

30 Hours childcare FAQs for parents

What is the 30 hours funded childcare entitlement?

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours funded childcare a week for up to 38 weeks of the year (570 hours in total). This is called the '**Universal**' entitlement.

From 1st September 2017, the Government has increased the funded childcare entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds to (up to) 30 hours a week over 38 weeks for **eligible working parents** (1140 hours in total). This additional 15 hours is called the '**Extended**' entitlement or '**30 Hours**'. To claim these additional funded childcare hours, working parents need to apply through the online childcare service, www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Eligibility

Am I eligible for the 30 Hours funded childcare offer?

The 30 Hours childcare entitlement is available to parents of 3 and 4 year olds where both parents work or the sole parent works in a lone parent family.

The eligibility criteria are as follows, **for families living in England**:

- Each parent (or sole parent) has a weekly minimum income equivalent to at least 16 hours a week at national minimum wage (£107.20) per week or national living wage (£115.20) and neither parent (or the sole parent) has an income of more than £100k a year
- Both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on parental, adoption, maternity or paternity leave, on statutory sick pay
- One parent is employed and one parent has substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits received for caring
- One parent is employed and one parent is disabled or incapacitated based on receipt of specific benefits.

When can my 3 or 4 year old access the 30 hours?

Your child will be eligible for 30 hours funded childcare from the term after they turn 3, or the term after you receive your 30 Hours eligibility code – **whichever is later**. Your child will be able to access the Extended entitlement as follows **and as long as** you have applied and received a 30 Hours eligibility code (you can apply for a 30 Hours funded childcare up to 16 weeks before your child turns 3):

- If your child was born on or between the 1st January to 31st March, you can access your additional hours from the beginning of the term on or after 1st April
- If your child was born on or between the 1st April to 31st August, you can access your additional hours from the beginning of the term on or after 1st September
- If your child was born on or between the 1st September to 31st December, you can access your additional hours from the beginning of the term on or after 1st January

As an illustration of when your child can access a 30 Hours place, if your child turns 3 on 25 March, and you apply for the 30 Hours on 27 March, your child will be eligible for a place from 1st April (i.e. the start of the Spring term). However, if your child turns 3 on 25 March but you don't apply for the 30 hours until 5th April, your child won't be eligible for a place until 1st September (i.e. the start of the Autumn term).

Is my child eligible if I am living with a new partner or have remarried?

You and your new partner must both be working in order for your child to be eligible and you must meet the eligibility criteria.

Can I claim the 30 hours for my foster child?

No, foster carers cannot claim the 30 Hours for children they foster but they can claim the funded childcare entitlement for their own 3 or 4 year old children.

Can I claim the 30 hours for my adopted child?

Yes, as long as you (and your partner, if you have one) meet the eligibility criteria.

Will my child qualify if my partner or I are on a zero hours' contract?

Providing you work on average two weeks out of every three and when you are working you earn the equivalent of at least 16 hours at the National Living Wage or National Minimum Wage (depending on your age), your child will be eligible for the 30 Hours funded childcare. HMRC will confirm your eligibility based on the information you provide them.

Will my child qualify if my partner or I are self-employed?

As long as you earn at least the minimum but less than the upper threshold of £100,000 each, your child will be eligible for the 30 Hours funded childcare. HMRC will confirm your eligibility based on the information you provide them.

Will my child qualify if I've just started a new job?

If you expect to earn at least the minimum amount on average, over the next three months, your child will be eligible for the 30 Hours funded childcare. To qualify for the 30 Hours, you should be in work or expecting to be in work within 14 days of applying. HMRC will confirm your eligibility based on the information you provide them.

I'm not sure that I am eligible for 30 hours childcare but I would like help with childcare costs, what can I do?

The Government's childcare website: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk holds details of all childcare entitlements and information on help with childcare costs. The website has a helpful [Childcare Calculator](#) that can you work out which scheme is best for your family's individual circumstances.

The [Gloucestershire Family Information Service](#) is also able to help parents with queries on childcare entitlements and schemes. Contact them on 01452 427 362 or email familyinfo@gloucestershire.gov.uk

What happens if I lose my job?

You **need to reconfirm your eligibility** for 30 Hours every 3 months. There is a 'grace period' where you can keep your childcare for up to a term, to give you time to find a new job and start earning at least the minimum amount again. If you do not find a new job within the grace period, your child will stop being eligible to receive the 30 Hours funded childcare. You will still be able to access the Universal 15 hours funded childcare entitlement.

Applying for 30 Hours

How do I apply for the 30 Hours offer?

You must apply for 30 Hours funded childcare using the Government's online childcare service via HMRC: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk If you have any problems with making an online application or have any questions about your eligibility, contact the Customer Contact Centre on **0300 123 4097**.

HMRC make the decision as to whether you meet the criteria and are eligible for the Extended childcare entitlement. If so, they will issue a 30 Hours eligibility code which you must pass to your chosen childcare provider(s). Your provider(s) will need additional information such as your National Insurance number and child's date of birth to check your eligibility code, agree a place with you and be able to claim funding for your child.

When your eligibility is confirmed and your 30 Hours eligibility code issued, you will also be notified of the dates the eligibility runs from and to. In order to retain your eligibility, you will need to reconfirm every 3 months.

My child is 4 years old can I still apply for the 30 Hours?

You can apply if your child is not attending a state school until the term following their fifth birthday and you wish to use your funded childcare entitlement up until this point at a private, voluntary or independent school or childcare provider. You are not able to access the 30 Hours childcare if your child is attending a reception class in a state funded school.

Does this mean I can get 30 hours funded childcare every week of the year?

No, the total funded hours for eligible families will be 1140 over the year and can be taken in a number of different ways:

- Term time only – 30 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year
- Stretched – around 22 hours for 50 weeks of the year (discounting bank holidays etc)
- Alternatively a different offer may be agreed for the funded childcare that meets you, your child's and your provider's needs, as long as it is no more than 1140 hours taken between 6am and 8pm for a maximum of 10 hours. You should expect to be charged for any hours over 1140 by your chosen provider(s)

You are not able to access more than 30 Hours funded childcare a week over a shorter number of weeks. For any additional childcare hours over 30, you should expect to be charged a pre-arranged rate.

Charges

What may I have to pay for?

Government funding is intended to cover the delivery of early education and childcare only. This means that providers are allowed to charge parents for meals, consumables and additional items and services. These charges should be **voluntary** and **cannot** be a condition of accessing any funded childcare place. Where a provider makes a charge for meal times, you should be offered the choice of providing a packed lunch for your child though it is important to note this is not always possible for all providers (for example, some may not have food storage facilities). Your provider(s) should make you fully aware of any additional charges prior to your child taking a place at their provision.

Providers can charge a refundable deposit to parents accessing the 30 Hours funded childcare but this should be returned to parents within a reasonable timescale on their child taking a funded place. The purpose of the deposit is to give providers certainty that a parent will take up the place.

Using 30 Hours childcare

What types of childcare providers offer the 30 Hours funded childcare?

All Ofsted-registered approved childcare providers in Gloucestershire can offer the 30 Hours funded childcare. This includes childminders, nurseries, day nurseries, and pre-schools. However, it is not compulsory for approved childcare providers to deliver the 30 Hours. Please speak with your chosen provider(s).

Ofsted registered childcare providers in Gloucestershire are registered on the [Glos Families Directory](#). This includes details on which providers are offering the Extended entitlement.

You are able to access funded childcare hours between 6am and 8pm. This does not mean that all settings have to be open for 14 hours per day, but it is designed to provide greater flexibility for both parents and providers. There is no mandatory pattern of delivery – providers are able to decide how and when they offer funded hours to parents.

Do I have to use 30 hours each week?

No, you can use anything from 1-30 hours –it's up to you. The first 15 hours make up the Universal entitlement and additional hours after make up the Extended entitlement (30 Hours). Not all childcare providers may be able to offer the exact amount of childcare hours that you need. If your childcare provider can't offer the exact amount of funded hours that you require, you can split your 30 hours across more than one childcare provider.

Can I take my child's entitlement during school holidays?

Yes, some providers can enable parents to 'stretch' their entitlement' allowing them to use less hours a week over a longer period of time. Or, if this is not possible for/offered by your provider, you may wish use a different provider during school holidays to access your funded entitlement. You can use multiple providers to access the 30 hours funded entitlement to meet your childcare needs but you cannot use more than two providers in one day.