

Dear all,

Thank you for your continued support to deliver the childcare entitlements, benefiting thousands of parents and children across England, especially as we approach the start of the new 15-hour entitlement for working parents of 2-year-olds. We also thank you in advance for all the work local authorities and providers will continue to do, as parents apply for and receive their codes from now through to the 31 March application deadline.

We recently wrote to you setting out a solution to an issue faced by a minority of parents who receive Tax Free Childcare (TFC) and who last reconfirmed their eligibility for TFC in late 2023, meaning that their next reconfirmation window does not open until the second half of February or March. We also pointed you to [our article](#) for parents which we had published on the Education Hub.

We are now following up on that letter with additional information for you on how the process will work, and further information for you to use in conversations with parents, to address questions that have been asked since we published those updates.

If a parent's reconfirmation window opens on or after 15 February (and before 1 April), HMRC will send them a letter before the middle of February with a temporary code. The letter will provide parents with a valid temporary code and instructions on how to use it to claim their entitlement. The letter will be posted to the address on the parent's Childcare Service account.

When we last wrote, we communicated that the temporary manual codes that will be issued to parents in their letters would begin with 50. Following further work alongside HMRC to make this solution work as well as possible, we will be using the existing temporary code format. This will make it easier for local authorities to differentiate between the single use temporary manual codes and the permanent digital codes. Temporary codes issued to parents will therefore begin with 11, rather than 50. We have confirmed with third party software suppliers that these codes will work with their software.

You should input these single use temporary codes in the normal way, and then when the parent comes back with their permanent digital code beginning with 50, you should accept and validate this code as you normally would. Temporary codes starting with 11 will continue to be valid into April, and will entitle parents to a grace period. If parents forget to reconfirm their code or fall out of eligibility, the Department is committing to fund a grace period between 1 April and 31 August, which we will fund through the early years block of the DSG. This is a temporary alteration to the normal rules, to support the solution that we have put in place for this issue. We encourage you to remind parents who have given

providers a temporary code that they need to reconfirm when their reconfirmation window opens in order to avoid falling out of eligibility. Pages 11 and 12 of the [Early years entitlements operational guidance](#) provides further information on validating and reconfirming temporary codes.

If a parent comes to you with two codes applicable for April; one beginning with 11 and the other beginning with 50, please use the code beginning with 50. The code beginning with 50 will be their permanent digital code for their child, which has been produced in their normal reconfirmation of eligibility. In this instance, the code beginning with 11 may be discarded.

We are aware that not all local authorities have IT systems in place to do automatic code checking yet. In these circumstances, local authorities have access to the [ECS manual checker](#) and should be regularly checking the codes their providers give them manually, to ensure providers can plan and confirm places. Providers should ensure that they give the codes that they receive to their local authorities regularly, so that local authorities can perform their checks in good time.

For your convenience, we have attached a sample copy of the letter HMRC will send to parents who have a Tax-Free Childcare account for their 2-year-old with a reconfirmation window between 15 February and before 1 April 2024, and who are currently waiting for a code to use the new 15 hours entitlement for working parents from April.

Since we communicated about this, we know you will have received further questions from parents regarding their eligibility for the 15 hours. We have therefore provided additional FAQs below to include answers to additional questions we have received.

We thank you again for your time and patience in this matter.

Entitlements Team