

'30 Hours' Childcare

The extended entitlement to free early years education/ childcare
Stakeholders briefing sheet no. 1 (July 2017)

Introduction

From 1 September 2017, the Government will be extending the free childcare entitlement, for working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds. The current free 'universal' entitlement is 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year for **all** 3 and 4 year-olds. *(This also includes 2 year olds whose families meet the eligibility criteria).*

From September this entitlement will be extended to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year (a total of 1,140 hours per year) for 3 and 4-year-olds whose **parents are working**.

A child will be eligible to have the 30 free hours from the beginning of the term **after** their 3rd birthday. Terms starts on 1 January, 1 April or 1 September.

For example, if a child turns 3 on the 23rd June, they will be eligible from the 1 September, subject to having already received a successful application for the 30 hours confirmed by the HMRC. In order for a child to qualify for the 30 free hours from 1 September 2017, they must have been born after 1 September 2013.

The phrase '30 free hours a week' is based on a childcare provider only being open for the 38 weeks during the year (term-time only). However childcare providers **will have the option** to offer the same total number of hours (1,140 per year) over more than 38 weeks.

For example, if a childcare provider is open 48 weeks of the year, then they could offer 23.75 funded hours per week all year round. Or if a provider is open 51 weeks of the year, then they could offer 22.25 funded hours per week all year round. This is known as a 'stretched offer'. However, not all childcare providers may be able to offer the stretched offer.

The extended entitlement is being introduced alongside a new scheme to help working families with the cost of childcare called [Tax-Free Childcare](#).



Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria for accessing the extended free entitlement are:

- 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/living wage and less than £100,000 per year. Working will include self-employed persons. Parents do not necessarily need to actually work 16 hours a week, but rather their earnings must reflect at least 16 hours of work at minimum wage or at the national living wage. This includes parents on zero hour's contracts who meet the criteria.
- both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on parental, maternity, paternity leave, adoption

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Eligibility Criteria (continued)

The **upper limit** that **each parent** can earn is £100,000.

For parents who work with zero hours' contract their child will be eligible for the 30 hours free childcare providing:

- they work on average two weeks out of every three and
- they earn at least the minimum amount but less than the upper threshold of £100,000 each

For parents who are self-employed their child will be eligible for 30 hours free childcare providing:

- they earn at least the minimum amount but less than the upper threshold of £100,000 each

Where a parent is in a 'start-up period' (i.e. they are newly self-employed) they do not need to demonstrate that they meet the income criteria for 12 months.

For further details regarding the eligibility for the extended offer see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility>

How to Apply

Parents apply for the free 30 hours using the Government's online childcare service:

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



Details of other schemes to help with childcare costs can be found on this site along with the [Childcare Calculator](#) to work out which scheme is best for individual circumstances.

Parents will need to firstly set up a Government Gateway account through the Childcare Choices online portal. This will enable them to open a 30 Hours account in order to apply for the free childcare and receive communications from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) including eligibility confirmation.

(NB Parents can also set up a Tax-Free Childcare account through the same portal and so need to check that the right account has been set up.)

Once a parent has completed their online

application they will be sent confirmation if they are eligible for 30 hours free childcare. Parents will receive an 11 digit Eligibility Reference Number which they need to present to their childcare provider in order to be validated. Once the number has been validated by the provider then arrangements can be made for the child's placement. Parents will be asked to re-confirm their eligibility before the code becomes invalid (every 3 months).

Important Notice

Parents who apply to the Childcare Service and do not secure confirmation of eligibility before 31 August 2017 **will not** be able to claim their child's extended 15 hour entitlement (30 hours) from 1 September 2017. Parents **must** ensure that they reconfirm their eligibility if requested by the HMRC by 31 August 2017, or they will not be able to take up the extended 15 hours until 1 January 2018.

Contact info

For more information please contact the Childcare Service Helpline **0300 123 4097**

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