

3 & 4 Year Old Free Entitlement

Free 15 hours Universal Childcare Eligibility

All 3 & 4 year olds are entitled to 15 free hours of childcare - known as the Universal Entitlement. From September 2017 **some** will be entitled to an additional 15 hours known as the Extended Entitlement (30 hours).

You will **not** receive a letter from the Council. You will be required to provide evidence of your child's date of birth to the childcare provider.

Your child can access the **FREE** entitlement from the term after their 3rd birthday and this will continue until they transfer to full time school.

How many universal hours is my child entitled to?

The universal childcare entitlement is up to 570 hours per year. There are various ways you can access the FREE childcare:

Example A

- A maximum of 15 hours per week, term time only for 38 weeks per year. You can choose to take a minimum of 3 hours to a maximum of 10 hours per day and the 15 hours can be accessed over a minimum of 2 days.

Example B

- The 570 hours will be divided by the number of weeks the provider is open throughout the year and will include school holidays. (This is usually offered by private nurseries and childminders)

Extended 15 Free Hours (known as 30 hours) Eligibility

Parents who meet the following eligibility criteria will be entitled to an additional 15 hours:

Both parents or the lone parent needs to be working.

Each parent earns, on average:

- A weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage or national living wage (equivalent to £120 per week for over 25s)
- Less than £100,000 per year

Families where one parent does not work (or neither parent works) will not usually be eligible for the extended entitlement.

However in other certain circumstances parents may be eligible to the additional hours. Please check eligibility by visiting www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator

When can I check if I am eligible for the extended hours?

As soon as possible in the term that your child becomes 3 to enable funding to be accessed the term following their third birthday.

How do I check my eligibility?

You need to access an on-line account via www.childcarechoices.gov.uk if you meet the criteria you will be issued with an eleven digit number. You **MUST** take this number and your National Insurance number to your childcare provider(s).

You will be expected to reconfirm your eligibility every 3 months and should receive a reminder from HMRC to prompt you to do this.

How many extended hours is my child entitled to?

The extended entitlement allows you to access up to a further 15 hours a week. Therefore you can claim a total of 1140 hours in a year (15 universal and 15 extended).

How can I take up the entitlement?

Your child can access their entitlement at up to two Ofsted registered sites in one day. For example:

- a childminder and a school nursery;
- breakfast/after-school club and a school nursery or daycare provider;

- a school nursery and holiday club; or another combination. Please ask your childcare provider about these arrangements.

If my child stays for the full day will I have to pay for anything?

This will depend on the total number of hours your child attends in a week.

For example: Your child attends for 35 hours and you are eligible to the Free 30 Hours. You will pay for 5 hours per week and the rest will be free. Your invoice should only show the charges for the additional hours at the provider's hourly rate.

Can I be charged for other things?

Yes. The provider can charge for meals and snacks or ask that you provide a packed lunch.

You will also be expected to provide disposables such as nappies and creams. Other additional services may be charged for such as Pick-up services, on-call services, French lessons, baby yoga etc. however the provider cannot say you have to take up these services as a condition of the funding.

Will I have to pay a deposit to hold a place?

Some providers may request a deposit to secure a funded place however this should be refunded once you take up the free entitlement. If the place is not accessed then the deposit will not be refunded.

We do not expect that a deposit is collected for free 2 year old places or the universal entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

Do I have to access five 3 hour sessions at one childcare provider or school?

No, you can access up to 15 hours in different ways (depending on what the childcare provider / school can offer you). For example you could access 2 days with one childcare provider and 1 day at another.

What if I lose my job?

You will still be entitled to the Universal 15 hours.

However, the extended entitlement is for working parents, if you lose your job you will be allowed a 'grace period' where your child can still access their additional hours for a number of weeks, generally around six. The Government determines the number of weeks in the grace period, your childcare provider will explain this should you need any further information.

The Grace Period will allow your child to remain with their childcare provider until

the end of this period giving you time to find another job.

What Happens at the end of 'Grace Period'?

At the end of the grace period the childcare provider can withdraw your child's place or provide you with an invoice for any additional hours above the universal 15.

It is in your interest to keep the childcare provider informed of your circumstances so your child does not lose their childcare place.

Claiming the free Childcare

The funding is paid directly by the Council to your childcare provider(s). You should not be charged for the childcare. A charge should only apply if you choose to take up more hours than your FREE childcare.

What if I do not live in the Wakefield district?

If you live outside the district and want to send your child to a childcare provider in Wakefield, you will still be able to access the FREE childcare. Similarly if you live in Wakefield and send your child to a childcare provider in another Local Authority (LA) area, that LA will fund your FREE childcare place.

However, you will have to follow the procedures of the LA where your child receives the **FREE** childcare.

Where can I access the free childcare?

Wakefield Council has a Directory of Providers where you can access your **FREE** childcare place.

These childcare providers are registered and inspected by Ofsted, and include:

- Private Day Nurseries
- Pre-School Playgroups
- Childminders
- Independent Schools
- School Nursery Classes (Maintained and Academies)
- Breakfast/After-School Clubs, Holiday clubs

Term dates and eligibility

If your child's 2nd or 3rd birthday falls between

1 January-31 March

1 April-31 August

1 September -31 December

He or she will become entitled to a free place from

Summer (after Easter)

Autumn (early September)


Spring (early January)

Please check with your school as many will NOT be able to offer any additional hours above the Universal 15.

If you would like a copy of the Wakefield Directory of Providers, please contact Families Information, Early Years on **0800 587 8042**

Who do I contact for further information?

Contact **Families Information, Early Years Team:**

 **0800 587 8042**

 **information@wakefield.gov.uk**

 **WakefieldFIS**

 **www.wakefield.gov.uk/earlyfree**

