

Solihull early years guidance – part-time/reduced timetables

Definition

A part-time/reduced timetable refers to a temporary arrangement where a setting decreases the number or length of sessions a child attends. Most early years settings refer to this as a 'reduced timetable', and for consistency, this term will be used throughout this document and the associated flowchart.

Purpose

This guidance supports early years settings in Solihull who are considering, in very exceptional circumstances, the use of a reduced timetable for a specific child.

Key points

- Every child has a legal right to a suitable education. This includes access to all of their free early education and childcare hours. If a childcare setting offers families the option to extend their funded hours (e.g. from 15 to 30 hours), this opportunity must be made available to all children, including those with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities. Denying access based on a child's SEN or disability is discrimination and is illegal under the Equality Act 2010. The law requires settings to treat all children fairly, make reasonable adjustments, and ensure equal access to services, including extended childcare hours.
- Reduced timetables should only be used for a short time (up to half a term) and must include a clear plan for returning to full-time.
- Settings should try all other support options and strategies before they consider using reduced hours.
- Decisions must be made based on what is best for the child, not to manage behaviour or because of staffing problems.
- A reduced timetable should only be used as a last resort. The setting must have tried all other options, including following the graduated approach and using available funding to support the child in accessing their full entitlement to education.

When might it be appropriate?

Settings should only use a reduced timetable in very rare cases. Every child has a legal right to a suitable education, including all of their free early education and

childcare hours. A reduced timetable may be used for a short time if it's truly in the child's best interests, for example:

- A child may have short-term or long-term medical conditions that affect their attendance or needs.
- A child may need support to settle back in after being away for a long time or refusing to attend.
- If a child is moving setting, they might not be able to attend full-time straight away and will need help during the transition.

Process overview

- The setting must contact any professional currently working with the child (such as the Area SENCo) if they are thinking about using a reduced timetable.
- The setting and the parent with whom the child normally lives must both agree to the reduced timetable.
- A Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting must happen before reduced hours begin. Parents and wider professionals should be involved.
- Written consent must be obtained from the parents to place the child on a reduced timetable.
- A reintegration plan must be agreed with parents and any professionals supporting the child. It should include clear goals, review dates, and strategies to support the child's return to full-time attendance.
- A reduced timetable is a short-term solution and should have a clear end date based on the child's needs.
- The timetable must be reviewed regularly, with informal check-ins every two weeks and a formal review after a maximum of 6 weeks. These reviews (informal and formal) should include the child's parents to make sure the timetable is only in place for as long as needed.
- The child is expected to return to full-time attendance after the review, unless there are exceptional circumstances which would justify extending the plan, i.e. a long-term health condition may need a reduced timetable for a longer period.

Please see the reduced timetable flowchart for further information on processes.

Safeguarding

Any reduced timetable must follow safeguarding rules and support the child's wellbeing. The setting is responsible for keeping all children safe, even when they are not on-site during normal hours. Even if parents agree to the arrangement, the setting must still make sure the child is safe while they are away. A child who is not attending full-time may be more vulnerable, so everyone involved must clearly understand and manage this risk. Settings must carry out a risk assessment to understand how a reduced timetable might affect the child. It's important to think carefully about the child's safety and wellbeing while they are not in the setting.

Special considerations

- Children with SEND must not be placed on a reduced timetable just because of their needs. It is illegal for settings to discriminate against children on the basis of their special educational needs and/or disability
- A reduced timetable should only be used for a child with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in very limited circumstances, **and with the agreement of the local authority**. Settings have a legal duty to make sure the support in a child's EHC plan is provided in full, even if the child is on a reduced timetable. To help with this, settings should speak with the child's EHC Officer. If the child's needs have changed, it may be necessary to arrange an interim review to check whether the current support still meets their needs.
- Looked After Children must have agreement from both their social worker and the Virtual School Head (if involved). Both should be invited to the initial Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting to help plan and support any reduced timetable arrangement.
- Children on Child Protection Plans should only be placed on a reduced timetable in the most exceptional cases, and only with agreement following a Core Group meeting.
- If a child's reduced timetable lasts longer than half a term, the setting must contact the Family Information Service (FIS) to let them know about the change in hours. This is so the funding paid to the setting, i.e. Early Education Funding (EEF) and Early Years Inclusion Funding (EYIF), can be updated to match the child's current attendance.

Summary

- Reduced timetables should only be used as a last resort, when all other strategies have been tried and exhausted.
- They must be time-limited, regularly reviewed, and carefully monitored.
- The goal should always be to help the child return to full-time attendance.

- Settings must be able to explain their decisions and show evidence of the support they have provided.

Further information and guidance

- [Early years: guide to the 0 to 25 SEND code of practice](#)
- [Disabled Children and the Equality Act 2010: What Early Years providers need to know and do](#)
- [Solihull SENDIAS](#)