

PARENT

Frequently Asked Questions about the Extended Free Entitlement (EFE) '30 hours free childcare' for eligible 3 & 4 year olds of working parents

Below is a list of frequently asked questions and answers for parents on the 30 hours free childcare entitlement for working parents. If you have a question that isn't answered here please email it to 30hours@bury.gov.uk and we will answer it as best we can and include it in the FAQs below.

[What are the eligibility criteria for parents to be entitled to 30 hours free childcare?](#)

[Does my partner need to meet the eligibility criteria?](#)

[How many hours of free childcare will working parents be entitled to?](#)

[Can I "stretch" my free hours over more than 38 weeks?](#)

[At what times are the free hours available?](#)

[How do I apply for 30 hours free childcare?](#)

[How do I apply if I do not have online access?](#)

[When should I apply for 30 hours free childcare?](#)

[I'm on a zero hour contract, am I eligible?](#)

[I am newly self-employed, am I eligible?](#)

[What if one parent works more hours than the other?](#)

[Who determines who is the lead parent if both parents have joint responsibility but are financially independent \(two households\)?](#)

[Will all childcare providers offer 30 hours?](#)

[Can I use the funded hours to pay for a nanny?](#)

[My child starts reception class in September and will only attend half-days for the first month.](#)

[Can I claim funding for the half day childcare I will need?](#)

[Can I take my free childcare with a provider outside of the borough?](#)

[Can you please explain what is meant by "the eligibility code may be used by one parent in lieu of the other"?](#)

[How long is my eligibility code valid for?](#)

[What happens if I lose my job?](#)

[How long will the grace period for parents be?](#)

[Are the 30 hours totally free?](#)

[Can I pay for additional hours and how much will this cost?](#)

[What if my childcare provider does not have space for me?](#)

[If my child is unwell, is the free place affected?](#)

[If I take a holiday, how does this affect my child's free place?](#)

[I am unhappy with my child's free entitlement and/or the quality of care my child is receiving.](#)

[What should I do?](#)

[I would like to change my childcare provider. What should I do?](#)

[My child was awarded a free place earlier in the year that he/she did not access. I now wish for my child to access this place. Is this place still valid?](#)

[Will providers be paid more to meet the needs of children with SEND?](#)

[Can parents use some of their 30 hours for drop-offs/collection from school?](#)

[I'm a student \[midwife/nurse\] and my partner works more than 16 hours. Are we eligible for 30 hours?](#)

[I'm on paid maternity / paternity / adoption leave. Am I eligible for 30 hours?](#)

[I have accepted a job offer but not started work yet – am I eligible for 30 hours?](#)

[Why should parents, who are splitting the extended offer over two or more providers, have to identify where they are taking the universal element?](#)

What are the eligibility criteria for parents to be entitled to 30 hours' free childcare?

Eligibility will be determined by HMRC and the criteria are as follows;

- Both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family) and each parent earns on average:
 - a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at National Minimum Wage (NMW) or National Living Wage (NLW) and
 - less than £100,000 per year
- One/both parent/s is away on leave (paternal, maternal, adoption leave etc.)
- One/both parents/s on Statutory sick
- One parent is employed and other parent has either: substantial caring responsibilities and/or disability

Parent means a person who has parental responsibility for the child or care of the child. Foster carers are not eligible for the children they foster but are for their own children. Please note that all 3-4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare and working parents who meet the eligibility criteria are entitled to an additional 15 hours. If you are unsure of your eligibility for 30 hours free childcare, please see the eligibility flowchart [here](#)

Does my partner need to meet the eligibility criteria?

If they are living with you then yes, both you and your partner need to meet the eligibility criteria to be entitled to 30 hours free childcare. When you make an initial application for 30 Hours via HMRC, you will have to declare the income/employment details of the household; this will include a residing partner/parent.

How many hours of free childcare will working parents be entitled to?

Parents who meet the eligibility criteria above are legally entitled to 1140 hours of free childcare over the year. This equates to 30 hours a week over 38 weeks of the year. The number of hours you are entitled to does not correlate with the number of hours you work. Eligibility is based on the amount you earn per week and year. Your entitlement can be "stretched" so you receive fewer funded hours per week over more weeks in the year. For example, 22.5 hours per week for 50 weeks. If you do not meet the eligibility criteria for 30 hours' free childcare you will still be entitled to the universal 15 hours of free childcare for all 3-4 year olds.

Can I "stretch" my free hours over more than 38 weeks?

It will depend on your childcare provider how you can take your 30 hours free childcare. Some childcare providers may offer it during term time, 30 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year. Whilst others may "stretch" your entitlement, offering, for example, 22.5 hours free for 50 weeks of the year.

At what times are the free hours available?

This will depend on your childcare provider. The government have extended the hours over which the funded hours can be delivered, to between 6am and 8pm (increased from between 7am and 7pm). The minimum session length for funded places has been removed and the maximum session length of 10 hours will remain.

How do I apply for 30 hours free childcare?

You can apply online at www.childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/par/app/applynow

If eligible, you will receive an 11 digit code which you then present to your chosen childcare provider to claim your 30 hours free childcare. Your childcare provider will also need your national insurance number, child's date of birth and consent from you to use these details to check your code is valid. Once they have confirmation your code is valid they can allocate you a place.

How do I apply if I do not have online access?

HMRC have a dedicated helpdesk which parents who are unable to complete the application online can call on 0300 123 4097 and go through the application with a HMRC representative.

When should I apply for 30 hours free childcare?

We recommend you apply at least the term before your child will be able to take the extra hours. For example, if your child turns 3 in the spring term you will be able to use your extended entitlement from the beginning of the summer term and therefore we advise you apply in the autumn or spring term.

I'm on a zero hour contract, am I eligible?

You could be. Although the eligibility criteria is based on earning the equivalent of 16 hours wages per week, there is no requirement to work any particular hours, or to earn any particular amount, in each week. You need only expect to earn the stated amount (which will be £120 a week based on the NLW rate from April 2017) on average over the 3 months then starting. So parents on zero hour contracts can meet the criteria when they know they will not get work every week but they reasonably expect to earn enough on average over the three months.

In looking at whether parents reasonably expect to earn the minimum income in the coming 3 months HMRC will look at various data. This may include looking at previous earnings. Where previous earnings suggest you may not meet the eligibility requirements in the coming 3 months HMRC may contact you for more information before determining whether you are eligible. If you are just starting work, HMRC will be unlikely to want to seek further information before determining your eligibility.

I am newly self-employed, am I eligible?

Yes, the Government recognises that many small businesses struggle to generate a regular income when they first start up. Therefore, to support newly self-employed parents, the Government will not expect self-employed parents to meet the scheme's minimum income rule in their first year of trading. This 'start-up' period removes the pressures relating to parents having to predict future income in the earliest days of their business.

What if one parent works more hours than the other?

As long as both parents work and earn a minimum of the equivalent to 16 hours on national minimum or living wage per week and less than £100,000 per year they are entitled to 30 hours free childcare. If one parent earns less than the equivalent to 16 hours on the national minimum or living wage per week or more than £100,000 per year they will not be entitled to any extended entitlement (30 hours). However, they will still be entitled to the universal 15 hours of free childcare for all 3-4 year olds. If you are unsure of your eligibility for 30 hours free childcare, please see the eligibility flowchart [here](#)

Who determines who is the lead parent if both parents have joint responsibility but are financially independent (two households)?

The lead parent should be the parent whom the 30 Hours funded childcare will benefit, in terms of enabling them to take up more working hours or entering full time employment. This will usually be the parent with whom the child usually lives.

Will all childcare providers offer 30 hours?

No, childcare providers do not have to offer 30 hours free childcare. You can view a list of all childcare providers and filter which are offering 30 hours on [The Bury Directory](#)

Can I use the funded hours to pay for a nanny?

No, both the universal and the extended entitlement have to be taken at a childcare provider who is registered to deliver the early education entitlement and nannies are not registered to do so.

My child starts reception class in September and will only attend half-days for the first month. Can I claim funding for the half day childcare I will need?

Children in reception class are not eligible for the universal entitlement / extended entitlement as they are on the school register and therefore funded through school funding channels.

Can I take my free childcare with a provider outside of the borough?

Yes, as long as your childcare provider has signed up to deliver 30 hours free childcare you can take your free place/hours outside of the borough.

Can you please explain what is meant by “the eligibility code may be used by one parent in lieu of the other”?

When you make an initial application for 30 Hours via HMRC, you will have to declare the income/employment details of the household; this will include a residing partner/parent. HMRC will make an assessment on eligibility based on the information submitted by you. You are required to take your eligibility code along with your National Insurance (NI) number and child's date of birth to your chosen childcare providers. In this scenario, your partner or the other parent is able to take the eligibility code along with their own personal information, in place of the lead parent, for the validation to be made.

How long is my eligibility code valid for?

Your eligibility code will be valid for 3 months, at which point you will have to reconfirm your eligibility with HMRC and continue to do so every 3 months throughout the duration you are receiving 30 hours free childcare. HMRC will notify you when you are due to reconfirm your eligibility with them. If you fail to reconfirm in time you will fall into the grace period and continue to receive your free childcare for a set period of time. If you reconfirm your eligibility within this time then you will continue to receive your 30 hours free childcare as before.

What happens if I lose my job?

The government is introducing a grace period with the 30 hours' free childcare entitlement for working parents. This means that should you lose your job your child will not automatically lose their place in childcare. You will have a period of time (grace period) during which you have the opportunity to regain employment and maintain your funded childcare place for the additional hours. Should you be unable to regain employment during the grace period and lose your 30 hours' free childcare you will still be entitled to the universal 15 hours of free childcare for all 3-4 year olds.

How long will the grace period for parents be?

A grace period will apply when a parent either loses eligibility or does not revalidate their code in time. The length of the grace period will depend on at which point in a term the code becomes invalid. If a code runs out due to ineligibility or failure to revalidate during the first half of a term, you will continue to receive your extended entitlement until the end of that term. If the code runs out during the latter half of a term, you will receive your extended entitlement until the end of the following term. Should a parent fail to regain eligibility or revalidate their code they will continue receive the universal 15 hours for their child.

Are the 30 hours totally free?

Some childcare providers may charge for meals, snacks or optional extras as these may not always be included within the universal / extended entitlement. If you take more than your total entitlement there is likely to be a charge from your childcare provider for these additional hours. Please check with your childcare provider for full details of any additional charges. It should not be a condition of you taking a free place that you pay for additional hours, consumable or services.

Can I pay for additional hours and how much will this cost?

It will depend on the availability of provision at your childcare provider whether you can purchase additional hours and it will vary by childcare provider how much additional hours will cost. 'Local authorities should not intervene where parents choose to purchase additional hours of provision or additional services, providing that this does not affect the parent's ability to take up their child's free place.' It should not be a condition of you taking a free place that you pay for additional hours, consumable or services.

What if my childcare provider does not have space for me?

Your childcare provider may not be able to offer you a place or all the hours you need. They may know of other providers with capacity or you can find a list of childcare providers in your area that offer funded places on [The Bury Directory](#). Remember you can use your free hours over more than one childcare provider so you may be able to take some hours at your current/chosen childcare provider and take the rest at another. It is important you declare in your agreement with your childcare providers which is delivering you universal entitlement and which is delivering your extended entitlement. This is to avoid any confusion should you lose eligibility.

If my child is unwell, is the free place affected?

You are not able to claim back any free hours that your child has been unable to attend due to illness. The free hours will be used to keep your child's place open for their return. If your child is unwell and unable to attend for more than four weeks, please contact your childcare provider to discuss your child's place.

If I take a holiday, how does this affect my child's free place?

If your child is unable to attend due to a family holiday, their free hours will normally be used to keep their free place open until they return. Alternatively, if you discuss your holiday with your childcare provider, you may be able to pay a retainer to keep your child's place open. This may mean that your child can receive their free hours later in the term. This would be at the discretion of your childcare provider and they are under no obligation to offer this.

I am unhappy with my child's free entitlement and/or the quality of care my child is receiving. What should I do?

If you have any queries about the entitlement or the quality of care it is important that you always discuss these first with your provider. It is in their interest to resolve any issues that you may have. Issues concerning invoices are best dealt with by your provider as they should be able to give you a full breakdown of the amount due. It is a legal requirement that they provide parents/carers with invoices. They must also provide you with a list of their charges, including details of charges made for any extra hours/services accessed in addition to the free entitlement. If, after speaking to your childcare provider, you still feel that your child has been unable to access their free entitlement, please e-mail childinfo@bury.gov.uk or write to Bury Family Information Service, 3rd Floor, 3 Knowsley Place, Duke Street, Bury, BL9 0EJ. For alternative providers, please use the Family Information Service Online Childcare Search at www.bury.gov.uk/fis. If you are still unable to find childcare please contact the Family Information Service who may be able to help.

I would like to change my childcare provider. What should I do?

You must inform your current provider as soon as possible of your change in circumstances as you may have to give a notice period. For information on other EEC providers for 2 year olds, please use the Family Information Service Online Childcare Search at www.bury.gov.uk/fis. If you are still unable to find childcare please contact the Family Information Service at childinfo@bury.gov.uk who may be able to help.

My child was awarded a free place earlier in the year that he/she did not access. I now wish for my child to access this place. Is this place still valid?

Yes however, if your child has missed the start of the term he/she became eligible, they will not be able to access all 38 weeks of the entitlement. Sessions cannot be back dated.

Will providers be paid more to meet the needs of children with SEND?

Additional financial support is available for providers to support access for children with special educational needs.

New legislation requires all LAs to have a SEN Inclusion Fund, and to consult on how it will be allocated. In addition, the new Disability Access Fund (DAF) will pay £615 per year directly to providers to support access into early years for eligible children. Parents will need to apply for this allowance. Providers will be able to use the parent declaration form template, due to be published alongside the Model Agreement to identify eligible children.

LAs will then check that the DAF eligibility requirements have been met before releasing any funds. Further information can be found within the EYNFF Operational guidance. Children with an identified special educational need (EHP) will receive additional funding.

Can parents use some of their 30 hours for drop-offs/collection from school?

Children who are in a state-funded school reception class are receiving their entitlement through the school. Therefore, they cannot receive 30 hours on top for private childcare before or after school. This is the same as the 15 hour universal entitlement.

I'm a student [midwife/nurse] and my partner works more than 16 hours. Are we eligible for 30 hours?

In order to qualify for 30 hours free childcare each parent must earn the equivalent to 16 hours at National Living Wage or their Minimum Wage. If one partner is in full-time education and does not meet the income requirement, the household will not be eligible. However, they should be entitled to the universal 15 hours entitlement for three and four year olds.

I'm on paid maternity / paternity / adoption leave. Am I eligible for 30 hours?

If you're on paid maternity/paternity/adoption leave then you should be eligible for 30 hours free childcare provided that you can demonstrate that you will either be on statutory leave or you will meet the minimum income criteria in the three months following your declaration to HMRC.

I have accepted a job offer but not started work yet – am I eligible for 30 hours?

In order to qualify for 30 hours free childcare, parents should be in work or to expecting to be in work within 14 days of applying.

Why should parents, who are splitting the extended offer over two or more providers, have to identify where they are taking the universal element?

If a parent ceases to meet the eligibility criteria, they may, at that point choose with which provider they wish to continue their child's universal entitlement. The local authority will manage this process with parents and providers. However, asking parents to identify this in advance, and then to confirm that decision if it is needed, helps local authorities and providers to plan and manage places.