

Free childcare for three and four year olds of eligible working parents

Eligibility criteria

A child is entitled to free early years provision from the term following their third birthday (see dates below) and up to compulsory school age where the child's parent(s) meets the eligibility criteria set out below.

- the parent of the child (and their partner where applicable) should be seeking the free childcare to enable them to work;
- the parent of the child (and their partner where applicable) should also be in qualifying paid work. Each parent or the single parent in a lone parent household will need to expect to earn the equivalent of 16 hours at the national living wage or their national minimum wage rate per week;
- where one or both parents are in receipt of benefits in connection with sickness or parenting, they are treated as though they are in paid work;
- where one parent (in a couple household) is in receipt or could be entitled to be in receipt of specific benefits related to caring, incapacity for work or limited capability for work that they are treated as though they are in paid work;
- where a parent is in a 'start-up period' (i.e. they are newly self-employed) they do not need to demonstrate that they meet the income criteria for 12 months in order to qualify for the extended entitlement;
- the parent of the child (and their partner where applicable) must not have an income exceeding £100,000 (each).

Three-year-olds of eligible working parents are entitled to an additional 15 hours of free childcare from the start of the term beginning on or following the date set out below:

- Children born in the period 1st January to 31st March: 1st April following the child's third birthday
- Children born in the period 1st April to 31st August: 1st September following the child's third birthday
- Children born in the period 1st September to 31st December: 1st January following the child's third birthday