



Department  
for Education

# **30 hours free childcare: summer 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 code and this code must be validated to enable a child to access a 30 hours place.

Earlier figures for 30 hours codes issued and codes validated for the summer term 2018 are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated>

This publication provides updated figures and also includes estimates of the number children in a 30 hours place for the summer term. The summer headcount data is for a different term than the January 2018 early years census and schools census; the figures represent different points in time and will not align. The 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2018' national statistics publication, due to be released on the 28th June 2018, gives a definitive picture of the number of children in a 30 hours place in January 2018. The data sources for that publication are the early years census, the school census and the school-level annual school census. All schools, and all private, voluntary, and independent (PVI) providers receiving government funding, are required to make (through their local authority) a child-level return. These data collections are on a statutory basis through legislation, which helps ensure complete and accurate information being returned.

By comparison, the summer headcount data in this publication gives an estimate of the number of children in a 30 hours place in summer term 2018, as well as final estimates of the number of eligibility codes issued and validated in the summer term.

## 2. Data Sources

The data sources for this publication are:

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

## 3. Children in a 30 hours place

During the end of May and beginning of June 2018 all local authorities in England were requested to provide 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 summer term i.e. a 30 hours place and were asked to note whether the figure provided was an actual or estimate. Returns were received from all 152 local authorities with 49% returning actual figures and 51% estimates.

## 4. 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 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 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 code. Once the 30 hours 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 eligibility codes issued to parents and validated by providers in the summer term, initially in the March 2018 statistical publication '30 hours free childcare: spring term 2018', and subsequently updated through management information releases, the last of which was published on 10 May 2018. The cut off date for summer applications was the 31 March 2018. This methodology has now been updated to include a wider range of eligibility codes that are assumed to relate to the summer term. Additionally data cleansing has been applied to identify and remove duplicate codes relating to the same child.

### 4.1. Methodology

#### Codes issued

An eligibility code is assumed to relate to the summer term under the following conditions:

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

- a. The code was issued on or before the 31 March 2018 or the code validity start date was on or before the 31 March 2018; and
  - i) The code validity end date is within or after the summer term; and
  - ii) The code validity end date is in the second half of the spring term meaning the child could be in their grace period during the summer term if they were in a place in spring. This excludes codes where the child was too young to be in a 30 hours place during the spring term as they are not eligible, since you cannot start a 30 hours place in a grace period; or
- b. The code was generated manually by the Childcare Service after the March deadline for the summer term. Temporary codes are issued to parents who encountered problems when trying to apply for 30 hours free childcare using the Childcare Service and then contacted the Childcare Service Helpline. Following a discussion with the call centre staff, if a parent met the eligibility criteria, then they were issued a temporary code which they could take to their provider; or
- c. The parent applied to the Childcare Service on or before the 31 March for summer term, but did not receive their code until April. Local authorities may have chosen to exercise discretion and fund 30 hours places in the summer term for parents who applied by, or had had attempted to apply by, the 31 March and did not receive their code until shortly after this.

Information on the child's age, the code validity start date and the code validity end date is available from the ECS. For codes in category (d) and (e) above, only codes within the ECS before the 1 May 2018 were included. Information on the application date was taken from HMRC's Childcare Service data.

Where identifiable, duplicates are removed from the data when multiple codes were issued to the same child. For example, where a temporary code was initially provided and the parent later received a digital 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.

Most children who had turned 4 by 31 August 2017 will have been in a reception place in the autumn term 2017, 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 until the term following their fifth birthday. Only children who were 3 at 31 August 2017 and additionally those who turned 3 by 31 December 2017 or by 31 March 2018 are included in the codes issued and validated figures for the summer term because it is not possible to identify whether a code was issued to a parent of a 4-year-old applying for Tax-Free Childcare only. Figures for 4-year-olds are included separately in the publication and the table footnotes.

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

## **Codes validated**

Codes validated are the subset of codes issued for the summer term that have been checked by a provider or local authority since the 15 January and by 13 June 2018. Local authorities began carrying out their early years census and schools census on the week commencing the 15 January, therefore checks made before this date are less likely to relate to the summer term.

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



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