

# Additional FAQs for Parents

## Your letter and code

### **Who will get a letter?**

If your Tax-Free Childcare reconfirmation window opens before 15 February, then you will receive your code when you complete your reconfirmation, and you will not receive a letter from HMRC.

If your reconfirmation window opens between 15 February and the end of March, you should receive a letter with a valid temporary code, starting with 11. Please remember that once your reconfirmation window opens, you will still need to reconfirm your eligibility through your Childcare Account and share the digital code you will receive at that time (beginning with 50) with your provider.

### **I have received two codes, one from the letter and one from the website. Which one am I supposed to use?**

If you have two codes, one from your letter beginning with 11 and one from the website beginning with 50, please give your provider the code from the website beginning with 50, as this is your permanent digital code for your child. If you only have one code (beginning with 11) then you can use this code to start using your entitlements. Please remember that once your reconfirmation window opens, you will still need to reconfirm your eligibility through your Childcare Account and share the digital code you will receive at that time (beginning with 50) with your provider.

### **What happens if my reconfirmation window is after 1 April? Do I get a code?**

Reconfirmation of eligibility occurs every 3 months, and you are able to reconfirm 28 days prior to your code's eligibility end date. Those with a reconfirmation window which opens in April should also have had a reconfirmation window opening in January. If you were eligible at this point you should have received a code then. Please remember to check your secure messages on your account to find your code after you have had a reconfirmed your Tax-Free Childcare. HMRC will only send a letter to those with reconfirmation windows which open on or after 15<sup>th</sup> February and before 1 April. Please do remember that once your reconfirmation window opens, you will still need to reconfirm via your Childcare Account and share this digital code with your provider.

If you want to make an application for another child to your account, you can do this at any time.

### **My reconfirmation window for Tax-Free Childcare is now open. How will I get my code? [for parents in receipt of Tax-Free Childcare]**

When you reconfirm your eligibility for Tax-Free Childcare through the Childcare Service you will be given access to the 15 hours of childcare if your child is the right age. You will find your code for this within your secure messages, on your Childcare Service account.

### **Will I be able to claim the 15 free hours from September for working parents of a child from 9-months old?**

Provided you meet the [eligibility criteria](#), and your child is at least 9 months old on or before 31 August 2024 (that is, your child was born on or before 31 December 2023) you will be able to claim 15 hours of childcare from 1 September 2024. This includes any children of eligible parents who are older than 9 months (for example, if your child turns 2 in May 2024).

Eligible parents of a child born between 1 January 2024 and 31 March 2024, (that is, they turn 9 months old between 1 September 2024 and 31 December 2024) will be able to claim the entitlements from 1 January 2025.

## **Eligibility**

### **If you're eligible for Universal Credit can you get the new entitlements?**

Whilst you cannot claim Universal Credit and Tax Free Childcare at the same time, those on Universal Credit will still be able to claim the 15 hours entitlement, as long as they meet our [eligibility criteria](#).

This will not affect your ability to claim Universal Credit. If you are taking up more than 15 hours childcare, you can claim Universal Credit Childcare, which can support you with up to 85% of the cost of any additional childcare you pay for. Please see [the Universal Credit childcare costs page](#) for more information.

Alternatively, there is a separate entitlement which means that parents of 2 year olds who are already receiving [some additional forms of government support](#), such as Universal Credit or tax credits, can receive 15 hours of funded early education, including childcare. This is separate from the new entitlement for working parents. All parents regardless of employment status or income levels are eligible for the universal 15 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds.

### **What about children turning 3 between April and September 2024?**

If your child is already 2 years old, you will be able to claim the 15 hours entitlement from 1 April 2024 so long as you meet the [eligibility criteria](#). If your child then turns 3 between 1 April 2024 and 31 August 2024, so long as you meet the eligibility criteria, you will be able to claim the 30 hours entitlement for 3-and-4-year-olds from 1 September 2024. If you fall out of eligibility, you will still have access to the universal 15 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds and will have a grace period until the end of December. Claiming the 15

hours for 2-year-olds will not affect your eligibility to claim the 30 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds in the following term.

### **If a parent claims carers allowance, is this classed as income? Can they apply for the new schemes?**

You may still be eligible if your partner is working, and you get Carer's Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Limited Capability for Work Benefit, contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance or the limited ability to work element of Universal Credit.

However, if you are a single parent on one of these benefits you will also need to be working and meet the income requirements to be eligible for this entitlement.

Alternatively, parents already receiving [some additional forms of government support](#), such as Universal Credit or tax credits, can receive 15 hours of funded early education, including childcare, for 2-year-olds, separate from the new entitlement for working parents. All parents regardless of employment status or income levels are eligible for the universal 15 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds.

### **Can a parent access the new entitlements if they get Disability Living Allowance?**

Claiming Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments for yourself or your child does not automatically grant you eligibility to use this entitlement. You would still need to be working and meet the income requirements in order to claim it.

However, parents who are already receiving [some additional forms of government support](#), can receive 15 hours of funded early education, including childcare, for 2-year-olds. This is separate from the new entitlement for working parents and is available to parents whose child is entitled to Disability Living Allowance.. All parents regardless of employment status or income levels are eligible for the universal 15 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds.

### **What is the minimum wage requirement to be eligible to claim the entitlements?**

To claim the entitlements, you (and your partner, if you have one) need to each be earning at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the National Minimum Wage. That is currently £8,670 per year, or £167 per week. On 6 April, this will rise to £9,518, which is £183 a week, in line with the changes to the National Minimum Wage. You (and your partner if you have one) must also each be earning less than £100,000 [adjusted net income](#) per year.

### **I tried to reconfirm, but as I'm on maternity leave it said I couldn't qualify for the code until I was back at work. Why is this?**

Parents can apply for a code for an older sibling whilst they are on maternity leave, but cannot apply for the child that is the subject of the maternity leave until 31 days before returning to work.

### **What do I do if my local authority or provider tells me I'm not eligible for 15 hours free childcare for my 2 year old?**

There are two 15 hour entitlements for 2 year olds. Parents who are receiving some [additional forms of government support](#) may be eligible for 15 hours of early education. Applications for this 15 hour entitlement are usually made through local authorities or providers, **not through the HMRC childcare service accessed via gov.uk**. If you are told by your local authority or provider that you are not eligible, you should check whether you're eligible for the other 15 hour entitlement 2 year olds (for working parents) on [Childcare Choices](#).

Equally, parents who apply for 15 hours free childcare for *working parents* must meet the [eligibility criteria](#). You apply for this through the HMRC Childcare Service and will be told by HMRC if you are eligible or not. If you are not eligible for this entitlement then you should check whether you are eligible for the alternative 2 year old 15 hour entitlement if you think you meet the [eligibility criteria](#).

## **Using your entitlements**

### **When can I use my hours?**

The 15 hours entitlement is for a total of 570 hours, which works out as 15 hours a week over 38 weeks of the year. However, your provider may agree to 'stretch' your entitlement by using fewer hours over more than 38 weeks per year. It is not possible to 'condense' your hours and use more than 15 hours in a week, but you don't have to use your full entitlement if you don't want to.

### **Can I use the entitlements for a nanny?**

You are not able to use the hours covered under the entitlements for a nanny or a home carer.

However, many nannies choose to register on the Voluntary part of the General Childcare Register. If your nanny has done this, then they are classed as eligible childcare providers for the purposes of Tax Free Childcare, though you cannot use the 15 hours funding for nannies.

### **Can you use the Tax Free Childcare to pay for your remaining bill, after the 15 hours comes off?**

Tax Free Childcare can be used to help pay for any additional hours above the hours you are claiming through your entitlements. It can also be used to pay for certain additional

services that are charged by your provider. You pay into the account, and HMRC will top up this amount by 20%, up to a value of £2,000 per year.

**My child turns 2 in February, but I ideally want them to start in September. Do I have to apply now or will I lose my access to the entitlements if I leave it until closer to September?**

If you wish to start using the entitlements from 1 September rather than 1 April, then you can apply closer to that time; provided you still meet the [eligibility criteria](#) at that time, you will not lose your ability to apply.

**Do you have any further information about the next stage of the rollout in September?**

We are currently working to prepare for the expansion of the entitlements for eligible working parents of children aged from 9 months and above, which will come into force in September 2024. We will provide further updates in due course.