



Department
for Education

30 hours free childcare: eligibility codes issued and validated

Ad-hoc Notice

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30 hours free childcare

All 3 and 4-year-olds in England are entitled to 15 hours a week, or 570 hours a year of free early education. From September 2017, 3 and 4-year-olds may be entitled to 30 hours free childcare, or an extra 570 hours of free childcare a year, so 1,140 hours in total. The additional 15 hours is available to 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. This also includes self-employed parents. This entitlement was rolled out nationally on 1 September, after being trialled in 12 early delivery areas.

In order to provide transparency on the progress of the national rollout of this new entitlement we are publishing management information relating to the rollout of 30 hours free childcare in this ad-hoc statistical release. This includes the number of 30 hours codes issued to parents of eligible children who applied via the Childcare Service and the number and proportion of these codes that have been validated by childcare providers (or Local Authorities) via the Eligibility Checking System. A parent must have generated a code and this code must be validated to enable a child to access the offer in the autumn term.

In summer 2018, the 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2018' national statistics publication will be released, which will give a definitive picture of the number of children in a 30 hours place in January 2018.

Definitions

Applying for 30 hours free childcare

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.

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 (LA), use the Department for Education's Eligibility Checking System (ECS) to confirm the validity of the code. Once the 30 hours code has been validated via the ECS, the parent will be able to take up their 30 hours place.

Parents will be prompted every 3 months to reconfirm their eligibility – this is a simple process which requires a parent to log into their childcare account and amend any details if necessary, or press 'reconfirm' if nothing has changed.

On reconfirmation, if a parent is no longer eligible for 30 hours they will enter a grace period where they can retain their childcare for a short period of time. A child who becomes ineligible during the first half of a funding block should be funded until the end

of that funding block. A child who becomes ineligible in the latter half of the funding block should be funded until the end of the following funding block.

Autumn term eligibility

A parent can start claiming their 30 hours place the term following their child's third birthday or the term following the date the eligibility code was issued (whichever is the later). Children are eligible for 30 hours free childcare from the term after they turn 3 until they reach compulsory school age, the term following their 5th birthday. Codes cannot be used to get 30 hours free childcare once a child has taken up a reception place in a state-funded school.

For the autumn term 2017, a child will have to have turned 3 on or before the 31st August 2017 to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare. Most children who had turned 4 by 31st August will be in a reception place in the autumn term, however, 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.

Furthermore, to secure a 30 hours place for the autumn term 2017, a parent must have applied for 30 hours before the 31st August 2017.

As most 4-year-olds will have started reception in 2017¹, the main table in this ad-hoc release includes only codes generated for 3-year-olds. Figures relating to 4-year-olds are shown separately.

Eligibility codes issued

Eligibility codes are generated for children of eligible parents. This release reports on the number of eligibility codes generated via the Childcare Service and sent across to the ECS for children that were aged 3 on 31st August 2017. A code is generated as part of the application process regardless of whether they intend to take up 30 hours, therefore some parents will receive a code even if they only want Tax-Free Childcare.

Codes validated

As set out above, LAs and providers are required to validate the 30 hours eligibility codes provided by parents to ensure the code is valid and the child in question is eligible for the 30 hours offer. This release reports on the number of 30 hours eligibility codes of children aged 3 by 31st August that have been validated through the ECS by LAs and providers by 5th September. LAs and providers may continue to validate codes that were

¹ The 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2017' national statistics publication showed that 63% of 4-year-olds as at 31 Dec 2016 were in infant classes in primary schools. Children who turned 5 between 1 Sep 2016 and 31 Dec 2016 are not included in the figures.

generated before 31st August during the autumn term, therefore this figure is expected to increase as the term progresses.

Eligibility codes issued and validated for the Autumn term

There were 216,384 eligibility codes issued by 31st August for children aged three at 31st August, of which 152,829 or 71% were validated by 5th September.

Table 1: Eligibility codes issued by 31st August and validated by 5th September for children aged three at 31st August 2017

Eligibility codes issued by 31 st August	216,384
Codes validated by 5th September	152,829
Codes validated as a percentage of eligibility codes issued	71%

Notes:

- 1) The data source for this table is the Department for Education's Eligibility Checking System.
- 2) The data is a snapshot of the live Eligibility Checking System as of the 5th September.
- 3) The figures excludes all eligibility codes issued after 31st August, the deadline for applying for a 30 hours place for the autumn term. Codes issued after this date are excluded even if the parents applied by 31st August and further eligibility checks were required, although these children would be entitled to a 30 hours place in the autumn term.
- 4) Local Authorities and providers can continue to validate codes for autumn term childcare places during the term, providing the code was applied for by 31st August. Therefore the number and percentage of codes validated is still changing and will increase during the term.
- 5) These figures are not directly comparable to figures released by HMRC referring to the Childcare Service due to a number of definitional differences:
 - a. These figures refer to the number of children rather than families, some families may have 2 or more children eligible for the additional 15 hours.
 - b. These figures only include children issued a 30 hours code aged 3 at 31st August.

- c. These figures include codes in their 30 hours grace period – and those who fall under the ‘guaranteed first term’ policy.²
 - d. These figures include temporary codes which were generated by a manual process, not by the digital service. Parents in receipt of a temporary code will need to reapply via the digital service at a later date to receive a permanent code. Both the temporary and permanent codes are included in these figures.
- 6) This table excludes 6,904 codes issued and 2,709 codes validated for children aged 4 at 31st August as it is likely these children will be in reception and therefore ineligible for 30 hours free childcare. However some of these children may defer their entry into reception and continue to be eligible for the additional 15 hours offer – these children are not captured in the table above.

Future Publications

We will consider providing further ad-hoc statistics on the operational aspects of this policy during the first year of national rollout. We will also set out details of our plans for comprehensive statistics on 30 hours rollout into the ‘Education provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2018’ national statistics publication which will be published in Summer 2018.

² Parents who lose eligibility before September – these parents will be permitted to take up the additional 15 hours for the autumn term only



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