



2020 Funded terms

Frequently Asked Question on 30 hours funded childcare for working parents

Below is a list of our most frequently asked questions about the 30 hours extended free childcare entitlement.

Overview

Free entitlement to childcare is provided by the government for all 3 and 4 year olds. It allows access to free, good quality, flexible early education and childcare through a pre-school, nursery or childminder that is registered to offer free places.

- Universal free entitlement - For all 3 and 4 year olds. Children can use up to 570 hours each year, or a maximum of 15 hours over 38 weeks.
- Extended free entitlement (also known as 30 hours free childcare) - For eligible working parents of 3 and 4 year olds. Children can use an additional 570 hours each year, or a maximum of 30 hours per week over 38 weeks (1140 hours in total). If the funding is spread over a longer period, the amount of hours taken per week would be reduced. Parents must apply online to the government to confirm their eligibility.

Who will be eligible to receive the extended entitlement

The extra funded hours will be made available to families where both parents (or the sole parent in a lone parent family):

- are working and earn on average a weekly minimum amount equivalent to working 16 hours at either National Minimum Wage (NMW) or National Living Wage (NLW)
- have an income of less than £100,000 each per year
- live in England (parents who are non-EEA nationals must have recourse to public funds to qualify)

You may still be eligible to apply if you or your partner:

- are taking paid time off work, such as maternity leave, paternity leave or sick leave
- are temporarily away from England for a period of up to 6 months, such as on military duty

You can also apply if either you or your partner are employed or self-employed and one of you gets one or more of the following benefits:

- contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance
- Carer's Allowance



- Incapacity Benefit or long-term Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- National Insurance credits because of incapacity or limited capability for work
- you've been assessed as having limited capability for work for Universal Credit purposes

How can I check if I am eligible?

You can check your eligibility for the 30 hours through the [Childcare Choices](#) website or by using the [Childcare Calculator](#). These will also show if you can get any additional government help with childcare costs.

If you meet the eligibility criteria for the additional hours you should also qualify for [Tax-Free Childcare](#), which can be used to help pay for any additional childcare costs. You can apply for this and the 30 hours at the same time through the [digital childcare service](#).

Do I need to be working 16 hours a week to qualify?

The eligibility checker has been designed to accommodate parents with fluctuating incomes, such as seasonal workers, those on zero hours and the self-employed. So you do not need to actually work 16 hours every week but your earnings over the next 3 months must be equivalent to the amount you would earn if you worked 16 hours a week at either the [National Minimum Wage \(NMW\)](#) or [National Living Wage \(NLW\)](#).

This currently equates to £139.52 a week (or £6,000 a year) for each parent over 25 years old or £131.20 a week (or £5,800 a year) for each parent between 21 and 24 years old. However, newly self-employed parents who are still in their 'start-up period' will not be required to demonstrate that they meet the income criteria for 12 months.

If I am eligible when can I apply?

If your child will be 3 or over by the 31st March you can apply now through the [Childcare Choices](#) website which will direct you to the [digital childcare service](#). If you don't already have one you will need to create a Government Gateway account at the start of your application process. The website will then guide you through setting up your own Childcare Service account.

If you're unable to apply online or have any problems with the application process you can contact the Childcare Service Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 123 4097 for support. If you disagree with the eligibility outcome you will be able to use the HMRC's review and appeals process.

Once your eligibility is confirmed you will be given an 11 digit 'eligibility code'. You can find this in the 30 hours funded childcare section of your new childcare service account or in your 'secure messages'. It will usually start with 500 but some temporary codes may begin with 11.

You will need to take your eligibility code, National Insurance number and child's date of birth to your chosen childcare provider. They will ask you to complete and sign a 30 Hours Funded Childcare Eligibility Form to give them consent to check and confirm your eligibility.



You will need to reconfirm your eligibility every three months to continue claiming the extra hours. You should receive a prompt from the HMRC to remind you to do this. If you completed your original application over the phone you will need to contact the Customer Interaction Centre to reconfirm.

You do not need to apply through the childcare service if you only want to use the universal 15 hours of Free early education and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds or want to apply for Free childcare for 2 year olds.

What happens if I no longer meet the eligibility criteria?

If your family no longer meets the criteria, The Local Authority will inform your childcare provider and you will stop being eligible to claim the extra hours. However, there will be a grace period until the start of the next funded period to give you the opportunity to regain employment. If your circumstances change during the grace period you can reapply again and continue to receive the extra hours.

You will still be able to receive the universal 15 hours of Free early education and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds even if you are no longer eligible for the extended entitlement.

If I am eligible when can my child start to receive the extended entitlement?

If your child is eligible, the earliest you can apply from is when your child is 2 years and 36 weeks old.

When your child turns 3	Can receive the funded hours from	Recommended time to apply
1 September to 31 December	January (Spring)	15 October to 30 November
1 January to 31 March	April (Summer)	15 January to 28 February
1 April to 31 August	September (Autumn)	15 June to 31 July

Provided they continue to meet the eligibility criteria children can receive the additional hours until they either start in a reception class at a local authority-maintained school or reach compulsory school age (which is the school term after their fifth birthday).

When can my child use the extended entitlement hours?

Childcare providers can set the times and sessions they offer the funded hours, so you will need to speak to them to see if the hours they are offering suit your needs. However, you won't be able to:

- have any time before 6am or after 8pm
- have a session longer than 10 hours
- claim more than 30 hours a week



- claim more than 1140 hours per year
- use the funding at more than two sites in one day

You may be able to stretch the funding across a full year if your childcare provider offers this but the number of hours per week would be reduced. For example, 1140 hours per annum is 30 hours per week for 38 weeks but if it was stretched over 50 weeks would be 22.8 hours per week.

Do I have to use the full 30 hours?

No, you can use anything from 16 to 30 hours you do not have to use the full 30 hours.

More information:

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/earlyyears>

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs-and-childcare/>