

Frequently Asked Questions - 30 Hours Childcare Funding

Universal and Additional Hours

1. What does 'universal 15 hours' and 'additional 15 hours' mean?

All 3 and 4 year old children are entitled to 15 hours per week of funded childcare (when taken over 38 weeks); this is referred to as the 'universal 15 hours'. Parents do not need to apply for this - the childcare provider will ask you to fill in a form and the local authority will fund these hours.

The new programme offers parents of 3 and 4 year olds up to 30 hours per week (when taken over 38 weeks) of funded childcare. This is made up of the 'universal 15 hours' and the 'additional 15 hours'. Not all parents are eligible for the additional 15 hours funding - parents must be working and earning less than £100,000 each. Other eligibility criteria apply:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/615804/30_hours_free_childcare.pdf

2. Are all 3 and 4 year old children eligible for the funding?

Only 4 year olds born after 1st April 2013 will be eligible for 30 hours funding from 1st September 2017, if their parents meet the other eligibility criteria.

4 year olds born between 1st September 2012 and 31st March 2013 must apply via a different process using this iForm <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-30-hours-free-childcare-fcc1>

Children starting school in September 2017 will not be eligible for any early education funding (15 or 30 hours) even if their school start date is later in the month.

3. A parent only wants to use 22 hours of childcare per week - is this possible?

The 30 hours childcare is based on a 38 week year (i.e. term time only). Parents do not have to use the full entitlement so can reduce to 22 hours a week, or any other number of hours, and should discuss this with their childcare provider to check places available. Parents may also be able to 'stretch' the funding over more weeks of the year. For example, use 22 hours per week over 51 weeks, and then pay for additional hours each week to fit their working hours. Again, parents need to speak to their childcare provider to check what models they offer.

Applications

1. I have been part of the 30 hour trial in Portsmouth and my child doesn't start school until next year. Will I automatically carry on getting the 30 hours funding?

No. All parents must apply online at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk before 31st August 2017 in order to access the additional 15 hour funding from September 2017. The universal 15 hours will carry on automatically.

2. If a child turns 3 in October, when would the parent be able to apply for the 30hrs funding?

Parents can apply and get a 30 hours eligibility code up to 16 weeks before their child's third birthday. This allows parents to secure a place with their childcare provider even though the funding will not begin until the term after the child turns 3. So in this case, the parent could apply in August and approach their childcare provider with an eligibility code to secure a place starting the following January. The parent will be prompted by email/text to renew their code online to ensure they continue to be eligible for the funding or the Grace Period will apply.

3. Why are some parents with 2 year olds getting an eligibility code when applying for the 30 hour funding?

Parents can get a 30 Hours code up to 16 weeks before their child's third birthday. Also see previous question and answer.

4. A parent applies for and receives their eligibility code after the 1st day of a term (e.g. 2nd Sept). Does this mean they will not be eligible for the 30hrs funding until January or is there some leniency depending on the circumstances?

If the parent does not apply for and obtain their eligibility code before the start of a term, they cannot start using their additional 15 hours until the following term. This does not affect their universal 15 hours which automatically begin the term after a child turns 3, irrespective of when the parent applies for the additional hours.

5. A parent has tried several times to apply online but the HMRC website keeps saying it can't find their details. How can they apply if it can't find their details on the system?

With any new system there are unfortunately going to be some glitches. Parents must telephone the HMRC Helpline on 0300 123 4097 for queries relating to the online application process.

6. Is there a chance to get the 30 hours from the 1st of September 2017 if a child turns 3 on 3rd September?

No. Both the universal 15 hours and additional 15 hours of funding begin the term after a child becomes 3. If a child turns 3 part-way through the term, the parent can apply, obtain their eligibility code and start claiming their additional hours the following term. The universal 15 hours will automatically start the term after the child turns 3 - parents do not need to apply for these. Parents must apply for the additional 15 hours the term before they wish to start claiming their place.

7. A parent is self-employed and works 25 hours a week but the system has said she isn't eligible, why?

Parents are only eligible for the additional 15 hours childcare funding if 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 £6,000 a year) for each parent over 25 years old, or £112.80 a week (or £5,800 a year) for each parent between 21 and 24 years old, or £56 a week for apprentices in their first year.

Tax Free Childcare and Tax Credits

1. What is Tax Free Childcare?

Working parents of children aged under 12 can use Tax-Free Childcare to pay for registered childcare (nursery, childminder, pre-school, holiday club, after school club, etc.). Parents will manage this through the childcare service account at www.childcarechoices.org.uk. The Government will top-up the money that parents pay into the account. For every £8 parents pay in, the Government will add an extra £2. Parents can receive £2,000 per child per year, or £4,000 if disabled.

2. Will my working tax credits and child tax credits be affected when my child starts accessing 30 hours childcare?

30 Hours Free Childcare won't affect a parent's eligibility for Working Tax Credits but will obviously impact any Childcare Element of their Child Tax Credit. This is because parents who pay for childcare can get up to 70% of their childcare costs back as part of their weekly/monthly tax credit payment from HMRC. So 'yes' their tax credits will go down because their childcare costs will go down.

3. Do parents have to sign up for Tax Free Childcare as well as 30 hours childcare funding?

No. Some parents may wish to sign up for both and make use of tax free childcare for any paid hours they access above the 30 hours, but this is down to personal choice.

Tax-Free Childcare is not available to parents in receipt of tax credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers. Parents in receipt of these can choose, as part of the childcare service application, whether they want to keep these benefits and apply for the extended entitlement only, or leave these and apply for Tax-Free Childcare as well as the extended entitlement. There are links to calculators and support guides at www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare

Starting School

1. A 4 year old child is starting school in September, but attending mornings only for the first half term. Can the parent use any early education funding for a childminder or nursery for the other half days?

No. Once a child starts school, even if only part time to start with, they cannot use any early education funding.

2. My child turned 4 on 18th March 2017 and I have agreed with the local authority and school to defer his start date until April 2018. Can I still use the 30 hours funding and keep him in nursery for the year?

Eligibility for both the universal 15 and additional 15 hours continues until the end of the term in which the child reaches 5. So in this example, the early education funding would continue until 31st March 2018.

3. A child is starting school in September yet the HMRC system has given mum an eligibility code for the 30 hrs entitlement - why?

At the time of application, the parent met the eligibility criteria. Once the child starts school, they will not be able to use any early education funding.