Help with Childcare Costs

All parents

Early Years Entitlement for two, three and four year olds

All children in Lincolnshire are eligible to access a free Early Years place from the funding period after their third birthday, until they reach statutory school age (the end of the funding period in which they celebrate their fifth birthday).

All eligible children can access up to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks per year (term time). Parents can now use their weekly entitlement flexibly in any reasonable combination of hours, subject to the childcare setting.

Parents can access their entitlement completely free of charge with no obligation to purchase additional hours to secure free provision, though parents may choose to purchase additional hours and this can be agreed with the Early Years provider prior to accessing provision.

Some 2 year olds are also entitled to the funding if they meet certain eligibility criteria - contact FIS for an application form, to complete a telephone application or complete online at: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/2yearolds

The Early Years Entitlement can be accessed at a variety of Ofsted-registered settings, from pre-schools and nurseries to nursery classes within maintained or independent schools and also an increasing number of registered childminders. Providers are required to meet a minimum level of quality before they can offer the funded places and this process is monitored and supported by the Birth to Five Service.

To find out more about the funding periods and access to the Early Years Entitlement and for any other queries regarding the Early Years Entitlement parents can also contact the EYE Team at the Birth to Five Service on 01522 552752 or go on-line at www.birthtofive.org.uk

The Family Information Service can provide a list of childcare providers who offer Early Years Entitlement places – call 0800 195 1635 for more information.
Working Tax Credit

You could get extra tax credits to help pay for some of your childcare costs while you’re working. You could get up to £122.50 a week for one child and up to £210 a week for two children or more. You can’t get 100% of the costs and how much you get depends on things like your income and how often and for how long you’ve paid for childcare.

This is the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, which is paid alongside Child Tax Credit to the main carer.

Generally couples with children must both work 16 hours or more a week to claim help with childcare costs. Single parents must work at least 16 hours per week.

If your child is eligible for Early Years Entitlement funding or use childcare vouchers, the equivalent cost of these places cannot be included in a claim for Working Tax Credit.

Other help

Childcare vouchers are one of the employer-supported childcare benefits available. Childcare vouchers involve sacrificing part of a salary into a specific account that can only be used for childcare through a childcare voucher company intermediary.

Employees save on tax and NI contributions on the maximum of £55 per week or £243 per month per parent if your employment earnings are not more than the higher rate threshold.

Any childcare paid for in this way cannot also be claimed for through Working Tax Credit, and may also affect other entitlements such as Statutory Maternity Pay.

Ask your employer whether they offer such a scheme, or contact the Family Information Service on 0800 195 1635 for more information.

Parents seeking work or about to start work

There are a number of options for parents/carers seeking or about to start work from various Jobcentre Plus funding aimed at supporting parents or carers as they move into training or work, plus other funding which may include In Work Credit and Job Grant. For new claims, contact them on 0800 055 6688.

For these and other benefits available for parents seeking or about to start work, go to:

www.gov.uk/browse/benefits
Parents in education or training

Further education colleges may have their own childcare on site, as well as hardship or access funds. There are also schemes such as Care to Learn and the Discretionary Learner Support Fund which offer support, with other options depending on the course and circumstances. Jobcentre Plus can offer some additional advice based on individual circumstances – contact them on 0800 055 6688.

Those in Higher Education may benefit from the Parents Learning Allowance or the Access to Learning Fund. Other funding may depend on the type of course and Professional and Career Development Loans are also available, although these have to be re-paid after the end of the course.

www.familyandchildcaretrust.org have some information for student parents about help with childcare costs.

Sure Start Children’s Centres offer community-run accredited and non-accredited training courses, often with access to childcare provision. Courses include IT training, interview skills and other development programmes as a preparation for starting work.

To find your nearest Children’s Centre go to: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/childrenscentres

Parents with disabled children

Additional help may come via the childcare element of Working Child Tax Credit, providing the child in question is already in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This may include an additional element if the child has a severe disability.

To check eligibility and to request a claim form, call the Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900 or go online at www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits

DLA has two components: care and mobility. The care component can be used to pay for childcare costs. If the child is entitled to DLA care component at the lowest rate, the parents may be able to claim Carer’s Allowance, although there are conditions and restrictions. For more information and to request a claim form, contact the Disability Benefits Helpline on 0845 712 3456.

Direct Payments can be made after a local social care assessment. These give families the freedom to shape their own use of services, which may include childcare. Contact Children’s Social Care Team on 01522 782111 for more information.
The Birth to Five Service manages this funding and monitors this funding alongside the Early Years Entitlements for 2, 3 & 4 year olds, to ensure families access the appropriate funding to support their child’s needs.

The Supported Childcare referral form can be found on-line at: www.birthtofive.org.uk/support/early-years-entitlement/supported-childcare.html

Other sources of information:
- [www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs](http://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs) for a wide range of information about childcare and funding options, as well as other family rights and entitlements.
- [Family and Childcare Trust - www.familyandchildcaretrust.org](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org) for a range of factsheets for parents, as well as information about help with childcare costs.
- [Learner Support Helpline 0800 121 8989](tel:08001218989) for advice around further education inc Care to Learn and Career Development Loans.
- [Student Finance - 0845 300 5090](tel:08453005090) for advice around higher education.

For more information about paying for childcare, as well as registered childcare and other children’s services in your area, contact the Family Information Service.
Freephone: 0800 195 1635 Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm or email: fis@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Further information is available online at [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/fis](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/fis) or on the Family Services Directory at [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/fsd](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/fsd)

Other

Supported Childcare

Supported Childcare Funding is available to support short term access to childcare as part of a holistic family support plan. This funding is available to all families who meet the eligibility criteria, including children with a disability, though families already in receipt of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit are not eligible.

The process for referring families for access to this funding sits with locality teams and professional colleagues who will complete referrals for eligible families. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis and initial enquiries should be made at your local Children’s Centre. The Family Information Service can find your nearest centre for you or search on-line at [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/childrenscentres](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/childrenscentres)

Supported Childcare places will only be provided if the parents, childcare provider, and relevant Children’s Services staff agree that it is in the best interests of the child. The offer is intended as a one off intervention programme and will therefore be time-limited. Reviews will take place every 6 weeks in order to ensure that access to the childcare is having maximum impact.