

Extension to the Free Childcare Entitlement for 3 & 4 Year Olds for Working Parents- Frequently Asked Questions

When does the Extended Free Childcare Entitlement start?

From September 2017 working parents of 3 & 4 year olds who meet the eligibility criteria will be entitled to an additional 570 hours of free childcare per year on top of the universal entitlement; therefore eligible parents will receive a total of 1,140 hours per year.

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
- 570 hours 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 up to 52 weeks of the year where this meets their childcare needs, for instance 22 hours per week for 52 weeks, or just under 24 hours per week for 48 weeks.

Who is eligible for the Extended Free Entitlement?

In order to be eligible for the Extension to the 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 Childcare Choices website (<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>) and obtain a code and take to code to your childcare provider.

We both don't work – are we still eligible?

Families where one parent does not work (or neither parent works) will not usually be eligible for the extended entitlement. However the extended entitlement will be available where:

- 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 statutory sick pay

- 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 30 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 will apply online and will be given a unique code; they must give this code to their provider, along with their national insurance number and child's date of birth, so that the provider can confirm with their local authority or a provider portal that it is a valid code. If they are eligible, they will receive a 30 hours eligibility code.

Does the provider have to offer flexible hours?

Not every setting will need to, 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?

Parents should not have to pay upfront for early education hours to be reimbursed at a later date, once a child is eligible to receive the grant, the offer of free entitlement must be available immediately.

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.