

# 30 Hours Childcare

## Frequently Asked Questions

Information for Providers of 30 hours childcare

## **Frequently Asked Questions for Early Years Providers**

### **30 hours free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds**

#### **What is the difference between the Universal and Extended hours?**

All children are eligible for 15 hours 'Universal' free early education. They become eligible the term after their third birthday and remain eligible for this until they move into Reception.

The 'Extended' entitlement is for children of the same age as above, but whose parents are working and meeting the relevant eligibility criteria.

It is really important that if a child is only attending your setting for 15 hours, you ascertain whether they are accessing the Universal or Extended hours with you as you will need to ensure that you enter their hours attended in the correct columns on Headcount.

#### **Who can access 30 hours free childcare?**

A child can access 30 hours free childcare from the term after their third birthday providing the parent has provided a valid eligibility code, which has been checked through the Provider Portal and produces relevant eligibility start and end dates. (*See "When can a child start their place"*)

#### **Who cannot access 30 hours free childcare?**

Children who attend a Reception Class are not able to access 30 hours free childcare. However, children who are 4 and would have been in Reception but whose parents have officially deferred their school start are entitled to access the offer.

Children of statutory school age are not entitled to access 30 hours free childcare, which is the term after the child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

#### **When can a child start their place?**

A child can start their 30 hour placement at any point from the beginning of term up to census/headcount providing they meet all of the eligibility criteria i.e. relevant date of birth,

eligibility start date and eligibility end dates. A child who is in a 'grace period' at the start of term cannot start with or move to a new provider.

New applications for each term will need to be made by the parent by the relevant deadline dates:

Spring Term – 31<sup>st</sup> December

Summer Term – 31<sup>st</sup> March

Autumn Term – 31<sup>st</sup> August

N.B. You must ensure all codes are validated via the Provider Portal **BEFORE** a child starts a place.

## **How do I verify an eligibility code?**

Key people within your setting will have been issued with log in details for the Provider Portal.

Within the 30 hours Childcare section, you should run a new check to verify the eligibility (always use the Find a Child function first). For more details see the 30 Hours Childcare User Guide.

## **What is the difference between the eligibility end date and the grace period end date?**

The 'validity end date' is the parent's deadline for reconfirming their eligibility. Parents eligibility periods run in 3 month blocks, they will need to reconfirm their eligibility every 3 months.

If for some reason they fall out of eligibility, their grace period enables parents to retain their childcare place for a short period.

## **When does the grace period apply?**

The grace period is for when a child is already in a 30 hour placement and the parent falls out of eligibility. It gives them a short period of time for them to be able to get back into eligibility during which time they retain their 30 hour placement.

The grace period does not apply when a parent falls out of eligibility **BEFORE** the child has taken up a 30 hour placement. In this case the child should **not** start their placement.

## **How often should I check the 30 hour portal dashboard?**

The Portal Dashboard is a useful tool that will help you to remind parents that they need to be checking their eligibility when it is coming towards their eligibility end date.

The dashboard has a traffic light system that shows you clearly which codes need no further action at the moment, which ones are nearing their reconfirmation period, and which ones have passed their eligibility end date.

It is up to you how often you check the dashboard but it would probably be really good practice for this to be done on a regular basis. This would give parents a reminder that it is time to re-verify but also make it easier to manage any potential problems and give everyone more time to get them sorted.

## **What if a parent misses the reconfirmation deadline?**

The parent should always be encouraged to reconfirm by their eligibility end date but if for some reason they were not able to, they can still reconfirm up until their grace period end date although they may notice that this has an impact on the new dates that they are issued with and they may need to reconfirm fairly quickly again.

## **What happens if a parent falls out of eligibility?**

If a parent's circumstances change which means they are no longer eligible, then their 30 hour placement will stop at the end of their grace period. Please note that this could be into the following term, but this would only apply if the child was already accessing a place.

A child would still be eligible for their universal 15 hours even though they are no longer eligible for the extended hours.

## **What if the parent is having problems?**

While Together for Children staff are happy to try to help and advise people with issues and queries wherever we can, we will not be able to help in every situation.

Unfortunately most of the problems that parents seem to be having are with the Childcare Choices website itself. As this is ran and managed by HMRC we are unable to help because the accounts that the parents create with HMRC are confidential.

If a parent is having problems they should address their queries/complaints to HMRC either by telephone or via an online form:

- Telephone – 0300 1234 097
- Online – <https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe>
- Online - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complain-to-hm-revenue-and-customs>

We will always try to keep people up to date with any issues that we are aware of and we will continue to feed comments back through the appropriate channels.

## **What if a parent wants to move setting during a term?**

Parents are able to move setting at any time if they wish however funding will only be issued to the setting the child attended during census week. If providers agree to take a child after this time, they would have to contact the previous provider to agree the transfer of the relevant number of weeks funding to cover the move in placement.

**Please note:** the DfE guidance states that although a childcare place can continue during a grace period, a child cannot change providers while in a grace period.

## **Where do I record the hours attended on the Headcount?**

It is really important that the hours a child attends are recorded in the correct columns on Headcount for universal and/or extended hours for two, three and four year olds.

For more information on this, please refer to the FAQ Completing Headcount document.