

Frequently Asked Questions for parents

Links can be accessed by clicking directly on highlighted text. Web addresses can also be found at the end of this document.

1) How do I know if I'm eligible?

You need to meet the [eligibility criteria](#) before you can claim 15 hours funded childcare. Working parents in England who each earn more than £8,670 - equivalent to at least £167 per week or 16 hours at the National Minimum Wage - but less than £100,000 adjusted net income per year, will be eligible.

Eligibility is calculated on an individual basis rather than by household. This means if you have a partner, you must both individually earn between these two amounts.

If you, or your partner, are on maternity, paternity, or adoption leave, or one of you is unable to work because you are disabled or have caring responsibilities, you could still be eligible.

You (and your partner if you have one) must have a national insurance number, and at least one parent (the one who is making the application) 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.

Parents already receiving some additional forms of government support, such as Universal Credit, working tax credits or child tax credits, can also receive 15 hours of fully funded early education, including childcare, for 2 year olds, separate from the new entitlement for working parents.

2) Why is the limit per parent? Wouldn't per household make more sense?

The income eligibility criteria are applied on a per parent basis as tax is calculated on an individual basis rather than a household basis. Working parents who individually earn more than £8,670 (equivalent to at least £167 per week or 16 hours at the National Minimum Wage) but less than £100,000 adjusted net income per year, will be eligible.

3) How do I apply?

You apply online using a government gateway account. If you do not already have an account, you will need to open one. [Log in: Government Gateway Account](#)

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 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.

You may find out if you're eligible straight away, but it can take up to 7 days.

Once your application has been approved, you'll get a code for funded childcare to give to your childcare provider. This will be an 11 digit code.

Parents will be asked to reconfirm that they are still eligible for the support every 3 months. [Login to your childcare account to renew](#). Your code will have an expiry date, for when your eligibility ceases. This may be less than 3 months, if you have more than one child or claim Tax Free Childcare, as renewal dates are often aligned.

4) What if I'm already registered for Tax Free Childcare?

Parents must reconfirm that they are still eligible for Tax-Free Childcare at least every 3 months.

As applications are now open for the new working parent entitlement, when eligible parents reconfirm they will receive a code which will also enable them to access the new offer.

To provide reassurance to parents with reconfirmation windows in late February and March, we're taking additional steps to ensure every parent is able to give their code to their provider in good time. If your reconfirmation window opens on or after the 15 February, HMRC will send you a letter with a temporary code before this date.

The letter will also explain how to use your code to claim your free place in April. Where possible, please wait for your letter to arrive. You don't need to contact HMRC.

Before your letter arrives, you can speak to your provider and use your eligibility for Tax-Free Childcare to demonstrate your eligibility for the working parent entitlement, as the eligibility criteria are the same. You can do this by showing your provider:

- Proof of your Tax-Free Childcare eligibility (this can be a screenshot from your childcare account, or simply showing your account to your provider)
- When your reconfirmation window is (you can get this from your childcare account)
- Your National Insurance number, and
- Proof of your child's date of birth, for example your child's birth certificate, to show they turn 2 on or before 31 March 2024.

However, you must wait for your code (either via letter or through your regular childcare account) to formally confirm your free place.

4a) Do I need to wait for my reconfirmation window to add another child to my account?

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

Your reconfirmation cycle for your current Tax-Free Childcare will not affect this.

4b) What happens once I receive my code?

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

Your childcare provider will process the code to provide your funded place.

Your local authority can provide support for finding a funded place in your area.

4c) If I receive a code in a letter from HMRC, does this make my code on my childcare account invalid?

We're taking these additional steps as a small number of childcare providers are operating earlier deadlines to process codes.

If you are aware of your childcare provider's deadline, and your reconfirmation window opens before this deadline, you can continue to use the code accessed via your childcare account, even if you have received a letter with an alternative code. Both codes will be valid.

4d) Do I still need to reconfirm if my window opens on or after 15 February?

If your reconfirmation window opens on or after 15 February, you will receive a letter with a temporary code which can be used straight away to claim your funded place.

However, once your reconfirmation window opens, you will still need to reconfirm via your Childcare Account and share this digital code with your provider.

This is because you will need to continue to reconfirm via your Childcare Account to ensure your eligibility doesn't lapse.

4e) What happens if I lose the letter with my code?

Your letter from HMRC should arrive by 15 February. If you haven't received a letter by 15 February, or if you lose the letter including your code after it has arrived, you should contact HMRC. Please wait for your letter to arrive before contacting HMRC.

5) My child turns 2 after 1 April. Why aren't I entitled to free childcare?

You can only apply for the first phase of the new working parent entitlement if your child is already 2 years old or will have had their 2nd birthday on or before 31 March 2024.

Your child's reaches the age of eligibility	When they can get their hours from
1 January to 31 March 2024	Term starting on or after 1 April
1 April to 31 August 2024	Term starting on or after 1 September
1 September to 31 December 2024	Term starting on or after 1 January

6) I'm a student. Why can I not access the entitlements?

Students who work in addition to studying are eligible if you meet the income requirements. Students who do not work are not eligible, but we recognise the value of parents continuing in education and provide a range of support for those in further or higher education.

7) Am I eligible if I'm on maternity leave?

If your partner works and meets the eligibility criteria, and you are on maternity leave, paternity leave, or adoption leave, you may still be eligible. Please see this article for more information.

8) Why are parents who earn more than £100k not eligible for the entitlements?

The £100,000 adjusted net income level was chosen to correspond with income tax thresholds. The universal 15 hours of funded childcare offer remains in place for all parents of 3- and 4-year-olds, regardless of parental circumstances, including those who earn over £100,000.

9) I'm on Universal Credit (UC). Will applying for 15 hours make me lose my UC?

You can apply for the 15 hours, and this will not affect your UC.

10) Will I need to pay any additional costs?

Some providers may charge you additional costs. Please ask for a copy of your childcare provider's fee structure, to allow you to make an informed choice about your childcare.

If you do not consent to the terms and conditions on offer at a particular childcare setting, please visit the [Family Services Directory](#) to find alternative care.

11) What happens once I receive my code?

You'll need to take 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.

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 for finding a funded place in your area. Please access the Family Services Directory (link provided below).

You must renew your code at least every three months, by logging into your childcare account. [Log in: Government Gateway Account](#)

Useful resources:

Eligibility Criteria:

<https://www.gov.uk/check-eligible-free-childcare-if-youre-working>

To Apply and renew eligibility: <https://www.gov.uk/sign-in-childcare-account>

Childcare Choices parent web page: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

Family Services Directory: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/childcare-family-support/find-family-services>

Childcare Service Helpline: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/childcare-service-helpline>

Childcare Service telephone: 0300 123 4097 – **if you are having any issue obtaining or renewing a code contact the parent helpline.**

Early Years Entitlements Team (Lincolnshire County Council): EYE@lincolnshire.gov.uk