



28 March 2019

This is the fifth termly experimental statistics publication on the use of 30 hours free childcare following the national rollout of the offer in September 2017. It follows the four previous experimental statistical publications¹ and the management information updates². This publication includes estimates for the spring term 2019 of the number of children in a 30 hours place from local authorities, as well as final estimates of the number of eligibility codes issued and validated. Unless otherwise stated the spring term referred to in this document is the spring term 2019.

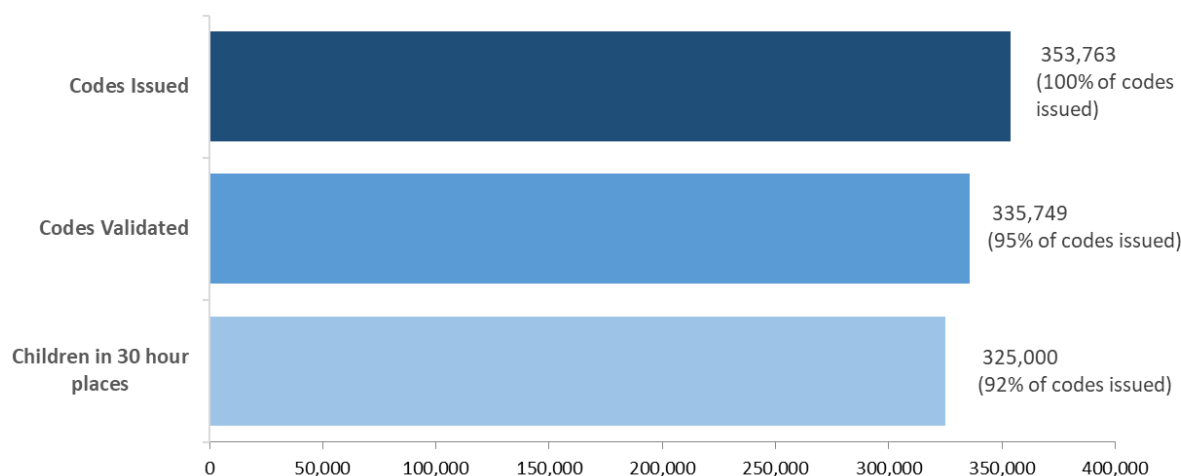
Around 325,000 children were in a 30 hours place during the spring term.

In the fifth term following the national rollout of 30 hours free childcare, known as the spring term (1 January to 31 March 2019), an estimated 325,000 children were in a 30 hours place. This is according to local authority data returns made during February and March. This compares to the 294,000 children who were estimated to be in a 30 hours place during the spring term 2018 (1 January to 31 March 2018).

The total number of children in a 30 hours place is equal to 97% of the eligibility codes issued to parents for the spring term.

There were 353,763 eligibility codes issued to parents for the spring term, of which 95% were validated by local authorities or providers. The number of children in a 30 hours place represents 97% of validated codes and 92% of all codes issued. These figures were 99% and 94% respectively in the 2018 autumn term and 95% and 90% respectively in the 2018 summer term.

Figure A: Comparison of children in a 30 hours place with eligibility codes issued and validated



¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-childcare-and-early-years>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated>

Contents

1.	Children in a 30 hours place	3
2.	Codes issued and validated	3
3.	Comparison of children in a 30 hours place with codes issued and validated in spring 2018	4
4.	Comparison of children in a 30 hours place, codes issued and validated percentages in spring 2018 and spring 2019	4
5.	Summer term codes issued and validated	5
6.	Accompanying tables.....	6
7.	Further information is available	6
8.	Official Statistics	6
9.	Technical information.....	7
10.	Get in touch	7
	Media enquiries	7
	Other enquiries/feedback.....	7

About this publication

This statistical publication provides experimental statistics on the use of 30 hours free childcare in the fifth term of national rollout, from 1 January–31 March 2019. This is known as the spring term. It includes:

- estimates of the number of children in a 30 hours place during the spring term based on local authority data returns,
- final estimates of number of eligibility codes issued and validated for the spring term,
- the initial estimate for the number of eligibility codes issued and validated for the summer term.

We are aware that many local authorities were still in the process of finalising and refining their figures when they submitted their spring headcount data, and therefore the headcount data in this publication should be treated as indicative. In June 2019, the 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2019' national statistics publication will be released, which will give a definitive picture of the number of children in a 30 hours place in January 2019.

Please see the technical note published alongside this publication for further information.

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. Since 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.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the publication:

- Main Table (Excel.xls)

The accompanying quality and methodology information document, provides information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data.

Feedback

We welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at EY.ANALYSISANDRESEARCH@education.gov.uk

1. Children in a 30 hours place

There were an estimated 325,000³ children in a 30 hours place⁴ during the spring term. This figure is the sum of the voluntary returns from local authorities of the number of children in a 30 hours place for the spring term. 31% of the 151 local authorities that responded provided estimates, rather than actual headcount, of the number of children in a 30 hours place. One local authority provided no data, so an estimation method has therefore been used to derive the national estimate⁵.

Spring 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 their 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 spring term, to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare a child will have to have turned 3 on or before the 31 December 2018. Most children who had turned 4 by 31 August 2018 will be in a reception place in the spring term, however, a small number of parents of these 4-year-olds may have chosen to defer their child's entry into reception and in these circumstances they would still be able to claim 30 hours free childcare. Note, the children who turn 4 after the 31 August 2018 are a different academic year to those turning 4 prior to 31 August 2018 and less likely to be in reception.

Furthermore, to secure a 30 hours place for the spring term, a parent must have received their valid 30 hours eligibility code by the 31 December 2018. However, local authorities may have chosen to exercise discretion and fund 30 hours places in the spring term for parents who applied by, or had attempted to apply by, the 31 December and did not receive their code up to 14 January.

2. Codes issued and validated

The department has previously released figures on the number of eligibility codes issued to parents and validated by local authorities or providers for the spring term. The number of codes issued and validated were included in a management information publication published in January⁶. These figures have been updated as set out in Table 1 below. This aligns with the process followed each term in the 2017/18 academic year and further details are provided in the technical note. In total, 95% of the 353,763 codes issued to parents were validated by providers during the spring term.

Due to the fact that parents need their eligibility code by 31 December to be eligible for the spring term and the timing of the January publication, the codes issued figure has remained the same. However, local authorities and providers can validate eligibility codes throughout the term, as they confirm childcare arrangements with parents and therefore this figure has increased slightly from 93% to 95%.

³ See technical notes for details

⁴ Children in a 30 hours place are those who are in receipt of more than 15 hours of government-funded early education. 15 hours is the universal entitlement that is available to all 3 and 4-year-olds

⁵ More details are available in the technical note

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated>

Table 1: Eligibility codes issues and validated

England, Spring term 2019

	Eligibility codes issued	Codes validated	Codes validated (%)
Spring term 2019	353,763	335,749	95%

Source: Eligibility Checking System, Department for Education

These figures exclude codes validated for children aged 4 at 31 August 2018, as it is likely these children will have taken up a reception place and are ineligible for 30 hours free childcare. However, some of these children may have deferred their entry into reception and therefore they will continue to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare and may be included in the headcount data returns from local authorities.

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.

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 Eligibility Checking System (ECS) to confirm the validity of the code. Once the 30 hours eligibility code has been validated via the ECS, the child will be able to take up their 30 hours place.

Parents will be prompted every 3 months to reconfirm their eligibility, which requires a parent to log into their childcare account and amend any details if necessary, or to confirm that their details have not changed.

On reconfirmation, if a parent is no longer eligible for 30 hours they will enter a grace period where they can continue their childcare for a short period of time, if their child is already in a 30 hours place. 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.

3. Comparison of children in a 30 hours place with codes issued and validated in spring 2018

There were an estimated 325,000 children in a 30 hours place in the spring term, representing 92% of the 353,763 codes issued to parents and 97% of the 335,749 codes validated via the ECS by a provider or local authority. We cannot account for a parents' preference and behaviour and there may be some parents who get a code, but choose not to take it to a provider and some parents may get their codes validated by a provider without taking up a place. 4-year-olds are included in the estimates of children in a 30 hours place provided by local authorities, but are not included in the codes issued and validated figures.

4. Comparison of children in a 30 hours place, codes issued and validated percentages in spring 2018 and spring 2019

Eligibility for 30 hours free childcare increases throughout the academic year as more children turn 3 and decreases in the ensuing autumn term when children move in to reception places. This publication allows for a comparison between the first and second year of national delivery of 30 hours free childcare when considered alongside the data published for spring 2018.

Table 2: Comparison of the number of children in a 30 hours place in spring 2018 and spring 2019

England, spring term 2019

	Spring 2018	Spring 2019	Percentage Change
Children in a 30 hours place	294,000	325,000	+11%

The number of children in a 30 hours place in spring 2019 has increased by 11% in comparison with spring 2018. We would expect to see variation across years as the number of eligible children will change depending on the birth cohort and parental employment.

Table 3: Percentage of codes validated and children in a 30 hours place

England, spring 2018 and spring 2019

	Spring 18	Spring 19
Codes Validated (% of codes issued)	93%	95%
Children in 30 hour places (% of codes issued)	89%	92%
Children in 30 hour places (% of codes validated)	96%	97%

Children in a 30 hours place as a percentage of codes issued and codes validated has remained stable in the spring term across the first year and second year of national delivery. Similarly, the number of 30 hours eligibility codes validated as a percentage of those issued has also remained stable.

5. Summer term codes issued and validated

As of 19 March 2019, 409,391 eligibility codes have been issued and 328,189 have been validated for the summer term 2019. This provides an early indication of the number of codes issued for the summer term, however parents can continue to apply for an eligibility code until the 31 March 2019 and providers will continue to validate codes throughout the spring term as parents confirm their childcare arrangements so these figures will continue to rise.

Table 4: Eligibility codes issues and validated

England, Summer term 2019, data extract as of 19 March 2019

	Eligibility codes issued	Codes validated	Codes validated (%)
Summer term 2019	409,391	328,189	80%

Source: Eligibility Checking System, Department for Education

These figures do not include codes issued and validated for children aged 4 at 31 August, as it is likely these children will have taken up a reception place therefore are ineligible for 30 hours free childcare. However, some of these children may defer their entry into reception and therefore they will continue to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare and take up a place in the summer term.

Summer term eligibility

For the summer term 2019, a child will have turned 3 on or before the 31 March 2019 to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare. To secure a 30 hours place, a parent should have received their 30 hours eligibility code by the 31 March 2019.

6. Accompanying tables

The following table is available in Excel format on the department's statistics website:

Local authority and regional tables

- 1 Eligibility codes issued and validated and number of children in a 30 hours place, by region and local authority

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

- The number of children in a 30 hours place is taken from voluntary headcount data returns submitted by local authorities during February and the beginning of March 2019. 31% of local authorities have provided estimates as final data was not yet available. One local authority provided no data, so an estimation method has therefore been used to derive the national and regional estimates⁷.
- Codes issued for children aged 4 at 31 August 2018 have been excluded from the codes issued and codes validated data as it is likely these children will have taken up a reception place and therefore are ineligible for 30 hours free childcare. However, some of these children may defer their entry into reception and continue to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare and may be included in the headcount data returns from local authorities.

7. Further information is available

Previous ad-hoc and management information is available on the [30 hours free childcare: eligibility codes issued and validated website](#). Statistical publication relating to the final estimates for each term since autumn 2017 available on the department's [childcare and early years statistics website](#).

The following are also available on the department's [childcare and early years statistics website](#):

- Statistical publications on provision for children under five years of age in England
- Childcare and early years providers survey
- Childcare and early years survey of parents

HMRC publishes information on [tax free childcare statistics](#). Because Tax-Free Childcare statistics only publishes numbers of open 30 hours free childcare accounts where they also have an open Tax-Free Childcare account, this publication should not be used as the lead source for 30 hours free childcare data. Additionally, HMRC's 30 hours data only shows where an account has been opened, and is within its eligibility period and not all of these families will necessarily be making use of the 30 hours offer.

8. Official Statistics

These are Official Statistics and have been produced in line with Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

This can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;

⁷ More details are available in the technical note

- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

9. Technical information

A quality and methodology information document accompanies this statistical publication. This provides further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

10. Get in touch

Media enquiries

Press Office News Desk, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Tel: 020 7783 8300

Other enquiries/feedback

Gordon Pal, Early Years Analysis, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT Tel: 0114 274 2933 Email: EY.ANALYSISANDRESEARCH@education.gov.uk



Department for Education

© Crown copyright 2019

This publication (not including logos) is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

To view this licence:

visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

email psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

write to Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London, TW9 4DU

About this publication:

enquiries Gordon Pal, Early Years Analysis, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT. Tel: 0114 274 2933 Email:

EY.ANALYSISANDRESEARCH@education.gov.uk

Reference: [30 Hours Free Childcare Spring term, 2019]



Follow us on Twitter:
[@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)



Like us on Facebook:
facebook.com/educationgovuk