

30 Hours Free Childcare Entitlement FAQs for Parents



What is the 30-hours free childcare entitlement?

Currently all 3 & 4 year olds are entitled to up to 15 hours of free childcare and early education a week for up to 38 weeks a year. Children access this entitlement in school, Nursery classes, private Day Nurseries, Pre-schools and with Childminders. The Government has increased the free hours from 15 to 30 a week from September 2017 for eligible working parents.

Will I be eligible?

This will only be made available to families where both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family) and each parent earns, on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW), and less than £100,000 per year.

Therefore, to be eligible you must meet the following criteria:

- Your child was aged 3 or 4 after September 2017
- You work more than 16 hours per week
- You have an annual income of less than £100,000 (per parent or individually in a lone parent family)
- You live in England

When will my child become eligible for the funding?

Your child will become eligible for the funding at the start of the school term after their 3rd birthday.

CHILDREN BORN IN THE PERIOD	BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING AT THE START OF THE TERM BEGINNING OR FOLLOWING	SCHOOL TERM
1 January - 31 March	1 April	Summer
1 April - 31 August	1 September	Autumn
1 September - 31 December	1 January	Spring

How do I check my eligibility and get a code?

Eligibility will be checked by HMRC via the government's Childcare Choices website and will be based on actual income earned. You can check your eligibility, or apply for the 30-hours free childcare entitlement by visiting the Childcare Choices website at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk. If you are eligible, you will be given an 11-digit code which you will need to take to your childcare provider along with your national insurance number and your child's birth certificate. Your childcare provider will then use the government's eligibility checking system to check that your code is valid. You will need to reconfirm your eligibility every 3 months and HMRC will send you a reminder to do so.

You must have your 30-hours eligibility code before the start of the term your child becomes eligible, or you will not be able to access the 30-free hours until the following term.

What happens if I become ineligible for the offer, for example, because I lose my job?

If you no longer meet the eligibility criteria, your child's 30-hour place will continue to be funded for a 'grace period'. You should discuss this with your childcare provider if and when you lose eligibility.

Where can I take up my free entitlement?

The offer can be delivered by a range of approved providers which include:

- Childminders
- Nurseries
- Nursery classes in schools and academies
- Nurseries based in a Children's Centre
- Private day nurseries, playgroups and pre-schools

Will I have to pay for anything?

Your child's entitlement is free, providers cannot charge for the free entitlement or any top up fees. For example, registration fees or uniform. However, providers can offer additional services which could be subject to charges but they must make parents fully aware of any additional charges that apply prior to them taking up their free place. Providers are entitled to charge for any unfunded hours attended according to their own policy.

Can I take my child's entitlement during school holidays?

Yes, some providers will offer a 'stretched entitlement' which allows you to use less hours a week over a longer period of time. In addition, you may use two different providers each day to meet the needs of you and your child, but no more than 10 hours can be claimed in any one day.

If I have just moved to England and my child is not a British Citizen, will my child be eligible for 30 hours' entitlement?

Children moving to England from another country can access a place on the same basis as any other child in the Local Authority area, providing they meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

Special Educational Needs - is my child still eligible?

Providers have a responsibility to ensure all children have full access to the EYFS. They must offer support for children accessing their provision with a disability or identified special educational need. To ensure the needs of your child are fully met, we encourage you to discuss your child's needs or any initial concerns with your provider.

There will be additional funding available to support SEN children to have full access to the EYFS. The new Disability Access Fund is equivalent to £615 per child per year to support access to free entitlements.

3 and 4 year olds will be eligible for the DAF if they meet the following criteria:

- The child is in receipt of child disability living allowance
- The child receives free early education

Early years providers are responsible for identifying eligible children.