

## 15 and 30 hours free childcare for three and four year olds

Free childcare and early education for three and four year olds will help your child develop and learn through a range of play activities in a safe and structured environment. The skills they develop will give them the best possible start when they move onto school.

All free childcare and early education must be with an Ofsted registered childcare provider who has been approved to offer the free sessions by the local authority. Search online for childcare providers who offer free places [www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk](http://www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk)

- For enquiries about 15 hours free childcare, call the Family Information Service on 01273 293545.

- For enquiries about 30 hours free childcare, call the Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 1234097

### Section One

#### 15 hours free childcare for all three and four year olds

ALL three and four year olds receive up to 570 hours of free childcare per year. This is often taken as 15 hours a week during term time, or you can take fewer hours and spread across the year.

### Section Two

#### 30 hours free childcare for parents who are working

Three and four year olds **whose parents are working** can now receive up to 1140 hours of free childcare spread per year. This is 30 hours a week if taken during term time, or you can take fewer hours per week and spread them over the year.

### Section Three

Information for **ALL** parents of three and four year olds.

### Section Four

About the Family Information Service and how to get in touch

## **Section One**

### **15 hours free childcare for all three and four year olds**

Every child is entitled to 570 hours of free childcare from the term after their third birthday. This equates to 15 hours a week if the entitlement is taken during term time only and around 11 hours a week if it is spread across the year. This is sometimes called the “universal entitlement”.

#### **DO I have to apply?**

No, you do not have to apply for the funding. The childcare provider claims the funding from Brighton & Hove City Council at the beginning of each term. Once you have decided on your childcare provider, you should contact them to discuss whether they have spaces and if they are able to offer your preferred hours. You can search online for childcare providers at [www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk](http://www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk)

#### **WHEN can my child start in a place?**

From the term after their third birthday (see table on page five). If your chosen childcare provider has a place available, your child may be able to start at any time during the term.

#### **WHEN does the free childcare end?**

The free childcare ends when your child starts school. Children normally start school in the September of the academic year in which they turn five.



**Parents who are working get 30 hours FREE childcare for their three year old!**

**If you would like some help and support to get into work, training or volunteering, read all about the PACE project on page 9.**

## Section Two

### 30 hours free childcare for parents who are working

#### WHO is eligible?

30 hours free childcare has been introduced to support working parents with the costs of childcare and to help parents who would like to work more hours. 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 **(see below for exceptions)**
- Single 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.
- From September 2018, foster carers will be eligible for 30 hours free childcare for three and four year olds that they foster if they meet certain conditions. Foster parents can call the Family Information Service for more information on 01273 293545.



Earnings per week, must be at least £125.28 if over 25, £118.08 for those aged 21-24 and £94.40 per week if aged 18-20. If you work less than 16 hours, but earn at least the amounts above, you will still be eligible.

#### WHAT are the exceptions?

Children **may** be eligible for 30 hours free childcare, if:

In a two parent household where one parent is working, the child will be eligible if the other parent is in receipt of one of the following;

- Incapacity benefit
- Severe disablement allowance
- Long-term incapacity benefit
- Carers' allowance
- Contributory Employment Support Allowance (ESA)
- National Insurance Credits on grounds of incapacity for work
- Universal Credit element for carers or limited capacity for work
- Statutory sick pay
- All forms of parenting and adoption leave

In a single parent household the parent is eligible if they are away from work and in receipt of

- Statutory sick pay
- All forms of parenting and adoption leave



Many people have varied work patterns, for example zero hour contracts, or self employment which means that earnings can change from week to week. If in doubt – apply!

### **HOW can parents check if they are eligible?**

The government has set up a website where you can enter your details and check if you are eligible. Visit <https://childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/> to check your eligibility.



If you apply more than three months before your child's start date, you will need to reconfirm your eligibility before your child takes up their extended entitlement

### **HOW do you apply?**

Go to the Childcare Service online at <https://childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/> and enter your details. The system will check whether you are eligible for 30 hours free childcare and Tax- free Childcare in one single application. Once you have verified your identity online you will then be given a childcare service account.

You should apply the term before your child turns three to ensure that you can access a place when you want it. If you do not receive a code before the deadline, you will need to wait until the following term before you can access your free place. Parents can apply up to 31 days before taking up or returning to work. The earliest you can receive a code is 16 weeks before they turn three.



You must apply on time otherwise your child will have to wait until the start of the next term to take up their extended entitlement. However, they will still be able to take up their 15 hours free childcare.

### **WHAT happens next if you are eligible?**

You will be given an 11 digit PIN that you must give to your childcare provider. They will verify your PIN and discuss your childcare needs.



You will need to hold onto your PIN, as you must reconfirm your eligibility online every three months. If you forget your PIN, log into your childcare service account online and click on 30 hours free childcare. You can then view your “secure messages” where a copy of your eligibility letter is saved.

### **RECONFIRMING your eligibility**

You will need to reconfirm that you are still eligible for 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare every three months, using your childcare service account, even if you have not yet taken up your place. It's easy to do; if your details have not changed you just tick a box to confirm this. You'll be reminded to do this four weeks before the reconfirmation deadline.

If you miss the reconfirmation deadline, you will receive a message that your eligibility has lapsed. You should log onto your childcare account and reconfirm; however this may cause a delay.



You must let your childcare provider know as soon as possible if you are informed that you are no longer eligible for 30 hours free childcare. Your child will still be entitled to 570 hours a year of free childcare.

**WHAT happens if I reconfirm and am ineligible or I forget to reconfirm?**

If you are no longer eligible for 30 hours free childcare (for example if you lose your job), or you do not reconfirm your details, you will enter a grace period during which you will be able to retain your 30 hours free childcare. You should check your grace period arrangements with your provider.

Date parent receives ineligible decision on reconfirmation	Grace period ends
1 January to 10 February	31 March
11 February to 31 March	31 August
1 April to 26 May	31 August
27 May to 31 August	31 December
1 September to 21 October	31 December
22 October to 31 December	31 March



You cannot claim both Tax Credits and Tax-Free Childcare. The childcare service online will check whether you are eligible for Tax-Free Childcare and opt you into the scheme if you are eligible. **If you would prefer to stay on Tax Credits, you must opt out of Tax-Free Childcare when asked.**

**If you have an enquiry about your eligibility or the online application process, call HMRC's Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 1234 097**

## Section Three Information for ALL parents of three and four year olds

### WHERE can children take up their free place?

Most Ofsted registered early years childcare providers in Brighton & Hove offer the universal entitlement, with most now also offering 30 hours free childcare.

You can search for childcare providers that offer places online at [www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk](http://www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk)

### WHEN can my child start in a place?

If your child's third birthday is between	Free places start from
1 <sup>st</sup> April – 31 <sup>st</sup> August	Autumn term, after the long summer holiday
1 <sup>st</sup> September – 31 <sup>st</sup> December	Spring term, after the Christmas holiday
1 <sup>st</sup> January – 31 <sup>st</sup> March	Summer term, after the Easter holiday



If you do not apply on time for 30 hours free childcare (see page 3) your child will have to wait until the following term before they can start.

### HOW will my child's free place be offered?

There are limits set by the government about how the free sessions can be offered:

- No session can be longer than 10 hours
- Sessions must not start before 6am or finish after 8pm
- A maximum of two single sites in one day

You should discuss with each childcare how they will spread the free hours over the week. Some offer specific packages, whereas others may be flexible to your requirements.

### CAN parents take MORE or FEWER hours over the year?

You do not have to take any of the free childcare at all if you don't want to, or you can take fewer hours if you wish.

If you take more than the hours to which you are entitled, you 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. Alternatively, you may be eligible for Tax-Free Childcare.



Childcare providers will offer free childcare for three and four year olds in different ways and they may limit the number of free places that they offer. You may not necessarily be able to get all your hours with one provider. For example, some providers are open term time only or will chose not to offer free hours over holidays.

Other providers may offer specific session times for the free hours which may not match your requirements and so you will have to pay for additional hours to meet your needs. Some providers will limit the number of hours a day that are free.

### **CAN the free hours be split between more than one provider?**

Yes. You can split your hours between a maximum of sites per day, as long as you don't exceed your 570 or 1140 hours per year.

Some providers give priority to children who want to take up their full entitlement with that provider.

### **CAN I use a childcare provider in a neighbouring local authority?**

Yes. You can decide which early years provider is best for your child depending on the vacancies available and your circumstances.

### **WILL I have to pay anything?**

If you only want your free hours, then you should not be asked to pay anything. You may have to pay a small deposit which will be refunded when your child starts.

However, as all childcare providers set their own criteria for admissions, they may not be able to offer you just the free hours. It is important to bear in mind that some providers cater for parents who pay for extra hours of care.

If you are having difficulty finding a childcare provider that can offer you just your free hours only, contact the Family Information Service.

Childcare providers can charge for meals and snacks as part of your free place, and they can also charge for consumables such as nappies and sun cream and for services such as trips and yoga. These charges must be voluntary for you. If you are unable or unwilling to pay for meals and consumables, the childcare providers should offer you an alternative, for example allowing you to supply your child's own meal.

**It is essential that you discuss your requirements with the childcare provider taking up a place. This should include clarifying what extras they may charge you for, and at what cost and what the alternatives are.**



If you have any queries about your bill, speak to your childcare provider in the first instance. They should explain how the bill has been worked out and how they are charging you for any extra hours or services.

Keep a note of any discussions that you have and if you still feel the situation is unresolved, contact the Family Information Service.

## Section Four About the Family Information Service

**The Family Information Service offers a wide range of information and advice for parents and carers in Brighton & Hove including**

- Support for families and where to go for help
- Information and advice about childcare options and funding

**For more information**

- Search online for childcare, services for families and factsheets [www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk](http://www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk)
- Visit our website: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis)

**Need extra help?**

- Email: [familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk)
- Telephone: 01273 293545

**Our range of factsheets to view online at [www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk](http://www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk)**

Tax-free childcare	A scheme for working parents to help save money on childcare bills.
Free Childcare for Two Year Olds	Some two year olds entitled to 570 hours of free childcare over the year
New to Brighton & Hove	Information on services, activities and local information for families who are new to the city.
Family Breakdown	What to consider when relationships break down and where to go for help and advice.
Family Finance	Overview of the different types of financial support available to families





**Are you the parent of a two year old who is getting  
FREE childcare sessions?**

**Then let the PACE team support you with taking the first  
steps into work, training or volunteering**

**PACE (Providing Access to Childcare and Employment)** is a European funded project designed to support parents in Brighton & Hove. Whilst your two year old is enjoying learning and making new friends at their childcare setting, you could be using the time to start thinking about what you would like to do in the future.

With 30 hours free childcare for three and four year olds whose parents are working, there's never been a better time to start thinking about taking the first steps towards work!

**PACE will:**

- Give you a **PACE** keyworker who will get to know you and stay in touch regularly
- Support you to find childcare and access any funding you might be entitled to
- Help you with “back to work” calculations so you will know how much your household income will increase if you get paid work
- Advise and help you to find ad-hoc childcare for interviews and training
- Work with you to develop a Personal Development Plan that is unique to you
- Help you to identify your skills and abilities and build on your confidence
- Support you to work out what you would like to do in terms of work, training or volunteering
- Offer you help with CV writing, interview skills and preparing for work
- Help you with “back to work” calculations so you will know how much your household income will increase if you get paid work

**Want to find out more?**

Contact the **PACE** Team at the Family Information Service.

Tel: 01273 293545

Email: [familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Web: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/pace](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/pace)

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