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Working parents: Apply for your childcare code by 31 August to start using your 30 hours from September

Childcare
Choices



UK Government

15 and 30 hours – frequently asked questions

[< Back](#)

What entitlements are available and which ones might I be able to use?

There are several different entitlements available for parents in England, which have different eligibility criteria. These are set out below.

Entitlement	Child's age	Eligibility	What you can receive	How to apply
Working parents entitlement	From the term after they turn 9 months until they start school	Read more on eligibility for the working parent entitlement.	30 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year.	You apply online on GOV.UK.

Entitlement	Child's age	Eligibility	What you can receive	How to apply
For parents of 2-year-olds receiving some additional forms of support	From the term after they turn 2 years old	Read more on <u>eligibility for this entitlement.</u>	15 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year. If you are working, you may also be eligible for an additional 15 hours under the <u>working parent entitlement.</u>	Contact your childcare provider or <u>your local council</u> to apply for this scheme.
Universal entitlement for all 3 and 4-year-olds	From the term after they turn 3 years old through to starting school	<u>All 3 and 4-year-olds are eligible.</u>	15 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year. Can be combined with the working parents entitlement to make up 30 hours.	Speak to your chosen childcare provider about if they can offer a place, and take them your child's birth certificate.

Your provider may agree to 'stretch' your entitlement by using fewer hours over more than 38 weeks per year. Check with your childcare provider to find out if this is something they offer.

It is not possible to use more than 30 hours in a week, but you don't have to use your full entitlement if you don't want to.

When can I use the entitlements from?

You can start using your entitlements from the term after your child turns the relevant age to use that entitlement. The relevant age for the working parent entitlement is 9 months old.

When your child turns the relevant age	When they can get their hours from
1 January to 31 March	Term starting on or after 1 April
1 April to 31 August	Term starting on or after 1 September
1 September to 31 December	Term starting on or after 1 January

You are only able to claim the entitlements from the term after they become the relevant age because this gives local authorities and childcare providers enough time to prepare. For the working parent entitlement, if you are not eligible to apply in the term your child reaches the relevant age, you will need to wait until the following term to make an application.

How do I apply for the working parents entitlement?

You can [apply online](#) at GOV.UK.

You'll need to make sure you have the following information to hand before starting the application:

- your national insurance number (or unique taxpayer reference if you are self employed)
- the date you started or are due to start work
- details of any government support or benefits you receive
- the UK birth certificate reference number (if you have one) for your child

If you are a foster carer, there is a separate application process. Speak to your social worker to find out more.

When do I need to apply?

We recommend you contact your chosen provider as early as possible to secure your place.

You will be able to take up your hours from the term after you meet all the eligibility criteria for the entitlement you are applying for. These terms begin on 1 January, 1 April and 1 September.

You can apply for your code up to 16 weeks before your baby turns 9 months old. You need to [apply online](#) before the deadline to receive a code to give to your childcare provider. The deadline is the day before the new term begins, but we encourage you to apply earlier, and recommend applying at least 6 weeks before the deadline. Some providers

may ask for codes before the deadline, so we recommend you speak to your provider to find out if this is the case. The deadlines are:

When you would like to use your entitlements from	The deadline to apply for a code
1 January	31 December
1 April	31 March
1 September	31 August

If you do not apply on or before the deadline, you will not be able to take up your entitlements in that term.

When will I find out if I am eligible?

When you apply you may find out if you're eligible straight away, but it can take longer if you need to provide further information. Once your application has been approved, you'll get a code to give to your childcare provider.

What happens once I receive my code?

You'll need to give the code to your childcare provider, along with your National Insurance Number and your child's date of birth.

Your childcare provider will check the code and then allocate your child a place if available.

We recommend parents speak with their chosen provider about when they will be able to offer them a place.

We know that some providers are able to amend invoices if they have issued them before a parent has received their code, so we recommend you speak to your provider if you are in this situation.

Once you have received your code, you will need to reconfirm every 3 months even if you have not yet started using your entitlements.

What are the eligibility criteria I need to meet to claim the 30 hours childcare for working parents?

Working parents in England who each earn the equivalent of at least 16 hours per week at the National Minimum Wage are eligible.

You're eligible if you earn at least:

Your age	Yearly	3 Months	Weekly
21 and over	£10,158	£2,539	£195
18 to 20	£8,320	£2,080	£160
Under 18 or an apprentice	£6,281	£1,580	£120

You can earn up to £100,000 **adjusted net income** per year and be eligible. If you have a partner who lives with you, they must also earn between these two amounts. The £100,000 adjusted net income level was chosen to correspond with income tax thresholds. See our **[eligibility criteria](#)** for more information, including the income requirements for those who are self-employed.

How is my eligibility calculated?

Eligibility is calculated on an individual basis rather than by household. This means if you have a partner who lives with you, you must both individually earn between these two amounts. However, if you are in a couple and one person is claiming one of the following benefits, you may still be eligible:

- Carer's Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance or
- Certain additional elements of Universal Credit

Can I apply for a code whilst I am on maternity, paternity or adoption leave?

If you are applying for childcare for an older child, who is not the subject of the parental leave, you can apply as normal.

You can also apply for the child that is the subject of the parental leave, though when you return to work will affect when you can take up the childcare. The dates below apply:

Date of starting or returning work	When you can apply from	When you can access your entitlements from
1 October to 31 January	1 September to 31 December	1 January
1 February to 30 April	1 January to 31 March	1 April
1 May to 30 September	1 April to 31 August	1 September

If I'm eligible for Universal Credit can I get the working parents entitlements?

Yes, if you meet the eligibility criteria. Whilst you cannot claim Universal Credit and Tax-Free Childcare at the same time, those on Universal Credit will still be able to claim the working parents entitlement, as long as they meet the [eligibility criteria](#).

This will not affect your ability to claim Universal Credit. If you are taking up additional childcare (on top of your 30 hours entitlement), you can claim Universal Credit Childcare, which can support you with up to 85% of the cost of additional childcare you pay for outside your entitlement to 30 hours. Please see [the Universal Credit childcare costs](#) page for more information.

Alternatively, there is a separate entitlement which means that parents of 2-year-olds who are already receiving some additional forms of support, such as Universal Credit, can receive [15 hours of early education](#). This is separate from the entitlement for working parents.

All parents regardless of employment status, family circumstances, or income levels are eligible for the universal [15 hours for 3 and 4-year-olds](#).

How often do I need to log into my childcare account?

You need to log into your childcare account every 3 months to reconfirm that your details are up to date and that you remain eligible for the childcare entitlements for working parents and/or Tax-Free Childcare.

Will I be reminded to reconfirm my details?

Yes, you will receive a reminder:

- the first email reminder is sent 4 weeks before reconfirmation is due

- a further reminder is sent 2 weeks before reconfirmation is due
- a notification is sent on the deadline date of reconfirmation to notify you that your eligibility for funded childcare for working parents has stopped and asking you to confirm your details as soon as possible

This message will come from GOV.UK. Please remember to make sure that your details are up to date.

How long does reconfirmation usually take?

In most cases, reconfirmation should only take a few minutes, but it may take longer if you need to provide further information.

How do I log into my childcare account to reconfirm?

You need to log into your [childcare account on GOV.UK](#) using your Government Gateway ID to reconfirm. The dates between which you should reconfirm will be displayed when you log in.

What's happening in September 2025?

From September 2025, the 15 hours for working parents of children under 3 will expand to 30 hours, meaning eligible working parents will be able to claim 30 hours of childcare all the way through from the term after their child turns 9 months to school age. You can apply for 30 hours from 1 April but once you have received your code, you will need to reconfirm every 3 months even if you have not yet started using your entitlements.

What if the provider I want to use says they don't have a place available?

If your chosen provider doesn't have a place available, we advise that you explore other providers in your local area.

Your local authority can provide support with [finding a childcare provider in your area](#).

What if I am a foster carer?

Children in foster care who are aged 9 months to 4-years-old could also be eligible for the working parent entitlements, provided the foster parent is in paid work outside their fostering role and does not expect their adjusted net income to exceed £100,000.

There is no minimum income requirement for foster parents, however the local authority responsible for the child must confirm it is satisfied that the foster parent's paid work other than their fostering role is consistent with the child's care plan.

Foster parents cannot use the online Childcare Service application to get funded childcare. Speak to your social worker and your **local council** if you want to apply.

What if I am a student?

Students who work in addition to studying are eligible for this entitlement if they meet the income requirements.

Students who do not work are not eligible, but other schemes are available for those in further or higher education. If you're a full-time student, you may be eligible for **help with your childcare costs**. You can find further information about **help with childcare while you study** on GOV.UK.

I missed out on the working parent entitlement because of a computer glitch

If you are eligible for the working parents entitlement but were unable to take up a place in time due to a technical issue with your application. **You may be eligible for compensation** if, for example:

- you applied before the deadline but your code has a start which is on or after the start of the term
- you were unable to reconfirm your eligibility due to a system error

What are the immigration requirements for parents?

You must have a national insurance number to apply. If you have a partner who lives with you, they must also have a national insurance number. If you are the parent who is making the application you must have at least one of the following:

- British or Irish citizenship
- **settled or pre-settled status**, or you have applied and you're waiting for a decision
- permission to access public funds – your UK residence card will tell you if you can't do this

What if I'm disabled, claim Personal Independence Payments or have caring responsibilities?

If you or your partner is unable to work because you get one of the following benefits, you could still be eligible for the working parent entitlement as long as you have a partner who is working and meets the eligibility criteria:

- Carer's Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance or
- certain additional elements of Universal Credit

However, if you are a single parent on one of these benefits you will also need to be working and meet the income requirements to be eligible for the working parent entitlement.

Claiming Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment for yourself or your child does not automatically grant you eligibility to use this entitlement. You would still need to be working and meet the **income requirements** in order to claim it.

However, parents who are already receiving some additional forms of support can receive **15 hours early learning for 2-year-olds**. This is separate from the entitlement for working parents and is available to parents whose child is entitled to Disability Living Allowance. All parents regardless of employment status or income levels are eligible for **15 hours for 3 and 4-year-olds**.

What do the entitlements cover?

Government funding is intended to pay for 15 or 30 hours a week of high quality, flexible childcare. The 15 or 30 hours must be able to be accessed free of charge to parents.

Government funding does not cover

- meals
- nappies
- additional hours
- additional activities, such as trips

So you might be asked to pay for these things. However, these charges must not be mandatory, or a condition of accessing a funded place and you can speak to your provider about what alternative options they may have.

What if I wish to start using them later, or if my child is already older than 9 months?

If you wish to use your entitlements later than the term after your child turns the relevant age, then you can apply closer to the time you wish to start. Provided you still meet the eligibility criteria for that entitlement at that time, you will not lose your ability to apply.

Can I use the entitlements for a nanny?

No, you are not able to use the entitlements for a nanny or a home carer.

Can I use the entitlements for childcare with a relative?

No. You cannot use the entitlements for childcare provided by a relative, such as a grandparent.

Can I add another child to my account between reconfirmation windows?

Yes, a parent who is already using the childcare service for another child can add a new child to their account at any time.

What happens if I miss my reconfirmation window?

If you miss your reconfirmation window, your eligibility for Tax-Free Childcare and/or your childcare entitlements will lapse. However, if your child already has a place where they're accessing their entitlement, a grace period will apply. This means your child can continue in their place for a short time, but you need to submit another application as soon as you can to keep getting the childcare entitlements and/or Tax-Free Childcare.

What happens if my circumstances change and I no longer meet the eligibility criteria?

If your child is already in a place, a grace period for your childcare entitlement will apply. This means your child can continue in their place for a short time, but you need to reconfirm your eligibility during this period as soon as you can to keep getting the childcare entitlements and/or Tax-Free Childcare.

If your child is aged 2-3 years old and you or your child receive some additional forms of support, you may be eligible for **15 hours early learning for 2-year-olds** under a separate scheme and you should speak to your local authority and/or provider in the first instance.

When can I submit a new application if I missed my reconfirmation window or fell out of eligibility?

You can submit a new application any time you meet the eligibility criteria for childcare entitlements or Tax-Free Childcare. You must then present your code to your provider to confirm your place can continue.

What is the entitlement for parents already receiving some additional forms of support?

Parents of 2-year-olds who are already receiving **some additional forms of support** may be eligible for 15 hours early learning for their child. This is separate to the **30 hours for working parents**. Speak to your local council about funded childcare places for eligible 2-year-olds. You should be able to find advice online on **your local authority's website**.

If you're not eligible for 15 hours early learning for families receiving additional forms of support, you may be able to get childcare if you're working under a separate scheme.

If you meet both sets of eligibility criteria, you should still apply for the working parent entitlement, but you will receive 15 hours from each scheme (up to a maximum of 30 hours in total).

Some households that have no recourse to public funds **may be eligible** for this entitlement for their 2 year old.

Who can get 15 hours for 3 to 4 year olds?

All 3 and 4-year-olds who live in England are entitled to 15 hours childcare a week, over 38 weeks a year the year, irrespective of income levels, benefit status, or family circumstances.

You can choose to take fewer hours over more weeks, if your childcare provider offers this option.

When can I access 15 hours for my 3 year old?

You can get it from the 1 January, 1 April or 1 September after your child's 3rd birthday.

Contact your childcare provider or **local council** to find out more.

How do I apply for this entitlement?

Take your child's birth certificate and speak to your chosen provider.

If your child is already accessing the 15 hours funded childcare for working parents from 9 months up to 3 years old and your child will turn 3 before 31 August 2025, your child will automatically be moved onto 30 hours from 1 September, providing you remain eligible.

Just reconfirm your code as normal and it will become usable to claim 30 hours from 1 September 2025. The actual code will remain the same. You should also speak to your childcare provider to let them know you intend to take up 30 hours.

What other support is available?

You can also apply for [Tax-Free Childcare](#) or [Universal Credit childcare](#). You cannot use both of these at the same time.

You may be able to use these other forms of support to help pay for childcare that is not covered through the entitlements. For example, you can use it to help pay for any additional hours, or to pay for a nanny if your nanny has registered on the Voluntary part of the General Childcare Register. It can also be used to pay for certain additional services that are charged by your provider.

Is there any support I can get for my provider to help my child?

Yes. The Early Years Pupil Premium is additional funding for your provider to support children whose families get certain benefits. Its purpose is to enhance learning and development support for children, ultimately improving their outcomes. You can find out more about this on GOV.UK at [Get extra funding for your early years provider](#).

Is there any support for my provider to help my disabled child?

Yes. Disability access funding is a grant given each year to providers to help children with disabilities get the best support during their early education. If you get Disability Living Allowance for your child, then they are eligible for this funding. If you think your child may be eligible for disability access funding speak to your childcare provider or [local council](#).