

30 hours free childcare provision

Parent/Carer Frequently Asked Questions



Will I qualify for 30 hours free childcare?

Parents of three and four year olds will need to meet the following criteria in order to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare:

- They earn or expect to earn the equivalent to 16 hours at National Minimum or Living Wage over the coming three months.
- This equates to £120 a week (or c.£6,000 a year) for each parent over 25 years old or £112.80 a week (or c.£5,800 a year) for each parent between 21 and 24 years old.
- This applies whether you are in paid employment, self-employed or on zero hours contract.
- The parent (and their partner where applicable) should be seeking the free childcare to enable them to work.
- Where one or both parents are on maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave, or if they are on statutory sick leave.
- Where one parent meets the income criteria and the other is unable to work because they are disabled, have caring responsibilities or have been assessed as having limited capability to work.
- 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.
- If a non-EEA national, the parent must have recourse to public funds.

Who will not qualify?

A parent will not meet the criteria when:

- Either parent has an income of more than £100,000
- Either parent is a non-EEA national and subject to immigration control (and has no recourse to public funds)

So what is the free childcare deal?

In a nutshell, many working parents of 3 to 4-year-olds in England will be eligible for 30 hours of free childcare - rather than the current 15 hours.

But the first thing you need to know is that this is 30 hours free for only 38 weeks per year - not 52 weeks of the year. It's basically equivalent to school term times - and totals 1140 free hours across the year.

In theory, you may be able to spread the free childcare out over further weeks. This will mean you'll get fewer than 30 hours free childcare each week (totalling the 1140 hours per year).

It will be available at the following participating childcare options:

- Nurseries and nursery classes
- Playgroups and pre-school
- Childminders

Will my child get it?

Not necessarily as not everyone is eligible. However every 3 and 4 year old will still receive the 15 hours free childcare that is currently available.

Eligibility rules for 30 hours free childcare:

Your child will be aged 3 or 4 when the scheme starts in your area

Both parents must be working - or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family

Each parent earns, on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage

Each parent must have an annual income of less than £100,000

You live in England

How do you apply for the 30 hours free childcare?

You can now pre-register for the 30-hour scheme on the www.gov.uk website.

You'll need to confirm you live in England and will be asked to provide your email address and your child's date of birth.

You can also find out more on a new www.childcarechoices.gov.uk set up by HMRC. This also gives information about the new Tax-free childcare and includes a childcare calculator so you can compare your different options.

To get 30 hours free childcare, you'll need to do the following:

Once you have registered you will need to apply online.

You'll receive a code – this will allow you to arrange your childcare place ahead of September 2017

Take your code to your childcare provider along with your National Insurance number and your child's date of birth

Your childcare provider will check the code is authentic and allocate your child a free childcare place if eligible.

To be eligible, I've got to earn the equivalent of 16 hours at National Minimum Wage. How much is that?

It depends on your age. For this scheme, the minimum amount will always reflect the lowest hourly rate that a person of your age can legally be paid. Therefore, currently for a parent aged 21-24, you'd need to earn a weekly average of at least £112.80. For a parent aged 25+, you'd need to earn a weekly average of at least £120.

You are eligible for the extended entitlement because one parent/carer is in employment and a partner is in receipt of:

- Incapacity benefit
- Severe disablement allowance
- Long term incapacity benefit
- Carers' allowance
- Employment and support allowance
- National insurance credits on the grounds of incapacity for work or limited capability for work

What if one parent in a couple isn't working?

This is basically a scheme to help working parents, so families where one parent doesn't work, or both parents don't work, will usually not be eligible for these additional 15 hours.

However, if one parent isn't working because they're an official carer (e.g. receiving benefits relating to being a carer) or they are receiving disability benefits, and the other parent is working, then the Government has stated it "intends to make provision" to support these families.

There is also additional entitlement if the parent normally works but is temporarily away from the workplace, for example on statutory sick pay.

What if you are self-employed or on a zero hours contract?

You will be eligible if you (or both of you in a couple) earn at least the equivalent of 16 hours at the National Minimum Wage.

What if one parent loses their job?

- They will receive a “grace period” – this means they will be able to keep their childcare for a short period.
- Once the “grace period” has lapsed, the parent will still be entitled to the universal 15 hour entitlement.

Can providers charge for extras?

Providers are able to charge parents for meals, nappies and discretionary items such as trips and additional teaching such as learning a musical instrument.

However, these charges are voluntary and at the discretion of the parent and therefore cannot be a condition of accessing any free entitlement place.

Providers should deliver the free entitlements consistently to all children accessing any of the free entitlements, regardless of whether they opt to pay for optional hours, services, meals or consumables.

Will all early years' providers (nurseries, playgroups, childminders, and school nurseries) be offering this?

Providers have a choice as to whether they offer the 30 hours childcare. In Herefordshire, the roll out of the extended entitlement will begin on the 1st September 2017, and providers across Herefordshire will be able to start to offer the additional 15 hours for eligible parents/carers where they have the space and chose to do so.

If your current provider can not provide all the hours you want you can share the entitlement across 2 other providers.

For example:

Your nursery can only provide 5 morning sessions a week amounting to 4 hours a day (20 hours a week) for 38 weeks. This means that you will have used 760 hours of your 1140 stretch hours allowance, therefore you have 380 hours left. You can now go and find up to another two settings, be it a playgroup, childminder, or another nursery, to provide childcare for the remaining hours.

Please liaise with your provider who will be able to point you in the right direction.

I am a single parent/carer who is working and would qualify but I am living with a new partner. Do they need to meet the eligibility criteria too?

Yes, eligibility is based on household income therefore both adults in the household would need to meet the eligibility requirements in order to receive the extended entitlement.

Are adopted children automatically entitled to the extended entitlement as is the case for the free early education places for two year olds?

No, there is no automatic entitlement for adopted children unless they are eligible under the following criteria:

“Both parents/carers are employed but one or both parents/carers is temporarily away from the workplace on adoption leave”.

My child starts reception class in September and will only attend half-days for the first month. Can I claim funding for the half day childcare I will need?

Children in reception class are not eligible for the universal entitlement / extended entitlement as they are on the school register and therefore funded through school funding channels.

Can I use the funded hours to pay for a nanny?

No, both the universal and the extended entitlement have to be taken at a childcare provider who is registered to deliver the early education entitlement and nannies are not registered to do so.

Is it possible to use the universal 15 hours term time only and to access the additional hours across the whole year?

From September 2016 it will be possible to split the entitlement, using some hours term time only and other hours across the whole year regardless of whether you are accessing the extended 30 hours entitlement or just the universal 15 hours.

However, please be aware that if you are eligible for the extended entitlement you can take this up across a maximum of 3 providers whereas if you are only eligible for the universal 15 hours, this cannot be taken across more than 2 providers.

What will the flexible offer look like for a child eligible for the extended entitlement? What different models are available?

The Extended entitlement equals 380 hours per term (1140 hrs per year). This can be taken term time only or flexibly across the year:

- Up to 30 hrs per week for 38 weeks of the year
- Up to 23.75 hours per week across 48 weeks of the year
- Up to 22.25 hours per week across 51 weeks of the year

Standard / Flexible model (38 week / Term time)

Up to 30 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year.

This model is used for children who are attending a term time only provider or for those attending settings open longer than 38 weeks where the parents pay for additional hours not covered by the free entitlement (i.e. the child attends for more than their 30 hours free entitlement).

For families who pay for additional hours, most providers should be able to take the entitlement across the year (sometimes called a stretched offer) so that the parents pay an equal amount each month. This model allows parents to claim the full 570 / 1140 hours per year at all types of providers.

What if my provider is full and they cannot offer the extra hours that I need?

The majority of providers in Herefordshire should work in partnerships with other providers in their local area to deliver early education and childcare provision therefore they should be able to signpost you to other local provision which can meet your needs.