



The 30 Hour Free Childcare FAQs (The Extended Entitlement)

Q: What legislation applies to the 30 hours (extended entitlement)?

A: *The Government is introducing the 30 Hours of Free Childcare as part of the Childcare Act 2016. The aim is to help working families and allow more parents to work if they want to. Early education and childcare statutory guidance for local authorities March 2017. From 1 September 2017, free childcare will be available for up to 30 hours a week (for up to 38 weeks a year) for working parents of 3 and 4 year-olds.*

Q: Are all children aged 3 and 4 entitled to 30 Hours of Free Childcare?

A: *No, for details use the following link www.childcarechoices.gov.uk*

Q: Who is eligible for the 30Hours?

A: *To qualify for the full 30 Hours of Free Childcare, each parent (or the sole parent in a single parent family) will need to earn, on average, the equivalent of 16 hours on the national minimum wage per week and no more than £100,000 per year. A family with an annual household income of £199,999 would be eligible if each parent earns just under £100,000. Self-employed parents and parents on zero-hours contracts will be eligible if they meet the average earnings threshold. The additional funded hours will also be available where one parent is employed but the other has substantial caring responsibilities or is disabled.*

Q: If a parent works less than 16 hours a week, can they still be eligible?

A: *Yes. Eligibility is based on income earned, not hours worked, so if a parent works for less than 16 hours, but in that time, earns more than the equivalent of 16 hours per week at national living wage (or minimum wage for under-25s), they will still be eligible for the 30 hours.*

Q: What if I am a foster parent?

A: *Foster parents/carers cannot claim the 30 free hours for children they foster. The child can still access their 15 hours of funded childcare for 3 and 4-year-olds up until they start school.*

Q: What age does my child qualify?

A: *Your child will be eligible to claim the 30 Hours of Free Childcare from the beginning of the term after their 3rd birthday, assuming that you as the parent meet the eligibility criteria. Terms start in January, April or September.*

Therefore if your child turns 3 on the 6th July, they will be eligible from the September that year. In order for your child to qualify for the 30 free Hours from September 2017, they must have turned 3 years old on or before the 31/08/2017. In order for a child aged 3 or 4 years old to qualify, both parents must be working or the sole parent must be working in a lone parent family. An adopted child qualifies as long as you and your partner meet the eligibility criteria.

You can use 30 Hours of Free Childcare if you're already getting Universal Credit or tax credits, and you can still apply for 30 Hours of Free Childcare if you or your partner:

- are taking paid time off work, such as maternity leave, paternity leave or sick leave
- are temporarily away from England for a period of up to 6 months, such as if you're in the military (on duty)

You can also still apply for 30 hours free childcare if either you or your partner are employed or self-employed and one of you gets one or more of the following benefits:

- Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance
- Carer's Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit or long-term Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- National Insurance credits because of incapacity or limited capability for work
- you've been assessed as having limited capability for work for Universal Credit purposes

You're **not** eligible if:

- you're in receipt of a childcare grant
- you're a full-time student/an intern
- you're not entitled to receive public funds

All 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds will remain entitled to 15 hours of early education per week over a **minimum** of 38 weeks a year regardless of the employment status of their parent(s).

Q: Do both parents have to be in employment?

A: YES, both parents (in a dual-parent family) must be in employment unless one is on leave, has caring responsibilities or receives disability benefits. For lone-parent families, the lone parent must be in employment. Parents who are studying or in training will **not** be eligible unless this is combined with paid work which meets the minimum average earnings threshold.

Q: What if one of us is self-employed?

A: As long as you earn at least the minimum amount, but less than the upper threshold of £100,000 each, your child will be eligible for the 30 Hours Free Childcare. In the first 12 months of your business operating you are exempt from providing information about your income

Q: What happens if we are on zero hour contracts?

A: Providing you work on average two weeks out of every three and when you are working you earn the equivalent of at least 25 hours at the national living wage or national minimum wage (depending on your age), your child will be eligible for the 30 Hours of Free Childcare.

Q: How do I find a provider offering up to 30 Free Hours?

A: You can use the Milton Keynes Council [childcare search](#) or contact a provider directly

Q: Will my childcare provider have to deliver the 30 Hours?

A: No. The extended free entitlement offer is optional for providers although increasing numbers are choosing to offer this in part or in full.

Q: If my childcare provider chooses not to offer 30 Hours, will they still provide the universal 15 hour free entitlement?

A: Yes, providers are free to opt not to deliver the 30 Hours but continue to deliver the existing 15-hour offer.

Q: What do I do if my childcare provider is not able to offer the full 30 hours?

A: We would hope that all childcare providers will offer the total 30 hours to give parents their preferred choice. This might not be possible e.g. they are not open all day or the provider has chosen not to provide the 30 Hours. It might be possible to consider shared childcare with another childcare provider or childminder. How this might work requires some thinking and planning. The intention is to look at the different options to meet different childcare needs.

Q: Can I use more than one childcare provider for my 30 hours?

A: There will be no limitation on the number of providers. However, the 30 Hours will be limited to two locations in a single day to avoid the potential negative impact on children of multiple transitions between locations.

Q: What if I want to access a childcare provider but there are no places?

A: Parent choice is very important but if there is another childcare provider that is able to offer you a place then it will be for you to decide if you wish to go on a waiting list or consider the other provider.

Q: If a parent wants more than 15 but less than 30 Hours, will these hours be free?

A: Yes, if the parent is eligible for the additional hours, these will be free, even if they don't take up the full 30.

Q: Are there any additional costs I might have to pay for?

A: Government funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of free, high quality, flexible childcare. It is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional childcare hours or any additional services offered by the childcare settings. Childcare settings may therefore charge for meals and snacks as part of the free entitlement place and they may also charge for consumables such as nappies, creams and other services such as trips. However the provider cannot make these charges a condition of accessing the free place.

Q: What happens if we no longer eligible part way through the year?

A: You will receive a 'grace period' – this means you will be able to keep the Childcare place for a defined period. The grace period is set:

Date Parent receives ineligible decision on reconfirmation:	LA audit date:	Grace Period End date:
1 Jan – 10 Feb	11 February	31 March
11 Feb – 31 March	1 April	31 August
1 April – 26 May	27 May	31 August
27 May – 31 August	1 September	31 December
1 September – 21 October	22 October	31 December
22 October – 31 December	1 January	31 March

Q: What if there is a change in income or we lose our jobs?

A: If either parent starts earning less than the minimum income threshold or stops working altogether, you will be given a short '**grace period**' (this is set by the Government) to give you time to find a new job and start earning at least the minimum amount again.

Q: What if we are separated?

A: In cases where parent/carers are separated, eligibility applies to the parent with whom the child 'normally lives'.

Q: Who is responsible for determining who is eligible for the 30 Hours offer?

A: Parents will be able to apply for both the 30 Hours of Free Childcare and the tax-free childcare scheme through a joint online application being developed by HMRC, which will include an eligibility checking system.

Q: Can I register my details now?

A: You can log your details/interest www.childcarechoices.gov.uk
We are waiting for the HMRC to bring their system on-line. This is where you will register your details and will be given an eligibility code to pass to your provider (if they are offering the 30 Hours).

Q: Where can I get more information on eligible childcare and childcare tax Credits?

A: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Parents who provide false information about their eligibility can be fined between £300 and £3000.

