

Eligibility and application for 30 hours free childcare (the extended entitlement)¹

To check eligibility:

Either: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk> or
<https://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator>

Whichever way you check, if you are eligible you will be directed to the digital childcare service to apply.

You do not need to apply through the digital childcare service if you only want to claim the 15 hours universal entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

If you are receiving financial support through tax credits and childcare vouchers and only want to take up the 30 hours (ie. the 15 hours extended entitlement on top of your 15 hour universal entitlement), then you can choose not to apply for Tax-Free Childcare (and keep your tax credits) as part of the application.

How to apply? (via the digital childcare service)

You will need to ...

1. Create a Government Gateway account, if you do not already have one. If you do, then you will need to sign into the Government Gateway and verify your identity before accessing the childcare service. For details and instructions on how to register for a Government Gateway account go to www.gov.uk.
2. Once in the childcare service, enter your personal details including your name, address and National Insurance number and the same details for your partner (if you have one).
3. Declare that you expect to meet the income requirements over the coming 3 months².
4. Declare whether you are in receipt of any relevant benefits.

Having completed your application, if you are eligible, you will:

5. Have a childcare service account. In the “secure messages” section of your account you will receive messages regarding your eligibility.
6. Be given an 11 digit ‘eligibility code’ for your child. These codes normally start with ‘500’. However in a small number of cases parents may be given a temporary code starting with ‘11’.
7. You will be asked to take this code (the ‘500’ one), along with your National Insurance Number and date of birth of your child to your provider (ie. North Nibley Pre-school) to reserve your 30 hours place.
8. North Nibley Pre-school will validate your code and confirm back to you. We will require you to complete our own Parent Declaration form for our records.

If you need assistance in applying, then you can call the Customer Interaction Centre of 0300 123 4097 and apply over the telephone.

HMRC will contact you (probably via the Government Gateway “secure messages”) to tell you when to reapply for your code, ie. within a month of the expiry date.

Funding periods: 1 September to 31 December, 1 January to 31 March and 1 April to 31 August. So if your child turns 3 within one of these periods you will have to wait for the next to get the funding (universal and extended). Best time to apply, therefore, is in the month before the beginning of your eligible funding period, ie. August for Sept-Dec, December for Jan-Mar and March for Apr-Aug.

When you have your eligibility code, send this together with your child’s name, date of birth and you or your partner’s National Insurance number to the Pre-school’s administrator who will verify the code.

¹ 15 hours universal entitlement – all 3 & 4 year olds are eligible the term after their 3rd birthday; 15 hours extended entitlement (making 30 hours in total) for those parents who are eligible (income related).

² 21 to 24 year olds: £112.80/week (ie. £5800 per year); 25+ year olds: £120/week (ie. £6000 a year) for each parent. If your combined income is over £100,000 then you will not be eligible for the 15 hours extended entitlement.