

## **30 Hours Free Childcare Factsheet**

### Free Early Education 3 and 4 year olds

All 3 and 4 year olds are eligible for 15 hours free early learning in the school term after their third birthday.

- if their birthday is before 1 September, they can start in the autumn term
- if their birthday is before 1 January, they can start in the spring term
- if their birthday is before 1 April, can start in the summer term

From September 2017, some 3 and 4 year olds will be entitled to 30 hours per week of free childcare, under a new government scheme. The extended entitlement is intended to support working parents with the cost of childcare and enable them, where they wish, to return to work or to work additional hours.

#### **Who is eligible for 30 hours free childcare?**

- Both parents are working (employed or self-employed including zero hours contracts) 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 the national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW); and each parent individually earns less than £100,000 per year
- Both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on parental, maternity or paternity leave
- Both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on adoption leave
- Both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on statutory sick pay
- One parent is employed and one parent has substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits received for caring or
- One parent is employed and one parent is disabled or incapacitated based on receipt of specific benefits.

#### **How parents check their eligibility?**

Parents can check their eligibility by going to <https://childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/>. The online checker is not available to all parents yet. Parents can sign up for email updates about when they can apply: [www.tax.service.gov.uk/childcare-schemes-interest/welcome](http://www.tax.service.gov.uk/childcare-schemes-interest/welcome)

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.

Parents will receive reminders from HMRC every three months to re-confirm their eligibility.



## How can parents access a funded place?

If eligible, parents will receive a code which they will take to the provider of their choice together with their National Insurance Number and their child's date of birth.

Providers must validate a code before they can offer a funded place.

Eligibility codes will be valid for a certain period of time. Parents will be reminded by the HMRC to re-confirm their eligibility every 3 months.

The Department for Education (DfE) will be under a duty to fund places from the 1st January/1st April/1st September following a child's third birthday, just like the existing 15 hour entitlement. However, a parent will also need to have a 'yes' decision from HMRC as well as this will demonstrate that they meet the broader eligibility criteria (in addition to the age of the child).

**If a parent meets the eligibility criteria part-way through a term, the DfE will be under a duty to fund places from the 1st January/1st April/1st September following a 'yes' decision from HMRC.**

## Grace Period

Parents who fall out of the eligibility criteria will enter a grace period. The grace period will allow parents to re-enter employment whilst preserving the entitlement to the 30 hours free childcare. Once the grace period is ended, a child will no longer be eligible for 30 hours but will continue to be eligible for universal 15 hours free early education.

During the grace period providers will continue to be funded for 30 hours free childcare.

### **The length of grace period depends on when a child becomes ineligible.**

A child who becomes ineligible during the first half of a funding block (as defined at table below) will be funded until the end of that funding block (31 March, 31 August, 31 December) or for as long as they remain under Compulsory School Age, whichever is the shorter.

A child who becomes ineligible in the latter half of the funding block (up to the last day of the funding block) will be funded until the end of the following funding block or for as long as they remain under Compulsory School Age, whichever is the shorter.

Council will complete an audit check on eligibility codes at 6 fixed points in the year, both at half-term and at the end of term across the year (in line with the dates as listed at table below). Council will communicate the grace period to providers who in turn, will have to communicate it to parents who are found to be ineligible for the extended entitlement at the audit check date.

Term	Date parent receives ineligibility decision on reconfirmation	LA audit date:	Grace Period End date:
Spring Term	11 Feb – 31 March	1 April	31 August



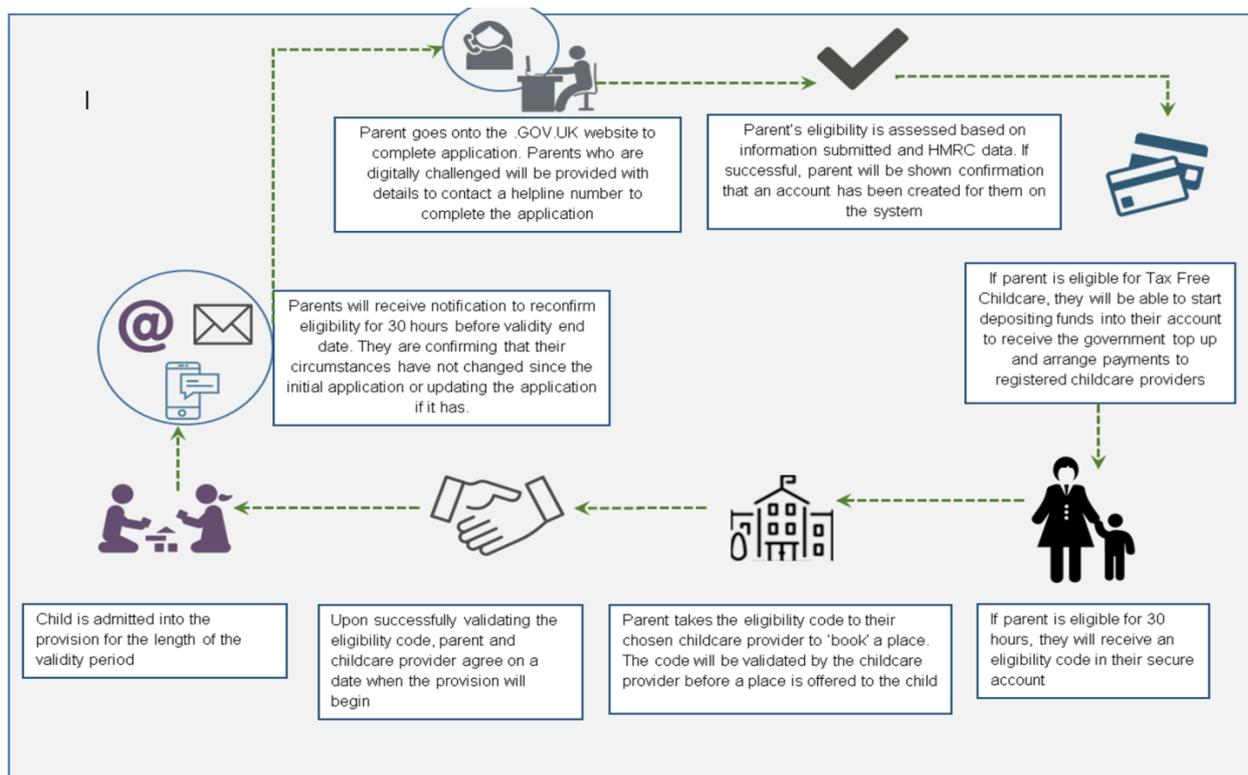
Summer Term	1 April – 26 May	27 May	31 August
Summer Term	27 May – 31 August	1 September	31 December
Autumn Term	1 September – 21 October	22 October	31 December
Autumn Term	22 October – 31 December	1 January	31 March

## How do providers validate eligibility codes?

We are working on implementing an IT solution to support this process. The solution will enable providers to validate the codes via the Provider Portal already used by providers for headcount submissions. Guidance notes and a training video will be available to all providers at a later stage.

Childcare providers are not required to re-validate eligibility codes when a parent reconfirms via HMRC. Childcare provision should continue without interruption or the need for the parent to resubmit details for providers to check.

New eligibility events/dates are pushed to the ECS when a parent reconfirms and will be available for LAs to query when auditing. LAs will identify any ineligible parents when they perform their periodic audits and will inform childcare providers when a parent is in their grace period. Providers will be responsible for communicating this with the parent.





## **September 2017 Admission**

You can begin to offer part-time nursery places for September 2017 and make a provisional offer for a 30 hours free place. You can advise parents to use the self-assessment form (attached) to offer conditional places.

Places can only be confirmed once the eligibility codes are validated. We will be confirming the process in due course.

Parents who check their eligibility after 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017 and receive a code will be able to access a free place from January 2018, not September 2017.