

30 Hours of Free childcare - providers questions and answers.

Q: What is 30 Hours of Free childcare:

A: The 30 Hours free childcare has been introduced to support working parents/carers with the costs of childcare and to help parents who would like to work more hours.

Since September 2017, working parents of three and four year olds are entitled to 1,140 hours of childcare a year which is free of charge. The 30 Hour funding only covers 38 weeks of the year.

Q: Who is eligible:

A: To qualify:

- Both parents must be working and earning at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage, but less than £100,000 per person a year
- Lone parents must be working and earning at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage, but less than £100,000 per year
- Self-employed parents must have earnings over a set period of time that equate to at least 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage but do not exceed £100,000 per year

There are exceptions if both parents usually work but:

- One or both parents are away from work on statutory sick pay
- One or both parents are on parental, maternity, paternity or adoption leave

In addition, parents are eligible if one parent is employed, but the other:

- Has substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits for caring
- Is disabled or incapacitated based on specific benefits

To complete the application, parents will need to provide details such as name, address and national insurance number, as well as whether you expect to meet the income requirements over the next three months and whether they are in receipt of any benefits. If they live with a partner, they will need to provide the same information for them as well. This will enable HMRC to decide whether their child is eligible for the 30 Hours (as well as tax-free childcare).

Q: How can parents check if they are eligible?

A: Parents can check whether they could be eligible for a range of government childcare offers, including 30 Hours, via Childcare Choices at: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Q: How does a parent/carer apply to receive an eligibility code, if they do not have online access?

A: HMRC will have a dedicated helpdesk where parents who are unable to complete the application online can call and go through the application with a HMRC representative. HMRC Childcare Service Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 123 4097

Q: Revalidating the 30 Hour code:

A: The DfE has stipulated that the parent must revalidate their eligibility every three months. Parents/carers will need to reconfirm their eligibility for the additional 15 hours before the validity end date.

Q: A parent/carer has a Tax-Free childcare account:

A: If you're an approved or registered childcare provider you can sign up to receive payments from parents who use the Tax-Free Childcare scheme.

<https://www.gov.uk/childcare-provider-tax-free-scheme>

Q. A parent/carer who has applied but lives in another County, but wants to come to our setting, how does this work with the funding?

A. Parents can access their extended entitlement funding with any provider that is offering this regardless of whether they live in Kent or not. So long as the parent has given the provider the eligibility code, the provider can claim for the child.

Q: Where can children take up their 30 Hours of Free childcare?

A: Ofsted-registered childcare providers will be able to offer the 30 Hours of Free childcare. This includes childminders, pre-schools, day nurseries, nursery classes and schools and playgroups. Providers are required to keep their information up-to-date 3 times a year (Jan, April and September).

Q: When will children be entitled to their 30 hours free childcare?

A: This is usually from the term after their third birthday, but eligibility dates are shown in the table below:

A child born between	Will become eligible for a free place
1 January to 31 March (inclusive)	The start of the Term 5 following their second birthday (after April holiday)
1 April to 31 August (inclusive)	The start of Term 1 following their second birthday (after Summer holiday)
1 September to 31 December (inclusive)	The start of Term 3 following their second birthday

Q: Are two year olds eligible for 30 Hours of Free childcare:

A: No, however, parents can apply for their code early but the place can only be accessed once the child meets the age eligibility criteria. Please check that the child falls into either the three or four year old date of birth range for the relevant term.

Q: Can a parent claim 30 Hours of Free childcare if their child is in full-time reception or if they have reached compulsory school age?

A: No

Q: What providers will need to verify a parents 30 hours eligibility code.

A: They will need to check the following:

- A 30 Hour eligibility code
- The parent's National Insurance number
- The child's date of birth
- The written consent of the parent

Q: What if the child is with a foster parent?

A: Foster carers can claim the 30 Hours of Free Childcare for children they foster if they meet the required criteria. Foster carers are required to speak to their social worker in the first instance. The child can still access their 15 hours of funded childcare for three and four year olds up until they start school.

Q: How will children with special educational needs and disabilities be supported?

A: Kent County Council (KCC) continues to strategically plan support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to meet the needs of all children in their local area as per the SEND code of practice: 0 to 12 (January 2015) <http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs/children-under-5-with-send>

Q: What happens if parents' circumstances change?

A: Parents will have to go onto the government's website every three months to confirm that their circumstances have not changed. If there has been a change, for example, the loss of a job, they will no longer be eligible. However, there is a grace period that will allow your child to continue having their 30 Hours of Free childcare while you find another job. Whatever your circumstances, all three and four year olds will still be entitled to 570 hours a year of free childcare.

Q: Can I charge non-compulsory additional charges?

A: Childcare providers are allowed to charge for additional goods, services and activities, such as lunch or trips, as long as these charges are voluntary

Q: What is the grace period?

A: A child will enter the grace period when the child's parents cease to meet the eligibility.

Date Parent receives ineligible decision on reconfirmation: Grace Period End date:

1 Jan – 10 Feb	31 March
11 Feb – 31 March	31 August
1 April – 26 May	31 August
27 May – 31 August	31 December
1 September – 21 October	31 December
2 October – 31 December	31 March

Q: Can parents take MORE or FEWER hours over the year?

A: Parents/carers do not have to take any of the 30 Hours of Free childcare at all if they don't want to, or they can take fewer than the 1,140 per year.

If they take more than the 30 Hours of Free childcare, they will have to pay for them. Help towards the cost is available if you are eligible through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, or Universal Credit when it replaces Working Tax Credit. Other help is available through the Tax-Free Childcare scheme (see below), or their employer may offer a supported childcare scheme.

Q: What happens to the child's funding if they decide to move settings and would late applications work in the same way as they do at present with the universal offer?

A. The extended funding entitlement will work in exactly the same way as the universal offer does; parents are not normally able to change settings part way through term.

Q: What would happen if we started to offer the 30 Hours but then felt it was not viable for us to continue?

A: Providers are able to opt in or out of offering the 30 Hours, and the needs of parents should be considered when setting notice periods.

Q: Do you need to offer the full 30 Hours?

A: No, you don't have to offer the full 30 Hours, a few extra may be all that's needed by parents/carers or you might choose to make links with another provider to offer a joined-up service.

Parents/carers do not have to take any of the 30 Hours of Free Childcare at all if they don't want to, or they can take fewer than the 1,140 per year. If they take more than the 30 Hours of Free Childcare, they will have to pay for any hours on top of the 30. Help towards the cost of hours above 30 is available for eligible families

Q: Can I work in partnership?

A: Childcare providers are being encouraged by the Government to offer the entitlement flexibly and extend the 1140 hours over the whole year if possible. For example, the entitlement can be split up between providers but at no more than two locations in any single day. If you are working in partnership with another provider, make sure you have read the Transition – Focus on 30 Hours of Free Childcare document available on [KELSI](#).

Q: If a parent is splitting hours between settings and the family are no longer eligible, who gets the universal 15 Hours?

A: It is up to the parent to decide when they become ineligible who gets the funding.

Q: What is a collaboration?

A: The majority of Early Years settings in Kent are now part of a collaboration. Working collaboratively provides an opportunity for settings to share good practice and take collective responsibility for children within a geographical location. Sharing

the cost of training makes this more affordable and provides valuable networking opportunities and continuous professional development.

We will be happy to support you in connecting with other local providers.

If you are interested in leading a collaboration, download a [Guide for Potential Leaders of Early Years collaborations](#).

If you would like to join or lead a collaboration, please contact EYCollaborations@kent.gov.uk

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