

FREE childcare



Welcome to the latest edition of the 30 Hours Free Childcare update. September is just around the corner and we are working hard to make sure everyone is prepared and ready to provide the offer to parents.

Things have really started gathering pace - the eligibility checker for parents is now up and running and operational guidance to support the delivery of the offer has been published. There's lots of information available to help you to prepare and in this update we look at eligibility, marketing, funding and more!

We have been working with schools, day care providers and childminders and would like to thank you for all of your hard work and flexibility in looking at how you can help us achieve this offer for parents.

We hope you find this update useful and look forward to working with you all over the next few months.

Eligibility

Parents of three and four year olds will need to meet certain criteria in order to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare. Find out more at www.durham.gov.uk/earlyyears

What happens if a parent loses eligibility?

- They will receive a 'grace period' – this means they will be able to keep their childcare for a short period.
- Once the 'grace period' has ended the parent would no longer get their additional hours but would still be entitled to the free 15 hour entitlement

Date parent receives ineligible decision on reconfirmation:	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

for **working parents**

of 3 and 4 year olds for 30 hours a week

www.durham.gov.uk/earlyyears



Verifying eligibility

Parents are now able to check their eligibility on the [Childcare Choices](#) website. If eligible, they will receive an 11 digit code which they need to take to their chosen provider. They will also need to provide the national insurance number of the person who registered online and their child's date of birth. Providers will need to validate their code with us before a place can be offered.

Once it launches providers will be able to validate eligibility online through the new Provider Portal (Synergy system) which will be in place prior to September 2017. Training for the new system will be rolled out this term.

Parents will need to complete and sign a **new** parental declaration form to allow checks to be carried out. The form is available on the extranet or can be downloaded [here](#).

Temporary validation arrangements

We are running a manual checking process until the new system launches. This means you can confirm places to parents for September 2017.

Once parents complete and sign the parental declaration form you must complete and return the [spreadsheet](#) to ChildCare@durham.gov.uk

We will then confirm eligibility by email. Please do not offer places to parents until you have received this confirmation.

Providers will be able to claim funding for the places through the Synergy system as part of the autumn term head count process. The Early Years Funding team will contact you to confirm training arrangements.

Admissions criteria

We have had quite a few questions around admissions and the impact of the 30 hours. Current advice, for Maintained Nursery settings only, is to follow the existing Durham County Council guidance relating to admissions for nursery places. We are working with the admissions team to look at updating the admissions policy to include the recent changes. All maintained settings will be consulted on any changes made.

Marketing

All providers should have received copies of posters and postcards to promote the offer. We have also provided artwork for pull up banners, vinyl banners and a generic advert that can be used by providers in their setting.

It is important that you update your listing on the [FIS website](#) to show that you will be offering 30 hours places.

Childcare choices website

The launch of the [Childcare Choices](#) website means that parents are now able to get support online with various aspects of childcare. The site provides parents with a single point of information for all government funded childcare offers, including the 30 Hours Free Childcare and Tax Free Childcare.

The Tax-Free Childcare scheme will be gradually rolled out over 2017 helping to cut childcare costs for working families in the UK.

The website includes a [childcare calculator](#) for parents to compare all the government's childcare offers and check what will work best for their families.

Capital projects

Early Years Capital Funding has been granted to the following six projects to create additional places in areas of demand:

- Nevilles Cross Primary School
- Lanchester EP Primary School
- Tanfield Lea Primary School
- House Of Eden - Stephenson Way Children's Centre
- Explorers Daycare – High Etherley
- Castle View Day Nursery - Chester-le Street

30 hours minor improvements

We have a small amount of funding available to help with minor improvement works to create additional 30 hours places in areas of high demand. Applications can be for minor improvement works, such as moving walls or creating additional toilets to support the delivery of the 30 hours offer. The maximum amount of funding is £10,000.

The funding application will be sent out very shortly and applications will be assessed against criteria such as demonstrated demand in the area, availability of existing childcare and value for money.

Provider Portal and Synergy training

From the autumn term all providers of funded early education and childcare services in County Durham will claim funding using the new Provider Portal. The Provider Portal is currently being piloted with a small group of settings of various types and it will shortly be rolled out to all providers. Over the coming weeks providers will be sent information on what they need to do and the training that will be available, as well as key dates for submission of information and payment deadlines. This information will all be available via a Provider Portal page on the FIS website.

In the meantime if there are any queries providers can contact the Early Years Funding Team via e-mail on EYfunding@durham.gov.uk or by telephone on 03000 262789.

Disability Access Fund (DAF)

The Disability Access Fund helps providers to make reasonable adjustments in their settings, either to support an individual child, or for the benefit of all children attending the setting.

A child will be eligible if they are in receipt of child disability living allowance and are receiving free early education for 3 and 4 year olds. **Please note:** children will not be eligible if they are in a primary school reception class.

If a setting has eligible children they will be entitled to receive one payment of £615 per child each financial year. If the child attends more than one setting only the main setting will receive the payment. The child's parents will choose which is the main setting.

If a child moves settings within the financial year the new setting will not be eligible to receive a payment until the next financial year.

How to claim

Settings and schools will submit information regarding eligible claims alongside their headcount. Settings and schools will be expected to see evidence of the child's DLA eligibility and retain this evidence for audit purposes.

First claim – summer term 2017

As an interim measure for the summer term, providers should submit a copy of the new [parent declaration form](#) for any children where DAF is to be claimed. These copies should be forwarded with your headcount return.

Ongoing arrangements

From the autumn term claims for DAF will be made via the Provider Portal.

Visits to discuss the 30 hours

Our team have been busy visiting schools and settings, managers meetings and Children's Centre Early Years Steering groups to discuss the implications of offering the 30 Hours Free Childcare. If you haven't had a visit yet or would like any further help please contact our team on 30hoursfreechildcare@durham.gov.uk

Operational Guidance

On 24 April 2017 the government released the operational guidance for the 30 hours free childcare offer named 'Early Years entitlements; operational guidance for local authorities and providers (April 2017)'. This is available to download from the DfEE website. The guidance aims to help providers through case studies of how the free entitlement is being delivered, and makes clear what you will need to do to fulfil your agreement with us. It also gives information on delivery models and flexibility, SEND, charging models and parental eligibility,

Steering group

The steering group for the 30 hours childcare offer has met regularly and supported the roll out of the project, discussing many aspects of the offer such as models of delivery, costs of delivery, SEND and admissions to name a few. We will share any details with providers through these newsletters and through the schools extranet and emails to the PVI sector.

Partnership events

Many thanks to those who were able to attend our partnership events. Each regional event attracted many providers, and as well as us giving an overview of the offer, we allowed time for local providers to get together and see if there were any possible partnership arrangements to be made to offer the 30 hours. We are currently working with a range of providers who are looking at different partnership arrangements for delivery of the offer and will be publishing details as case studies.

Feedback

We value your feedback and welcome suggestions of what you would like to see in future updates. You can email your comments to 30hoursfreechildcare@durham.gov.uk

If you would like further information about the 30 hours or to speak to a member of staff, please contact:

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