

# Early Education Funding Frequently Asked Questions



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# Introduction

Funded early education will ensure that your child has access to a high quality provision. Accessible childcare is crucial to enable parents to go out to work and research has shown that high quality early education can help children take the right steps towards being ready for school and support their opportunities for success in later life.

The government fund childcare places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds according to various eligibility criteria.

This booklet has been designed to help answer any questions you may have about funded early education. If you have any questions, or need support in finding a childcare provider, get in touch - we are here to help!

W: [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare)

F: <http://www.facebook.com/portsmouthfis>

E: [fis@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:fis@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

T: 023 9268 8830



# What help with childcare costs is available?

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## 2 Year Old Funding

**What is it?** 15 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year (or fewer hours over more weeks)

**Who is eligible?** Those on a low income or in receipt of certain benefits

**How do I apply?** Visit <https://myeducation.portsmouth.gov.uk>

**When can I apply?** The term before your child turns 2

**When can I start claiming?** The term after your child turns 2 with a valid code

**Where can I find out more and search for childcare?** Visit [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare)



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## 15 Hours Free Childcare

**What is it?** 15 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year (or fewer hours over more weeks)

**Who is eligible?** Everyone!

**How do I apply?** You do not need to apply. Talk to your childcare provider to find out more

**When should I talk to my childcare provider?** The term before your child turns 3

**When can I start claiming?** The term after your child turns 3

**Where can I find out more and search for childcare?** Visit [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare)



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## 30 Hours Free Childcare

**What is it?** An additional 15 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year (or fewer hours over more weeks)

**Who is eligible?** Some working families

**How do I apply?** Visit [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk). You must then reconfirm your eligibility every three months

**When can I apply?** Apply up to 16 weeks before your child turns 3

**When can I start claiming?** The term after your child turns 3 with a valid code

**Where can I find out more and search for childcare?** Visit [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare)



0 - 11

Or 16 if disabled



## Tax-Free Childcare

**What is it?** An extra £2 for every £8 you pay. (Up to £2000 per child, per year or £4000 for disabled children)

**Who is eligible?** Some working families

**How do I apply?** Visit [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk). You must then reconfirm your eligibility every three months

**When can I apply?** At any time you have a child who is 0 - 11 years old (or 16 years old if disabled)

**When can I start claiming?** Once you have set up an online account. You must check your provider is set up for payments

**Where can I find out more and search for childcare?** Visit [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare)



# What offers could I use at the same time?

You could get...

with...

	2 Year Old Funding	15 Hours (3-4 years)	30 Hours (3-4 years)	Tax-Free Childcare	Childcare vouchers	Tax credits	Universal credit
2 Year Old Funding		✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
15 Hours (3-4 years)	✗		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
30 Hours (3-4 years)	✗	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Tax-Free Childcare	✓	✓	✓		✗	✗	✗
Childcare vouchers	✓	✓	✓	✗		✓	✓
Tax credits	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓		✗
Universal credit	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	

Use the Childcare Calculator at [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk) to help you to work out the best options for your family.

## Frequently Asked Questions: 2, 3 and 4 year olds

### **Q. Can my childcare provider charge me additional costs?**

**A.** Just like at school, your childcare provider can charge for additional services, for example, lunch, trips or music classes. These charges cannot be a condition of accessing your funded place and alternative arrangements should be made available. Any charges should be itemised and cannot be a supplementary 'top-up'. You should speak to your provider for further information about any additional charges or find more information at see [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Help with Childcare Costs'.

### **Q. Can I use my Early Education Funding at more than one childcare provider?**

**A.** Yes. You can use up to two childcare providers. Both providers will ask you to fill in a 'parental declaration form'. On this form you should state how many hours of Early Education Funding you are taking at each provider. (Please note: if you are claiming 30 Hours Free Childcare for your 3 or 4 year old, you must be clear where you are taking your 'universal' 15 hours and your 'extended' 15 hours).

### **Q. Am I allowed to change my childcare provider?**

**A.** Yes. You can change your childcare provider at any point during your Early Education Funding, although you may need to give four weeks written notice. Talk to your childcare provider to find out. (Please note: if you are claiming 30 Hours Free Childcare for your 3 or 4 year old, you will not be able to change your provider if you are in your 'grace period'. See page 13 for further information).

### **Q. Is Early Education Funding available in term time only or all year round?**

**A.** You can use your funding flexibly. All 3 and 4 year olds and some 2 year olds are entitled to 570 hours of free childcare per year. That's up to 15 hours of free childcare per week when taken term time only (i.e. over 38 weeks of the year). You may choose to 'stretch' your hours by taking less hours over more weeks (e.g. up to 11.17 hours per week over 51 weeks). You should talk to your childcare provider about what they can offer. Some 3 and 4 year olds are also entitled to an additional 570 hours on top of the 570 hours that all 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to. (See page 11 for further information).

### **Q. I think my child is too young to leave me for 15 or 30 hours a week. Can I start them a bit later or use less hours?**

**A.** Yes, the choice is yours. Your child can start off with fewer hours and build them up when they are ready (as long as your childcare provider is able to increase the hours).

### **Q. What type of childcare providers can I use?**

**A.** You can use your Early Education Funding with a registered childminder, nursery or pre-school. Not all childcare providers are signed up to offer places for Early Education Funding, so check with them when you apply. You can also use our online search at [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Finding Childcare'.

### **Q. How do I find a childcare provider?**

**A.** Visit [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and click on 'Finding Childcare' or contact the Family Information Service on [fis@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:fis@portsmouthcc.gov.uk) or 023 9268 8830.



# 2 Year Olds

## 2 Year Old Funding



### What is it and when can I start claiming?

**Q. What is 2 Year Old Funding?**

**A.** 15 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year (or fewer hours over more weeks).

**Q. When can I start claiming 2 Year Old Funding?**

**A.** You can start claiming 2 Year Old Funding the term after your child turns 2 and the date stated on your 2 Year Old Funding voucher (whichever date is later). The earliest date your child can start depends on their birthday:

Child's birthday	When you can claim
1 January - 31 March	The beginning of term on or after 1 April
1 April - 31 August	The beginning of term on or after 1 September
1 September - 31 December	The beginning of term on or after 1 January

For example, if your child turns 2 on 15 February, they will become eligible to receive funding from 1 April.

### Who is eligible?

**Q. Are working and unemployed parents eligible for the funding?**

**A.** If you meet any one of the following criteria you will be eligible:

- In receipt of income based benefit
- In receipt of Universal Credit if you and your partner have a combined income from work of less than £15,400 a year after tax
- In receipt of tax credits and have an annual income of under £16,190 before tax
- Receive support under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Receive the Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Child attracts Disability Living Allowance
- Child has a current statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plan
- Looked after child by a local council
- Child left care through special guardianship, adoption or child arrangements order

### How and when do I apply?

**Q. How do I apply for 2 Year Old Funding?**

**A.** You can apply for 2 Year Old Funding [here](#). You will need your National Insurance number, plus evidence to support your application. If you are entitled to the funding, you will receive a 2 Year Old Funding voucher which will indicate the earliest date your child can start their funded place. You will need to show this to your childcare provider when arranging your child's place. We are unable to backdate funding before the date on the voucher.

**Q. When can I apply for 2 Year Old Funding?**

**A.** You can apply for 2 Year Old Funding the term before your child turns 2.

**Q. I can't apply online. What should I do?**

**A.** You can call the Family Information Service on 023 9268 8830 or email [2yroldfunding@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:2yroldfunding@portsmouthcc.gov.uk) for any queries relating to the online application process. We can also help you to apply if you need extra support.

## What if my circumstances change?

**Q. If my circumstances change, will I lose my 2 Year Old Funding?**

**A.** No. If your circumstances change, the funding will continue.

**Q. When does 2 Year Old Funding stop?**

**A.** 2 Year Old Funding runs until the end of the term that your child turns 3.

**Q. What happens when my child turns 3?**

**A.** The term after your child turns 3 you will continue to receive 15 hours of free childcare. Some working parents of 3 and 4 year olds are eligible to receive an additional 15 hours of free childcare - see [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Help with Childcare Costs'.

## Other frequently asked questions...

**Q. Am I able to receive additional funding to help with my childcare costs?**

**A.** Some working parents are eligible to receive Tax-Free Childcare (see [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Help with Childcare Costs'). You cannot benefit from Tax-Free Childcare at the same time as claiming Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers. The term after your child turns 3 you will continue to receive 15 hours of free childcare. Some working parents of 3 and 4 year olds are eligible to receive an additional 15 hours of free childcare. Use the [Childcare Calculator](#) to find out what help you could be entitled to and to help you decide what options suit your family best.

**Q. My child turned 2 after the first day of term. Do I have to wait until next term to claim my 2 Year Old Funding?**

**A.** Yes. You cannot claim 2 Year Old Funding until the term after your child turns 2. You must apply before the start of term so that you receive your 2 Year Old Funding voucher in time to start claiming the term after your child turns 2.



# 3 and 4 Year Olds 15 Hours Free Childcare



## What is it and when can I start claiming?

### Q. What is 15 Hours Free Childcare?

A. 15 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year (or fewer hours over more weeks). This is also known as 'universal' 15 hours.

### Q. When can I start claiming 15 Hours Free Childcare?

A. You can start claiming 15 Hours Free Childcare the term after your child turns 3. The earliest date your child can start depends on their birthday:

Child's birthday	When you can claim
1 January - 31 March	The beginning of term on or after 1 April
1 April - 31 August	The beginning of term on or after 1 September
1 September - 31 December	The beginning of term on or after 1 January

For example, if your child turns 3 on 15 February, they will become eligible to receive funding from 1 April.

## Who is eligible?

### Q. Are all families eligible for 15 Hours Free Childcare?

A. All 3 and 4 year olds are able to access this funding. Some working parents of 3 and 4 year olds are also eligible to receive an additional 15 hours of free childcare on top of the 15 hours that all 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to (see [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Help with Childcare Costs').

## How do I apply?

### Q. How do I apply for 15 Hours Free Childcare?

A. You do not need to apply. Your childcare provider will ask you to fill in a 'parental declaration form'. You will also be asked to provide evidence of your child's date of birth, identity and address.

## What if my circumstances change?

### Q. What if my circumstances change?

A. There is no eligibility criteria for 15 Hours Free Childcare - so you won't lose your funding if your circumstances change. If you start work, you may be entitled to an additional 15 hours of free childcare and Tax-Free Childcare (see [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Help with Childcare Costs').

### Q. When does 15 Hours Free Childcare stop?

A. Once your child starts school the early years funding stops. Even if your child starts school for part-time hours to start with, you can no longer claim early years funding. If you have other childcare costs at this time, you may be able to use Tax-Free Childcare - see [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Help with Childcare Costs'.

## Other frequently asked questions...

**Q. Am I able to receive additional funding to help with my childcare costs?**

**A.** Some working parents of 3 and 4 year olds are eligible to receive an additional 15 hours of free childcare and Tax-Free Childcare. See

[www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Help with Childcare Costs'. You cannot benefit from Tax-Free Childcare at the same time as claiming Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers. Use the [Childcare Calculator](#) to find out what help you could be entitled to and to help you decide what options suit your family best.

**Q. My child is 4 but I've agreed with the Local Authority and school to defer their school start date until the term after they turn 5. Can I claim 15 Hours Free Childcare until my child starts school?**

**A.** Yes. Eligibility will continue until the end of the term in which your child reaches 5.



# 3 and 4 Year Olds

## 30 Hours Free Childcare



### What is it and when can I start claiming?

#### Q. What is 30 Hours Free Childcare?

A. 30 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year (or fewer hours over more weeks). This is an additional 15 hours of childcare on top of the universal 15 hours that all 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to.

#### Q. When can I start claiming 30 Hours Free Childcare?

A. You can start claiming 30 Hours Free Childcare the term after your child turns 3 and the date you receive your eligibility code from HMRC (whichever date is later). The earliest date your child can start depends on their birthday and the date you receive your eligibility code:

Child's birthday	When you can claim
1 January - 31 March	The beginning of term on or after 1 April
1 April - 31 August	The beginning of term on or after 1 September
1 September - 31 December	The beginning of term on or after 1 January

For example, if your child turns 3 on 15 February, they will become eligible to receive funding from 1 April so long as you have your eligibility code from HMRC. However, if you receive your code for an initial claim after the start of the funding term (as table above) you will need to wait until the following term.

For more information go to [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Help with Childcare Costs'.

### Who is eligible?

#### Q. Who is eligible for 30 Hours Free Childcare?

A. You can usually get 30 Hours Free Childcare if you (and your partner, if you have one) are:

- In work - or getting parental leave, sick leave or annual leave
- Each earning at least the [National Minimum Wage or Living Wage](#) for 16 hours a week - this is £125.28 if you're over 25
- In work and a foster parent (from September 2018) - [click here](#) for information.

This earnings limit does not apply if you're self-employed and started your business less than 12 months ago. The HMRC will ask you for evidence of your income and make a decision based on your specific circumstances.

You're not eligible if:

- Your child does not usually live with you
- Either you or your partner has a taxable income over £100,000
- You're from [outside the EEA](#) and your UK residence card says you cannot access public funds.

You can get 30 Hours Free Childcare at the same time as claiming Universal Credit, tax credits, childcare vouchers or Tax-Free Childcare. However you cannot benefit from Tax-Free Childcare at the same time as claiming Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers.

If you cannot work, you may still be eligible if your partner is working, and you get Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Carer's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance.

**Q. I'm on a zero hour contract. Will I be eligible for 30 Hours Free Childcare?**

**A.** As long as you expect to meet the earning criteria (as mentioned above) on average over the three months after you have applied.

**Q. I have accepted a job offer but not started work yet. Will I be eligible for 30 Hours Free Childcare?**

**A.** In order to be eligible you should be in work or expecting to be in work within 31 days of applying. The HMRC will ask for proof of your new job starting date when you apply.

**Q. I'm separated from my partner and we share the care of our child. Would we both need to be working to claim 30 Hours Free Childcare?**

**A.** Only one application for 30 Hours Free Childcare can be made per child and the offer cannot be split between parents. Only the parent making the application needs to meet the eligibility criteria.

**Q. My partner has no recourse to public funds. Will that mean that I am not eligible for 30 Hours Free Childcare?**

**A.** In couple households where one parent/partner has no recourse to [public funds](#) you **may** still be eligible as long as the parent with recourse to public funds applies and meets the criteria.

## How and when do I apply?

**Q. How do I apply for 30 Hours Free Childcare?**

**A.** Visit [www.gov.uk/childcareaccount](http://www.gov.uk/childcareaccount) to apply.

You'll need your details (and your partner's, if you have one), including your:

- National Insurance number
- Unique Taxpayer Reference, if you're self-employed

If you are eligible you will receive an 11 digit eligibility code that usually starts with '500'. You should take this to your chosen childcare provider along with your National Insurance number and child's date of birth to arrange your place. The childcare provider will check that your code is eligible - once confirmed you can agree a start date.

**Q. When can I apply for 30 Hours Free Childcare?**

**A.** You can apply up to 16 weeks before your child turns 3. This will allow you to secure your place at a childcare provider ready for when your child becomes eligible to start. You must log into your [childcare account](#) every three months to reconfirm that you are still eligible - you must do this even if your child hasn't yet taken up their place.

**Q. I can't apply online. What should I do?**

**A.** You can call the Childcare Service Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 123 4097 for any queries relating to the online application process.

## What if my circumstances change?

**Q. Why do I have to reconfirm my code every three months?**

**A.** You must log into your [childcare account](#) every three months to confirm that you are still eligible to receive 30 Hours Free Childcare. You need to do this even if you have not yet taken up your place. It's easy to do; if your details have not changed you just tick a box to confirm this. You'll be reminded to do this four weeks before the reconfirmation deadline. It's important you say whether your circumstances have changed, as they will be checked against other systems.

**Q. What will happen if I don't reconfirm my code when I'm meant to?**

**A.** If you do not reconfirm your code by logging into your [childcare account](#) every three months, you will enter into a grace period (a short period of time that you will be allowed to continue to claim 30 Hours Free Childcare if your circumstances change or if you do not revalidate your code). It's important that you reconfirm before the end of your grace period or you will lose your funding for that term. If you lose your funding, you will need to reconfirm your eligibility to be able to take up your funding for the following term. You will still be able to claim your 'universal' 15 hours of free childcare.

**Q. What does 'grace period' mean?**

**A.** 'Grace period' is a short period of time that you will be allowed to continue to claim your 30 Hours Free Childcare if:

- Your circumstances have changed and you are no longer eligible
- Or, if you have not logged into your [childcare account](#) to reconfirm that you are still eligible (this must be done every three months).

Date you enter into grace period	Grace period end date
1 January - 10 February	31 March
11 February - 26 May	31 August
27 May - 21 October	31 December
22 October - 31 December	31 March

**Q. What will happen if my circumstances change and I'm no longer eligible?**

**A.** You'll enter into a grace period which will offer your child continuity at the childcare provider whilst giving you the opportunity to meet the earning criteria. If you meet the earning criteria before the end of the grace period you will be required to reconfirm your eligibility by logging into your [childcare account](#). If you do not meet the earning criteria you will be able to continue to claim your 'universal' 15 hours of free childcare after the grace period end date.

**Q. When does 30 Hours Free Childcare stop?**

**A.** Once your child starts school (even if only attending part time to start with) or if your circumstances change meaning you are no longer eligible (i.e. if you no longer meet the earning criteria). You must log into your [childcare account](#) every three months to reconfirm that you are still eligible. You may lose your free childcare if you do not do this.

## Other frequently asked questions...

### Q. Am I able to receive additional funding to help with my childcare costs?

A. Some working parents are eligible to receive Tax-Free Childcare. You cannot benefit from Tax-Free Childcare at the same time as claiming Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers. Use the [Childcare Calculator](#) to find out what help you could be entitled to and to help you decide what options suit your family best. For more information go to [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Help with Childcare Costs'.

### Q. I applied before the start of term but my application was delayed because of a technical issue. What should I do?

A. If you have evidence that you started your application before the deadline, take this to your childcare provider. Evidence can be emails or screenshots of your secure messages in your [childcare account](#). Your provider will then contact the Local Authority to process your application.

### Q. My child is 2 and has a 30 Hours Free Childcare eligibility code. Does that mean I can claim early?

A. No. You can get an eligibility code up to 16 weeks before your child turns 3. You cannot start your funding until the term after your child turns 3 and the date you receive your eligibility code (whichever date is later). Getting a code before your child turns 3 allows you to reserve their place, but the funding itself will not start until the start of the term after they turn 3.

### Q. I applied for and received my eligibility code after the first day of term. Do I have to wait until next term to claim my 30 Hours Free Childcare?

A. Yes. If you do not apply for 30 Hours Free Childcare before the start of term, you cannot start using your 'additional' 15 hours of free childcare until the following term. You can still use your 'universal' 15 hours of free childcare - this automatically starts the term after your child turns 3.

### Q. My child turned 3 after the first day of term. Do I have to wait until next term to claim my 30 Hours Free Childcare?

A. Yes. You cannot claim 30 Hours Free Childcare until the term after your child turns 3.

### Q. I'm having issues reconfirming my eligibility. What should I do?

A. You can call the Childcare Service on 0300 123 4097.

### Q. What is the 'validity start date'?

A. This is the date that you applied and were issued with a code. Not the date you can start your 30 Hours Free Childcare. 30 Hours Free Childcare can start the term after your child turns 3 and the date you receive your eligibility code from HMRC - whichever date is later (as long as the date you receive your eligibility code is before the cut off dates as below):

Child's birthday	When you can claim
1 January - 31 March	The beginning of term on or after 1 April
1 April - 31 August	The beginning of term on or after 1 September
1 September - 31 December	The beginning of term on or after 1 January

**Q. What is the 'validity end date'?**

**A.** This is your deadline to reconfirm your eligibility. You must reconfirm your eligibility every three months by logging into your [childcare account](#). If you do not reconfirm your eligibility you will enter into a grace period.

**Q. Where will I find my eligibility code?**

**A.** You should log into your [childcare account](#). Your eligibility code will be found under 'secure messages'.

**Q. Can my childcare provider charge me additional costs?**

**A.** They can charge for additional items or services, such as lunch, sun cream or trips, but must not make this compulsory. Alternative arrangements should be made available. You should speak to your childcare provider for further information about any additional charges.

**Q. My child is 4 but I've agreed with the Local Authority and school to defer their school start date until the term after they turn 5. Can I claim 30 Hours Free Childcare until my child starts school?**

**A.** Yes. Eligibility will continue until the end of the term in which your child reaches 5.

**Q. My child starts school in September, but I still have an eligibility code to receive 30 Hours Free Childcare. Can my child be in school and at a childcare provider?**

**A.** No. Once your child starts school (even if only attending part time to start with) you will no longer be eligible to receive 30 Hours Free Childcare, but you can use Tax-Free Childcare or Tax Credits towards your childcare costs.

**Q. I have a query about 30 Hours Free Childcare. Who should I contact?**

**A.** Call the Childcare Service on 0300 123 4097 or speak to your childcare provider. You can also go to [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare).



# 0 - 11 Year Olds

(Up to 16 if disabled)

## Tax-Free Childcare



### What is it and when can I start claiming?

**Q. What is Tax-Free Childcare?**

**A.** Tax-Free Childcare is a government scheme to support working parents with childcare costs. If eligible, you set up an online childcare account which you can use to pay your childcare provider directly. For every £8 you pay in, the government will pay in an extra £2. You can get up to £2000 per child, per year, or £4000 for disabled children. Check that your childcare provider is signed up to receive payments before you apply.

**Q. When can I start using Tax-Free Childcare?**

**A.** You can start using Tax-Free Childcare as soon as you've set up your online childcare account. You must check your provider is set up to receive payments.

### Who is eligible?

**Q. Who is eligible for Tax-Free Childcare?**

**A.** You could be eligible if;

- Your child is under 12 years old, or your child is disabled and under 17 years old
- The child you are applying for usually lives with you - you don't have to be their parent
- You live and work in the UK, unless you're a Crown servant or member of the HM Armed Forces posted overseas
- You, and any partner, are working, and each earning at least the [National Minimum Wage or Living Wage](#) for 16 hours a week - but less than £100,000 a year each
- If you're under 25 or an apprentice, you should expect to earn the equivalent of 16 hours, at the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage which applies to you

You can still apply for Tax-Free Childcare if you're:

- On paid sick leave
- On paid ordinary or additional maternity, paternity or adoption leave, or getting Maternity Allowance, for another child
- On paid shared parental leave
- On paid annual leave

You can also apply for Tax-Free Childcare if you're not working but expect to start a new job in the next 31 days. You can't get Tax-Free Childcare and Tax Credits, Universal Credit or Childcare Vouchers at the same time.

## How and when do I apply?

### Q. How do I apply for Tax-Free Childcare?

A. Visit [www.gov.uk/childcareaccount](http://www.gov.uk/childcareaccount) to apply. You and your partner (if you have one) will need your National Insurance number(s) and details of one or more of the following; your UK Passport, tax credits, P60 or a recent payslip. You must log into your [childcare account](#) every three months to reconfirm that you are still eligible - you must do this even if your child hasn't yet taken up their place.

### Q. When can I apply for Tax-Free Childcare?

A. You can apply at any time.

### Q. I can't apply online. What should I do?

A. You can call the Childcare Service Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 123 4097 for any queries relating to the online application process.

### Q. How do I find a childcare provider?

A. Visit [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare) and go to 'Finding Childcare' or contact the Family Information Service on [fis@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:fis@portsmouthcc.gov.uk) or 023 9268 8830.

## How can I use my Tax-Free Childcare?

### Q. How can I use my Tax-Free Childcare?

A. You can use Tax-Free Childcare to pay for:

- Registered childminders, nurseries and nannies
- Registered after-school clubs and play schemes
- Home care workers working for a registered home care agency.

### Q. How do I pay my childcare provider using Tax-Free Childcare?

A. First you need to add your Childcare Provider to your [childcare account](#) by clicking on the 'Your Tax-Free Childcare link'. Then you can pay them directly or set up a regular monthly payment. When you pay money in, it will take 24 hours to clear before you can pay your provider. Payments to childcare providers will take a further three days to arrive in their account. When you apply for Tax-Free Childcare, you'll be given a unique reference number for your child. You need to give this number to your childcare provider so they can match your payments to your child. You can find this in your welcome pack by clicking the 'secure messages' link on your [childcare account](#) homepage.

### Q. How do I find out if my childcare provider is signed up for Tax-Free Childcare?

A. You can search for your provider in the 'Your Tax-Free Childcare account' section of your [childcare account](#) homepage. If your provider is registered as sensitive with their regulator (perhaps because they are a childminder working from their home address) you'll need to search for them using their regulator ID and postcode.

## What if my circumstances change?

### Q. What happens if I lose my job?

A. If you are no longer eligible for Tax-Free Childcare the Government will no longer pay the £2 top up for every £8 you pay in. Use the [Childcare Calculator](#) to see what help you could be entitled to. You will still be able to use your childcare account to pay your childcare provider.

**Q. I'm using childcare vouchers. How do I switch to Tax-Free Childcare?**

**A.** First check which scheme best suits you by using the [Childcare Calculator](#). If you decide to switch, apply for Tax-Free Childcare through [Childcare Choices](#). You'll then need to give your employer written notice that you want to permanently leave their voucher scheme. This needs to be done within three months. You can continue to use any childcare vouchers already accrued prior to joining Tax-Free Childcare.

# Contact us...

If you have any questions, or need support in finding a childcare provider, get in touch - we are here to help!

W: [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/childcare)

F: [www.facebook.com/portsmouthfis](http://www.facebook.com/portsmouthfis)

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