



Department
for Education

30 hours free childcare: autumn term 2018

Technical note

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1. Background

All 3 and 4-year-olds in England are entitled to 15 hours a week of free early education. From September 2017 this entitlement was extended to 30 hours free childcare for families where both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family), and each parent earns a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage or living wage, and less than £100,000 per year.

Parents apply and have their eligibility checked for 30 hours free childcare via the Childcare Service. If a parent is found to be eligible, they will be given a 30 hours eligibility code which they take to their chosen childcare provider. Childcare providers or local authorities will then validate these codes via the Eligibility Checking System (ECS). A parent must have generated a 30 hours eligibility code and this code must be validated to enable a child to access a 30 hours place.

Figures published in September for 30 hours eligibility codes issued and codes validated for the autumn term 2018 are available here: [30 hours free childcare: eligibility codes issued and validated](#)

This publication provides updated and final figures of 30 hours eligibility codes issued and validated for the autumn term 2018. It also includes estimates of the number children in a 30 hours place for the autumn term 2018 based on voluntary local authority returns.

Unless otherwise stated the autumn term referred to in this publication is the autumn term 2018.

2. Data Sources

The data sources for this publication are:

- Children in a 30 hours place – voluntary data returns made by local authorities in November and December 2018.
- 30 hours eligibility codes issued and validated – the Department for Education’s Eligibility Checking System.

3. Children in a 30 hours place

During November and the beginning of December 2018 all local authorities in England were asked by the Department for Education to submit a figure for the number of 3 and 4-year-olds in their local authority in a funded early education place for more than 15 hours for the autumn term (i.e. a 30 hours place). They were also asked to note whether the figure provided was an actual or estimate. Returns were received from 151 local authorities with 71% returning actual figures, 29% estimates.

An estimate was calculated for the one (1%) of all local authorities where no information was supplied. In this instance the headcount had been estimated based on a percentage derived from the total headcount from local authorities where supplied divided by the total validated codes.

$$estimate\ headcount = \frac{\text{Total headcount all LAs submitted}}{\text{Total validated codes all LAs submitted}} * \text{validated codes for LA unsubmitted}$$

The national total has been rounded to the nearest 1,000 to reflect the uncertainty of the estimate and the totals for the one affected region have been rounded to the nearest 100.

4. 30 hours eligibility codes issued and validated

Parents apply and have their eligibility checked for 30 hours free childcare via the Childcare Service, the online application for Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare. A 30 hours eligibility code is generated, for any child in the appropriate age range, as part of the application process regardless of whether they intend to take up 30 hours, therefore some parents will receive a 30 hours eligibility code even if they only want Tax-Free Childcare.

If a parent is found to be eligible, they will be given a 30 hours eligibility code. A parent should take this code along with their national insurance number and their child's date of birth to their chosen childcare provider. The provider will either directly, or via their local authority use the Department for Education's ECS to confirm the validity of the 30 hours eligibility code. Once the 30 hours eligibility code has been validated, the child will be able to take up their 30 hours place. The local authority in which the check is made in and the date of the check are recorded by in the ECS.

The department has previously released figures on the number of 30 hours eligibility codes issued to parents and validated by providers in the autumn term in a management information release¹ which was published on 27 September 2018. The cut off date for autumn term 30 hours eligibility codes was the 31 August 2018.

4.1. Methodology

30 hours eligibility codes issued

A 30 hours eligibility code is assumed to relate to the autumn term under the following conditions:

The child had turned 3 on or before the 31 August 2018 ; and

- a. The 30 hours eligibility code was issued on or before the 31 August 2018 or the code validity start date was on or before the 31 August 2018; and
 - i) The code validity end date is within or after the autumn term; and
 - ii) The code validity end date is in the second half of the summer term meaning the child could be in their grace period during the autumn term if they were in a place in summer. This excludes codes where the child was too young to be in a 30 hours place during the summer term as they are not eligible, since you cannot start a 30 hours place in a grace period; or
- b. The parent applied to the Childcare Service on or before the 31 August for autumn term, but did not receive their 30 hours eligibility code until up to 14 September. Local authorities may have chosen to exercise discretion and fund 30 hours places in the

¹ [30 hours free childcare: eligibility codes issued and validated](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated>

autumn term for parents who applied by, or had had attempted to apply by, the 31 August and did not receive their 30 hours eligibility code until shortly after this.

Where identifiable, duplicates - when multiple 30 hours eligibility codes were issued to the same child - are removed from the data. For example, where a temporary 30 hours eligibility code was initially provided and the parent later received a digital 30 hours eligibility code via the Childcare Service application. Codes are identified as relating to the same child if they share the same national insurance number of the parent making the application and the same first name of the child.

Methodology has been refined to remove a small number of codes that have a code validity end date in the first half of the summer term, meaning any grace period would end before the start of autumn term.

Only children who were aged 3 at 31 August 2018 are included in the 30 hours eligibility codes issued and validated figures for the autumn term. This is because most children who had turned 4 by 31 August 2018 will have been in a reception place in the autumn term 2018. A small number of parents of 4-year-olds may choose to defer their child's entry into reception and in these circumstances, they would still be able to claim 30 hours free childcare until the term following their fifth birthday.

Figures are broken down by local authority based on the local authority in which the child is resident.

30 hours eligibility codes validated

30 hours eligibility codes validated are the subset of codes issued for the autumn term that have been checked by a provider or local authority since the 27 May 2018 and by 5 December, inclusive. The suggested local authority mid-term audit window is between 27 May and 2 June inclusive, therefore checks made before this date are less likely to relate to the autumn term.

Figures are broken down by local authority based on the local authority who completed the most recent check; this may be a different local authority to where the child is resident. Where a 30 hours eligibility code has been checked by more than one local authority, it is recorded against the local authority that most recently checked that code.

5. Spring 30 hours eligibility codes issued and validated

Initial figures for the number of 30 hours eligibility codes issued and validated for the spring term are also included in this publication. A 30 hours eligibility code is assumed to relate to the spring term under the following conditions;

- a. The child will turn 3 on or before the 31 December 2018.
- b. The 30 hours eligibility code was issued on or before the extract date 5 December 2018 (30 hours eligibility codes issued up to 31 December 2018 will be eligible for the spring term and therefore these numbers are expected to increase).
- c. The 30 hours eligibility code validity end date is after 31 December 2018 or the 30 hours eligibility code validity end date is in the second half of the autumn term, meaning the child could be in their grace period in the spring term if they were in a

place in the autumn. This excluded 30 hours eligibility codes where the child was too young to be in a 30 hours place during the autumn term as they are not eligible, since you cannot start a 30 hours place in a grace period.

Codes validated are the subset of 30 hours eligibility codes issued for the autumn term that have been checked by a provider or local authority since the 22 October 2018 and by 5 December 2018, inclusive. The suggested local authority mid-term audit window is between 22 and 29 October inclusive, therefore checks made before this date are less likely to relate to the spring term.

These figures will be updated through the termly management information releases available here: [30 hours free childcare: eligibility codes issued and validated](#). An update is due to be published in January 2019.



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Reference: [30 Hours Free Childcare Autumn Term, 2018]



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