Extended Hours Free Childcare Entitlement for 3- & 4-Year Olds for Working Parents- Frequently Asked Questions

# What is the Extended Free Entitlement?

The total offer for eligible working parents comprises the following:

* 570 hours Universal early education entitlement for all 3- & 4-year olds from the beginning of the term after the child’s 3rd birthday.
* 570 hours Extended funded childcare for eligible working parents

If taken during the term time only eligible working families are entitled to 30 hours in each of the 38 weeks of the school year. Parents can choose to stretch this offer over an increased number of weeks in the year by reducing the number of free hours in the week. For instance, just under 24 hours per week for 48 weeks.

# Who is eligible for the Extended Hours Free Entitlement?

In order to be eligible for the Extended Hours Free Entitlement both parents must be working (or the sole parent must be working in a lone parent family), and each parent, on average, should earn:

* A weekly minimum equivalent to £120 (16 hours at national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW)), and
* Less than £100,000 per year.

You need to check your eligibility by logging in to the <https://www.gov.uk/apply-30-hours-free-tax-free-childcare> and obtain a code to take to your childcare provider.

# Neither of us work – are we still eligible?

No, you will not usually be eligible for the extended entitlement. However, there are exceptions for 2 parent families where extended entitlement will be available:

* Both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on parental, maternity or paternity leave
* Both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on adoption leave
* Both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on long term sick leave
* One parent is employed and one parent has substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits received for caring
* One parent is employed and one parent is disabled or incapacitated based on receipt of specific benefits

# Do childcare providers have to offer the Extended Free Entitlement?

No. It is a provider’s choice whether they deliver the Extended Hours entitlement or not. They can choose to offer some or all of the hours. Parents are free to shop around to find appropriate funded provision.

**How will providers know if a child is eligible?**

Parents must apply for an [Eligibility Code](http://www.gov.uk) which they will then give to the provider of their choice, along with their National Insurance Number and the child’s date of birth. The provider will then be able to confirm the validity of the Code and agree a start date with the parent.

**Does the provider have to offer flexible hours?**

Not every setting will need, or be able to deliver, flexibility. Where a parent needs a flexible pattern that cannot be delivered by a setting, they should contact the Family Information Service who will help to find a setting that can.

**Can my nursery charge me full fees and then reimburse me at the end of the term?**

No the funded hours are free at the point of supply, providing you meet the criteria e.g. the term after the child’s 3rd birthday. However, providers may decline to offer a funded place to new starters at the setting after the headcount date and may also charge you for any hours over and above the free funded entitlement

**Can I use the Early Education Entitlement at more than one setting?**

Yes. If a child is attending two different settings it is very important that both providers are made aware of this, as the funding may have to be split between two settings. Currently due to the coronavirus pandemic the sharing of hours across two different settings is discouraged.

**COVID-19 guidance**

Please note, there maybe changes to eligibility by the government due to the coronavirus pandemic. Please check for any changes on the <http://www.gov.uk/>