

# Free nursery place scheme grows [GB]<sup>[1]</sup>

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AVAILABILITY  
See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Extra funding has been announced to give three and four-year-olds in England more free nursery education.

Children's Minister Beverley Hughes has pledged £340m to extend the entitlement from 12.5 to 15 hours a week.

The expansion will be rolled out across the country over three years, with poor families being targeted first. The 15 hours is available in 20 areas already.

The government believes early learning is crucial in fighting deprivation and breaking cycles of under-achievement.

Beverley Hughes said: "Free nursery education is essential to supporting high quality early learning and care for children and to meet the needs of today's parents for flexible childcare.

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The government says the number of childcare places has doubled since 1997 to 1.3 million.

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A report for the Day Care Trust last month said some nurseries said they had to charge top-up fees because government funding was not enough to cover the cost of provision.

Tricia Pritchard, from the Professional Association of Nursery Nurses welcomed the announcement, but said: "We hope that this funding will be sufficient to meet the costs of providing free entitlement, as this has been a problem for some providers.

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- reprinted from the BBC News

**Region:** Europe<sup>[2]</sup>

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