

Parent guide to 30 hours free childcare from September 2017

How do I sign up for the 30 hours?

You can apply for both the 30-hour offer and tax-free childcare via a single application on the [Gov.uk website](#).

To complete the application, you provide your name, address and national insurance number, as well as whether you expect to meet the income requirements over the next three months and whether you are in receipt of any benefits.

If you live with a partner, you will need to provide the same information for them as well. This will enable HMRC to decide whether your child is eligible for the 30 hours (as well as tax-free childcare).

If you are eligible, **you will be given an 11-digit code** that you will need to take to your childcare provider along with your national insurance number and your child's birth certificate.

Your provider will then use the government's eligibility checking system to check the code is valid. If it is, they will be able to book your child's place - but bear in mind that **providers don't have to take part in the 30-hour offer**, so be sure to speak to your childcare provider about what they are able to offer for your family.

You will need to **reconfirm your eligibility every three months** and will receive a reminder text message or email from the government before the deadline.

If you give false information about your eligibility, you could be fined up to £3000.

My child is going to turn three next year. How soon can I access the 30 hours?

Your child will be eligible for the 30 hours offer from the term after they turn three, or the term after you receive your eligibility code - whichever is later.

For example, if your child turns three on 25 March, and you apply for the 30-hours on 27 March, your child will be eligible for a place from 1 April (i.e. the start of the spring term). However, if your child turns three on 25 March but you don't apply for the 30 hours until 5 April, your child won't be eligible for a place until 1 September (i.e. the start of the autumn term).

You can apply for the 30 hours from when your child is 2 years and 36 weeks old, as outlined in the table below:

When your child turns 3	When they can get 30 hours from	Recommended time to apply
1 September to 31	Term starting on or after 1 January	15 October to 30 November

December

1 January to 31 March

Term starting on or after 1 April

15 January to 28 February

1 April to 31 August

Term starting on or after 1
September

15 June to 31 July

If I'm not eligible for the 30-hour offer, can I still get my 15 hours?

A: Yes. The 15-hour offer is still universal so if you're not eligible for a 30-hour place, you will still be eligible for the 15-hour offer.

What happens if I become ineligible for the offer e.g. because I lose my job?

If you no longer meet the eligibility criteria, your child's 30-hour place will continue to be funded for a 'grace period'. You should discuss this with your provider if and when you lose eligibility. The table below outlines how long the grace period will last, depending on when you become ineligible for the offer. Your childcare provider can tell you how long your grace period will last. A grace period will always end at the end of a term.

Date parent's 30 hours eligibility code becomes invalid:	LA audit date:	Grace Period end date:
1 Jan – 10 Feb	11 February	31 March
11 Feb – 31 March	1 April	31 August
1 April – 26 May	27 May	31 August
27 May – 31 August	1 September	31 December
1 September – 21 October	22 October	31 December
22 October – 31 December	1 January	31 March

Once the grace period has expired, you will still be eligible for the 15-hour funded childcare offer. If you have been taking up the 30 hours at two providers, you can decide which provider you want to continue taking up your 15 hour places from.

Is there any difference in how the first 15 hours and the second 15 hours under the 30-hour offer will be delivered?

No, there is no difference. Childcare providers will provide early years care and education that follows the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework across the whole 30 hours.

Accessing 30 hours places: Things to know

- Early years providers don't have to offer the 30 hours.
- Like the 15-hour offer, the 30-hour scheme is optional for providers. This means that your early years provider may decide not to offer funded places. Alternatively, they may limit the number of 30-hours places they offer.
- This might be because, for example, the level of funding they receive from the government is not enough to cover the cost of delivering places, or because they do not have enough staff to deliver the extended offer.
- You don't have to take up the full 30 hours to receive funding.
- If you want to take up, for example, 25 hours per week, this will still be funded by the government under the 30-hour offer.
- You can split the offer between more than one childcare provider.
- You can split your funded entitlement between more than one provider, though no more than two sites in one day. For example, a child could attend a breakfast club and nursery setting based on one site or a maintained school and a private, voluntary and independent (PVI) provider on two different sites. However, it is important to bear in mind the impact of multiple providers on a child's learning, development and wellbeing.
- If you are splitting your offer between providers, you will need to provide your eligibility code and information to each provider.
- 30-hour funding only covers 38 weeks of the year.
- The actual government funded entitlement is for 1140 hour per year. This means that if you take up your full 30 hours per week, government funding will only cover this for 38 weeks of the year. However, your provider may choose to deliver a 'stretched offer' i.e. fewer hours per week over more weeks of the year: for example, 22 hour per week over 52 weeks or the year, or just under 24 hours per week over 48 weeks of the year. Speak to your provider about how they can offer the hours and what works best for all of you.
- Providers can charge non-compulsory additional charges.

- Government funding is meant to cover the delivery of early education and care only. This means that childcare providers are allowed to charge for additional goods, services and activities, such as lunch or trips, as long as these charges are voluntary. For example, your provider might give you the choice of paying for lunch or providing lunch yourself, though it is important to note that this is not possible at all childcare settings (for example, some may not have food storage facilities).