

## 2-year-old Working Parents 15 Hours Free Childcare Entitlement FAQ's For Parents

### What is the 2-year-old 15-hours free childcare entitlement?

Currently all 3 and 4 year-olds are entitled to up to 15 hours of free childcare and early education a week for up to 38 weeks a year following their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Children access this entitlement in registered schools, Nursery classes, private Day Nurseries, Pre-schools and with Childminders. The Government has expanded the free hours for 2-year-olds to gain access to 15-hours free childcare per week from April 2024 for eligible working parents.

### Will I be eligible?

This will only be made available to families where both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family) and each parent earns, on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW), and less than £100,000 per year.

Therefore, to be eligible you must meet the following criteria:

- Your child turned two before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024,
- You work more than 16 hours per week,
- You have an annual income of less than £100,000 (per parent or individually in a lone parent family),
- You live in England.

### When will my child become eligible for the funding?

Your child will become eligible for the funding at the start of the school term after their 2nd birthday.

When your child turns 2	When they can get 30 hours from	Recommended time to apply
1 September to 31 December	Term starting on or after 1 January	15 October to 30 November
1 January to 31 March	Term starting on or after 1 April	15 January to 28 February
1 April to 31 August	Term starting on or after 1 September	15 June to 31 July

### How do I check my eligibility and get a code?

Eligibility will be checked by HMRC via the government's Childcare Choices website and will be based on actual income earned. You can check your eligibility or apply for the 2-year-old working families entitlement by visiting the Childcare Choices website at [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk). If you are eligible, you will be given an 11-digit code which you will need to take to your childcare provider along with your national insurance number and your child's original birth certificate or passport. Your childcare provider will then use the government's eligibility checking system to check that your code is valid. You will need to reconfirm your eligibility every 3 months and HMRC will send you a reminder to do so.

You must have your 2-year-old eligibility code before the start of the term your child becomes eligible, or you will not be able to access the 15 free hours until the following term.

### What happens if I become ineligible for the offer, for example, because I lose my job?

If you no longer meet the eligibility criteria, your child's 15-hours place will continue to be funded for a 'grace period'. You should discuss this with your childcare provider if and when you lose eligibility.

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### **Where can I take up my free entitlement?**

The offer can be delivered by a range of approved providers which include:

- Childminders
- Nurseries
- Nursery classes in schools and academies
- Nurseries based in a Children's Centre
- Private day nurseries, playgroups and pre-schools

### **Will I have to pay for anything?**

Your child's entitlement is free. However, providers can offer additional services which could be subject to charges, but they must make parents fully aware of any additional charges that apply prior to them taking up their free place. Providers are entitled to charge for any unfunded hours attended according to their own policy.

### **If I have just moved to England and my child is not a British Citizen, will my child be eligible for entitlement?**

Children moving to England from another country can access a place on the same basis as any other child in the Local Authority area, providing they meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

### **Special Educational Needs - is my child still eligible?**

Providers have a responsibility to ensure all children have full access to the EYFS. They must offer support for children accessing their provision with a disability or identified special educational need. To ensure the needs of your child are fully met, we encourage you to discuss your child's needs or any initial concerns with your provider.

There will be additional funding available to support SEN children to have full access to the EYFS. The new Disability Access Fund (DAF) is equivalent to £910 per child per year to support access to free entitlements.

3 and 4 year olds will be eligible for the DAF if they meet the following criteria:

- The child is in receipt of child disability living allowance (DLA)
- The child receives free early education.

Early years providers are responsible for identifying eligible children. The government are looking to expand to all funded children in the future but as yet is unconfirmed.