including support, will be integrated with work to support you to meet your BSiL targets.

We are also keen to improve the join up between Best Start Family Hubs and early

years education and care. We are in the process of revising the guidance for family hubs to make it clearer that engaging parents and supporting them to access their funded entitlements is a key expectation for all hubs. We would be grateful for any insights or views you have on how we could go further to support good relationships between services and simplifying the process for vulnerable families.

We're also exploring options to improve the use of data to identify, engage and support disadvantaged families into early years provision – this includes looking at what data is available and how it can be used. We're keen to hear from local authorities who feel they have strong processes for using data to maximise take up so we can learn from what works and share this knowledge wider.

Q: You use the DWP lists as a proxy for the eligible population, what are you doing to ensure that these are as accurate as possible?

A: The DWP lists are a snapshot of eligibility on a given day based on the latest earnings information for each households, and this is why we provide regular updated lists throughout the year. DWP cross-reference universal credit data with data held by the Child Benefit Service to ensure the lists are as accurate as possible, however this cannot capture changes to information that have not been reported by the parent. When calculating take up, we use the last list issued covering that term to ensure that we are working with the most accurate data (e.g. for the Autumn 2025 term, we will use the DWP list issued in August 2025).

We are aware of concerns that households without children of the relevant age have appeared on the lists and are working closely with DWP to investigate this.

Q: How are you planning to issue scorecards to local authorities?

A: It is not our intention to publish the termly scorecards. These will be issued to local authorities via email following the same process we used previously.

You will be aware that local take up rates will be published in the Local Outcomes Framework as a key metric for the Best Start in Life priority outcome.

Q: Will the minimum expectations stay static, or will these be revised each time you get new data?

A: We will keep the minimum expectations under review to ensure we can respond to changing circumstances. However, it is not our intention that these will be revised following each new data collection.

Q: Where will you get the data from to produce the scorecards? Is this going to be another data collection for local authorities to complete?

A: We will make use of existing data collections. We will use the data from the Autumn 2025 EY headcount and schools census to calculate minimum expectations and produce the first scorecards. Going forwards, we will use the data submitted to

the termly EY and schools census’.

Q: The income threshold for FRAS has stayed static since 2018, despite the national minimum wage increasing each year. This means eligibility is declining. What are you doing about this? / A growing number of 2-year-olds aren’t eligible for any early education, what are you doing about this?

A: We know that the number of children eligible for Early Learning for 2-year-olds is declining due to lower birth rates, the static income threshold and a rising national minimum wage. We recognise that this year has seen larger than usual drops as parents increase their working hours and their incomes in response to the expanded working parent entitlement. Any changes to the income threshold or eligibility criteria for the entitlement would need to be agreed at a future fiscal event.

As announced in the Autumn Budget 2025, and included in the Child Poverty Strategy, the Department for Education (DfE) will lead a review of childcare provision. This review aims to simplify the system for providers and families, improving access and strengthening the impact of government support.