



Department
for Education

Extended childcare entitlement: codes issued

**Ad-hoc MI data on codes issued to
eligible parents of two-year-olds**

February 2024

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Extended childcare entitlement for two-year-olds

All three and four-year-olds in England are entitled to 15 hours a week of free early education for 38 weeks of the year (term-time). In addition, since September 2017 three- and four-year-olds from 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, have been entitled to 30 hours free childcare per week, for 38 weeks a year.

In 2023 the government announced that the entitlement would be extended to 30 hours free childcare per week for eligible working families for children aged nine months and older. The rollout of this policy is staggered such that from April 2024 eligible parents of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours free childcare. From September 2024 eligible working parents of children from the age of nine months will be able to access 15 hours free childcare, and from September 2025 all children aged nine months and above from eligible working families will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks a year.

Management information

Parents apply and have their eligibility checked for the free childcare offer (also known as their 'entitlement') via HMRC's Childcare Service. If a parent is found to be eligible, the Childcare Service will send an eligibility code to the parent and log that code in the Eligibility Checking System (ECS). Parents take their eligibility code to their chosen childcare provider and the provider validates the eligibility code through their LA and the ECS. A parent must have generated an eligibility code and this must be validated to enable a child to access the offer.

Purpose of this release

This release provides the number of eligibility codes issued to parents as at 31 January 2024 inclusive. This is to provide transparency around the rollout of the extended entitlement. It is a likely indication of demand for the childcare entitlement.

Future releases

The number of codes issued to parents and validated by providers will be made available when comprehensive data for the term beginning April 2024 is available.

Number of codes issued

Between 2 January and 31 January 2024 inclusive, 102,480 codes were issued to parents or carers.

The accompanying table includes data on codes issued at local authority level.

Data collection and methodology

The data is taken from DfE's Eligibility Checking System between 2nd January 2024, when the window opened for parents to apply for the new 15-hour entitlement for the term starting April 2024, and 31st January 2024 inclusive.

Codes issued

Codes issued were defined by identifying the number of applications made by parents each day which were both eligible for the 2-year-old offer and which generated an eligibility code. This is also referred to as the number of eligibility codes. A parent is eligible if they meet the work-related criteria set out above and if their child will be aged two on 1st April 2024. They are then given an eligibility code which they then take to their chosen childcare provider to access the offer.

Local authority level data is based on parent's residence as submitted in the application to HMRC.

Data quality

Data was collected from HMRC's Childcare Service and aggregated by DfE from individual parent applications. The data was subject to a number of quality checks, including:

- Identification of the first issuance of each unique code to remove duplicates, such as when the same code has been used to reconfirm a place.
- Dual-running postcode to LA data matching.

Data protection

The data has been handled in accordance with DfE's data protection policy, and any personal details such as National Insurance number and names have been removed during the aggregation to protect individual identities.

Limitations

The figures presented here are drawn from the ECS which is an administrative data system and are provided to aid transparency. The numbers of codes issued does not necessarily become the number of children taking an entitlement funded place. It is possible that duplicate codes exist in the data, where a parent applies more than once for a code or where manual codes have been issued, and possible that parents obtain eligibility codes that they do not use. Caution is therefore advised when interpreting these figures.

Each code has been assigned to an upper tier Local Authority (LA) area on the basis of the postcode submitted to the Childcare Service and logged in the ECS. The latest ONS directory identifies postcodes in each LA as at November 2023. In a small number of

cases codes could not be match to a November 2023 LA, for example for newly built homes. It may also be the result of a typo in the postcode when it was submitted by the applicant.



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