

# Free early education and childcare for two-year-olds



Information for parents



## What is available?

Eligible two-year-olds are entitled to a total of 15 hours of free early education for 38 weeks a year. This adds up to 570 hours per year.

Children can enjoy their free place with a Merton early education approved provider. A place can be delivered over 38 weeks (during term time), or some providers offer more than 38 weeks, so parents would get fewer hours each week for more weeks of the year.

## When can my child get a free place?

Your child becomes eligible from the relevant date after their second birthday:

Child born	Will be eligible
1 January and 31 March	1 April
1 April and 31 August	1 September
1 September and 31 December	1 January

## Can I get a place for my child?

Your child may be able to get a place if:

- You receive certain unemployment benefits, such as income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance or support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act; or
- You receive Working Tax Credit and have an annual household income of less than £16,190 (before tax); or
- Your child receives Disability Living Allowance (DLA); or
- Your child has a current Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP); or
- You have adopted your child or you have a special guardianship order or residence order to care for them

## How will this help my child?

Enjoying good quality early education at the age of two has been found to give children a good start in life, making them more likely to do well and have fun at school.

For example, children who enjoy early education when they are two can:

- Develop their speech and language
- Make friends and play with other children
- Learn new things, such as putting on their coat by themselves



## Where can I get a place?

To find an approved nursery, preschool or childminder that offers early education and childcare places, visit the Family Services Directory at [www.merton.gov.uk/fsd](http://www.merton.gov.uk/fsd) and click on 'childcare and education'.

Enter your postcode and search to find childcare providers in order of distance from your home. You can then filter the results to only show providers offering funded places for 2-year-olds. The directory includes more information about each provider, including their latest Ofsted grade and contact details and can include details of current vacancies.

When you contact a provider, you can organise an appointment to visit them and find out what they can offer your child.

## What happens when my child is 3?

When your child turns three, they can take up a free place for 3 and 4-year-olds. They may be able to continue with the provider they were with when they were two or you can apply for a place in a school nursery class or with an alternative approved childcare provider

For further information on Merton school nursery classes and how and when to apply, please visit [www.merton.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.merton.gov.uk/admissions)

# What shall I do next?

Check if your child can claim a free place

1. Visit **[www.merton.gov.uk/two](http://www.merton.gov.uk/two)**
2. Click on Free Early Education for 2-year-olds
3. Click on External Links to go to the online checking service

You will need the following information to complete your check:

- Parent's full name and date of birth
  - Parent's National Insurance or NASS number
  - Postcode
  - Child's full name and date of birth
4. The checker will give you a unique Reference Number
  5. Find a provider at **[www.merton.gov.uk/fsd](http://www.merton.gov.uk/fsd)** and contact them to see if they have a place
  6. When the provider confirms your place, they will validate your Reference Number. You will be asked to sign a Parent Funding Agreement Form and provide proof of your child's identity.

## **Adopted children and those with an EHCP / Statement of SEN**

1. Find a provider at **[www.merton.gov.uk/fsd](http://www.merton.gov.uk/fsd)** and contact them to see if they have a place
2. When the provider confirms your place, they will ask you to sign a Parent Funding Agreement Form and provide paper proof of your eligibility and your child's identity

### **For further information:**

Email: **[fsd@merton.gov.uk](mailto:fsd@merton.gov.uk)**

Or you can visit your local children's centre where staff will be happy to help you.

**[www.merton.gov.uk/childrenscentres](http://www.merton.gov.uk/childrenscentres)**

