

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION  
BY DEPUTY H.L. JEUNE OF ST. JOHN, ST. LAWRENCE AND TRINITY  
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024**

**Question**

“Will the Minister provide details of the funding allocated for Early Years in the Government Plan 2024 – 2027, including any funding available to support parents to return to work; and will he advise what plans, if any, he has to enhance this support?”

**Answer**

The funding allocated to the provision for Early Years is shown within the Education service under the Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES) net revenue head of expenditure in the Government Plan 2024 to 2027. There was no new growth funding approved in Government Plan 2024 to 2027 specifically for Early Years.

The base budget across all Early Years settings is **£8,934,000** in each of the years 2024 to 2027. The table below shows how this is spread across the following broad headings:

	<b>2024 recurring £</b>
Nursery Education Fund	3,421,000
Childhood & Early Years Team & Central budgets	1,951,000
Nursery classes in 21 primary schools - funding formula	3,045,000
Nursery Inclusion – additional funding to support inclusion needs	517,000
<b>Total Early Years budget in each year of GP2024 to 2027</b>	<b>8,934,000</b>

**The Nursery Education Fund (NEF) - £3,421,000** is a universal offer of 30 free hours per week with private and third sector providers for 3 and 4 year olds.

The offer increased from 20 to 30 hours in 2021, extending support for all families, including working families, and affording 10 additional hours of early learning opportunities for all children.

CYPES increased the funding to nursery providers by upping the hourly rate in 2023 from £6.89 per hour to £7.44 per hour. This rate increase was also paid one term early to reflect cost of living pressures felt by nurseries. The department also directly provided further one-off ‘cost of living’ support grants of £85,000 to nurseries to help them to maintain the high-quality offer in the context of higher costs. This enabled them to maintain healthy food and snacks and to renew resources and equipment.

CYPES has increased the NEF budget in line with demand and fee increases since 2020 to cover the impact of these decisions. In 2020, the NEF budget was £1,593,000, rising to £3,050,000 in 2022 to cover the full year impact of the increase in hours from 20 to 30, and increases in the value of the hourly rate, to a recurring level of £3,421,000.

**Childhood and Early Years Team - £1,951,000** – this is the base budget including additional funding which was secured in Government plan 2023 for the following purposes:

- **£535,000** allowed the further extension of a targeted childcare offer for children aged 2-3 years with the greatest need, of up to 12 hours of nursery experience. It also provided additional and targeted funding for schools and services that offer programmes and activities for children and families prior to NEF funding.
- **£262,000** was secured to expand the early years inclusion team to increase their capacity to meet the growing needs and work directly with children and families of children with special educational needs.
- **£170,000** was secured to implement the Early Years Policy Development Board recommendation of an integrated developmental review for children aged 3 to support early identification, intervention and collaborative working with health, education, and parents/carers.

**Nursery classes in schools - £3,050,000** – 21 primary schools have dedicated nursery classes with qualified early years teachers providing high quality nursery education during school hours. The budget is calculated as part of the Schools Funding Formula and forms part of the school's allocation.

**Nursery Inclusion - £517,000**– this element of the funding formula recognises the enhanced level of inclusion support required in schools for nursery children.

**Future plans to enhance support for working parents.**

- Proposals are being developed under the draft Common Strategic Policy to extend nursery and childcare provisions. This includes additional hours of funded childcare for 2–3-year-olds in greatest need.
- Any expansion programme needs to be acutely aware of the current workforce and capacity challenges and will require careful phasing to ensure successful implementation and a sustainable provision.