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▾ Expansion to early childcare entitlements: eligibility codes issued and validated

March 2026

# Expansion to early childcare entitlements: eligibility codes issued and validated

# Management information on eligibility codes for the extended childcare entitlement for working parents.

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## **Background information**

This publication provides a summary of the number of eligibility codes issued to parents of children aged nine months to two years old, and the number of codes that have been validated by providers to date.

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# Headline facts and figures

Codes issued

**585,708**

Autumn 2025 final data

Codes validated

**555,150**

Autumn 2025 final data

Percentage of codes validated

**95%**

Autumn 2025 final data

Codes issued

**579,692**

Spring 2026 (Ongoing)

Codes validated

**546,067**

Spring 2026 (Ongoing)

Percentage of codes validated

**94%**

Spring 2026 (Ongoing)

This publication provides a summary of the number of eligibility codes issued to parents of children aged nine months to two years old, and the number of codes that have been validated by providers to date.

The data is taken from DfE's Eligibility Checking System (ECS).

This is management information data, aggregating codes by local authority (using child postcodes), age of child (9 months to 12 months vs one-year-olds vs two-year-olds), and the term for which the code was applied (Autumn 2025 and Spring 2026). This will be the final publication relating to the Autumn Term 2025, and the first publication of data relating to the Spring Term 2026.

This is the first time that number of parents benefiting from the entitlement have been published as well as the codes issued and validated by deprivation, based on Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI).

These counts reflect data as at midnight on the 31st December 2025 (end of Autumn term) and midnight on 17th March 2026 (Spring term) - see methodology for more details.

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## About these statistics

In order to access a government-funded childcare entitlement place, parents and carers must apply for an eligibility code which is then validated by early years providers or local authorities when a place has been secured at an early years setting. This release provides the number of eligibility codes issued to parents and the number of codes validated by providers or local authorities as at the end of 17th March 2026 (or end of term for Autumn). In addition to this, the latest release also introduces—for the first time—estimates of the number of parents who have benefited from the entitlement, as well as validation rates by area-level deprivation using Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) deciles.

Autumn term ran from 1st September to 31st December and Spring term will run from 1st January to 31st March 2026, and so remains ongoing.

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# National codes issued, validated, and percentage validated by age of child and term

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**Codes issued, validated, and percentage validated nationally (all terms and ages of children)**

		2025/26 Spring term	2025/26 Autumn term
<b>Total</b>	<b>Codes issued</b>	579,692	585,708
	<b>Codes validated</b>	546,067	555,150
	<b>Percentage of codes validated</b>	94%	95%
<b>9 months - 12 months</b>	<b>Codes issued</b>	38,561	45,183
	<b>Codes validated</b>	35,582	42,545
	<b>Percentage of codes validated</b>	92%	94%
<b>One-year-olds</b>	<b>Codes issued</b>	241,279	243,421
	<b>Codes validated</b>	225,426	228,563
	<b>Percentage of codes validated</b>	93%	94%
<b>Two-year-olds</b>	<b>Codes issued</b>	299,852	297,104
	<b>Codes validated</b>	285,059	284,042
	<b>Percentage of codes validated</b>	95%	96%

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Source: Headline stats spring release

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## LA Map of Validation Rates

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**Percentage of codes validated for Autumn 2025 term, All Local Authorities**

		2025
North East	County Durham	95%
	Darlington	93%
	Gateshead	95%
	Hartlepool	96%
	Middlesbrough	93%
	Newcastle upon Tyne	96%
	North Tyneside	96%
	...	...

<b>Northumberland</b>	96%
<b>Redcar and Cleveland</b>	94%
<b>South Tyneside</b>	94%
<b>Stockton-on-Tees</b>	96%
<b>Sunderland</b>	94%

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**North West**

<b>Blackburn with Darwen</b>	94%
<b>Blackpool</b>	95%
<b>Bolton</b>	95%
<b>Bury</b>	96%
<b>Cheshire East</b>	96%
<b>Cheshire West and Chester</b>	96%
<b>Cumberland</b>	97%
<b>Halton</b>	96%
<b>Knowsley</b>	95%
<b>Lancashire</b>	96%
<b>Liverpool</b>	96%
<b>Manchester</b>	93%
<b>Oldham</b>	93%
<b>Rochdale</b>	96%
<b>Salford</b>	96%
<b>Sefton</b>	96%
<b>St Helens</b>	97%

<b>St. Helens</b>	97%
<b>Stockport</b>	96%
<b>Tameside</b>	95%
<b>Trafford</b>	97%
<b>Warrington</b>	97%
<b>Westmorland and Furness</b>	96%
<b>Wigan</b>	96%
<b>Wirral</b>	97%

**Yorkshire and The Humber**

<b>Barnsley</b>	95%
<b>Bradford</b>	95%
<b>Calderdale</b>	97%
<b>Doncaster</b>	95%
<b>East Riding of Yorkshire</b>	97%
<b>Kingston upon Hull, City of</b>	95%
<b>Kirklees</b>	96%
<b>Leeds</b>	96%
<b>North East Lincolnshire</b>	96%
<b>North Lincolnshire</b>	96%
<b>North Yorkshire</b>	97%
<b>Rotherham</b>	95%
<b>Sheffield</b>	95%
<b>Wakefield</b>	95%

	<b>York</b>	97%
<b>East Midlands</b>	<b>Derby</b>	95%
	<b>Derbyshire</b>	96%
	<b>Leicester</b>	91%
	<b>Leicestershire</b>	96%
	<b>Lincolnshire</b>	96%
	<b>North Northamptonshire</b>	95%
	<b>Nottingham</b>	93%
	<b>Nottinghamshire</b>	96%
	<b>Rutland</b>	97%
	<b>West Northamptonshire</b>	94%
<b>West Midlands</b>	<b>Birmingham</b>	93%
	<b>Coventry</b>	94%
	<b>Dudley</b>	95%
	<b>Herefordshire, County of</b>	95%
	<b>Sandwell</b>	92%
	<b>Shropshire</b>	96%
	<b>Solihull</b>	96%
	<b>Staffordshire</b>	96%
	<b>Stoke-on-Trent</b>	94%
	<b>Telford and Wrekin</b>	95%

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<b>Walsall</b>	93%
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<b>Warwickshire</b>	95%
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<b>Wolverhampton</b>	92%
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<b>Worcestershire</b>	96%
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**East of England**

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<b>Bedford</b>	93%
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<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	95%
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<b>Central Bedfordshire</b>	95%
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<b>Essex</b>	95%
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<b>Hertfordshire</b>	95%
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<b>Luton</b>	90%
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<b>Norfolk</b>	94%
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<b>Peterborough</b>	95%
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<b>Southend-on-Sea</b>	94%
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<b>Suffolk</b>	94%
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<b>Thurrock</b>	91%
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**London**

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<b>Barking and Dagenham</b>	89%
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<b>Barnet</b>	93%
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<b>Bexley</b>	94%
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<b>Brent</b>	91%
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<b>Bromley</b>	95%
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<b>Camden</b>	88%
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<b>City of London</b>	86%
<b>Croydon</b>	94%
<b>Ealing</b>	91%
<b>Enfield</b>	92%
<b>Greenwich</b>	92%
<b>Hackney</b>	94%
<b>Hammersmith and Fulham</b>	88%
<b>Haringey</b>	93%
<b>Harrow</b>	90%
<b>Havering</b>	93%
<b>Hillingdon</b>	92%
<b>Hounslow</b>	89%
<b>Islington</b>	90%
<b>Kensington and Chelsea</b>	89%
<b>Kingston upon Thames</b>	93%
<b>Lambeth</b>	92%
<b>Lewisham</b>	94%
<b>Merton</b>	93%
<b>Newham</b>	89%
<b>Redbridge</b>	91%
<b>Richmond upon Thames</b>	94%

<b>Southwark</b>	92%
<b>Sutton</b>	93%
<b>Tower Hamlets</b>	86%
<b>Waltham Forest</b>	93%
<b>Wandsworth</b>	91%
<b>Westminster</b>	89%

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**South East**

<b>Bracknell Forest</b>	94%
<b>Brighton and Hove</b>	97%
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	95%
<b>East Sussex</b>	95%
<b>Hampshire</b>	96%
<b>Isle of Wight</b>	96%
<b>Kent</b>	94%
<b>Medway</b>	93%
<b>Milton Keynes</b>	94%
<b>Oxfordshire</b>	94%
<b>Portsmouth</b>	95%
<b>Reading</b>	93%
<b>Slough</b>	90%
<b>Southampton</b>	93%
<b>Surrey</b>	94%

	<b>West Berkshire</b>	95%
	<b>West Sussex</b>	95%
	<b>Windsor and Maidenhead</b>	95%
	<b>Wokingham</b>	94%
<b>South West</b>	<b>Bath and North East Somerset</b>	96%
	<b>Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole</b>	96%
	<b>Bristol, City of</b>	95%
	<b>Cornwall</b>	96%
	<b>Devon</b>	96%
	<b>Dorset</b>	95%
	<b>Gloucestershire</b>	95%
	<b>Isles of Scilly</b>	100%
	<b>North Somerset</b>	96%
	<b>Plymouth</b>	96%
	<b>Somerset</b>	96%
	<b>South Gloucestershire</b>	95%
	<b>Swindon</b>	95%
<b>Torbay</b>	95%	
	<b>Wiltshire</b>	96%

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1. Eligibility Checking Service data was aggregated to local authorities using the child's postcode, and the ONS February 2026 postcode directory. Sometimes, a geography cannot be assigned, and the aggregate of LAs may not equal the full national total. This also means that validation rates can only be between 0% and 100%, as the same postcode is used for both (unlike in other statistics relating to entitlements).
2. "Existing" users are defined as those who held an eligible code in the term immediately preceding the term shown. By contrast, "new" users are those whose codes have only just become eligible, whether because the child has reached the qualifying age or because the application was submitted during the current term.

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Source: Autumn 2025 codes issued and validated

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### Percentage of codes validated for Spring 2026, All Local Authorities

2026

**North East**

<b>County Durham</b>	94%
<b>Darlington</b>	91%
<b>Gateshead</b>	95%
<b>Hartlepool</b>	95%
<b>Middlesbrough</b>	92%
<b>Newcastle upon Tyne</b>	95%
<b>North Tyneside</b>	96%
<b>Northumberland</b>	96%
<b>Redcar and Cleveland</b>	95%
<b>South Tyneside</b>	94%
<b>Stockton-on-Tees</b>	95%
<b>Sunderland</b>	94%

**North West**

<b>Blackburn with Darwen</b>	92%
<b>Blackpool</b>	94%
<b>Bolton</b>	94%
<b>Bury</b>	95%
<b>Cheshire East</b>	96%
<b>Cheshire West and Chester</b>	96%
<b>Cumberland</b>	96%
<b>Halton</b>	95%
<b>Knowsley</b>	95%

<b>Lancashire</b>	96%
<b>Liverpool</b>	95%
<b>Manchester</b>	92%
<b>Oldham</b>	93%
<b>Rochdale</b>	94%
<b>Salford</b>	96%
<b>Sefton</b>	95%
<b>St. Helens</b>	96%
<b>Stockport</b>	96%
<b>Tameside</b>	95%
<b>Trafford</b>	97%
<b>Warrington</b>	97%
<b>Westmorland and Furness</b>	96%
<b>Wigan</b>	95%
<b>Wirral</b>	96%

**Yorkshire and The Humber**

<b>Barnsley</b>	94%
<b>Bradford</b>	95%
<b>Calderdale</b>	96%
<b>Doncaster</b>	94%
<b>East Riding of Yorkshire</b>	96%
<b>Kingston upon Hull, City of</b>	95%
<b>Kirklees</b>	96%

<b>Leeds</b>	90%
<b>Leeds</b>	95%
<b>North East Lincolnshire</b>	95%
<b>North Lincolnshire</b>	94%
<b>North Yorkshire</b>	97%
<b>Rotherham</b>	94%
<b>Sheffield</b>	94%
<b>Wakefield</b>	95%
<b>York</b>	97%

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**East Midlands**

<b>Derby</b>	94%
<b>Derbyshire</b>	95%
<b>Leicester</b>	89%
<b>Leicestershire</b>	96%
<b>Lincolnshire</b>	96%
<b>North Northamptonshire</b>	95%
<b>Nottingham</b>	92%
<b>Nottinghamshire</b>	95%
<b>Rutland</b>	96%
<b>West Northamptonshire</b>	94%

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**West Midlands**

<b>Birmingham</b>	92%
<b>Coventry</b>	93%
<b>Dudlev</b>	93%

	<b>Herefordshire, County of</b>	94%
	<b>Sandwell</b>	91%
	<b>Shropshire</b>	96%
	<b>Solihull</b>	95%
	<b>Staffordshire</b>	96%
	<b>Stoke-on-Trent</b>	94%
	<b>Telford and Wrekin</b>	94%
	<b>Walsall</b>	92%
	<b>Warwickshire</b>	95%
	<b>Wolverhampton</b>	92%
	<b>Worcestershire</b>	95%

**East of England**

	<b>Bedford</b>	92%
	<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	95%
	<b>Central Bedfordshire</b>	94%
	<b>Essex</b>	95%
	<b>Hertfordshire</b>	94%
	<b>Luton</b>	89%
	<b>Norfolk</b>	94%
	<b>Peterborough</b>	94%
	<b>Southend-on-Sea</b>	94%
	<b>Suffolk</b>	93%

	<b>Thurrock</b>	90%
<b>London</b>	<b>Barking and Dagenham</b>	88%
	<b>Barnet</b>	93%
	<b>Bexley</b>	93%
	<b>Brent</b>	89%
	<b>Bromley</b>	95%
	<b>Camden</b>	88%
	<b>City of London</b>	91%
	<b>Croydon</b>	93%
	<b>Ealing</b>	91%
	<b>Enfield</b>	91%
	<b>Greenwich</b>	92%
	<b>Hackney</b>	94%
	<b>Hammersmith and Fulham</b>	88%
	<b>Haringey</b>	92%
	<b>Harrow</b>	90%
	<b>Havering</b>	92%
	<b>Hillingdon</b>	90%
<b>Hounslow</b>	88%	
<b>Islington</b>	90%	
<b>Kensington and Chelsea</b>	87%	

<b>Kingston upon Thames</b>	93%
<b>Lambeth</b>	91%
<b>Lewisham</b>	94%
<b>Merton</b>	93%
<b>Newham</b>	88%
<b>Redbridge</b>	90%
<b>Richmond upon Thames</b>	94%
<b>Southwark</b>	92%
<b>Sutton</b>	93%
<b>Tower Hamlets</b>	87%
<b>Waltham Forest</b>	91%
<b>Wandsworth</b>	91%
<b>Westminster</b>	88%
<b>South East</b>	
<b>Bracknell Forest</b>	94%
<b>Brighton and Hove</b>	96%
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	94%
<b>East Sussex</b>	94%
<b>Hampshire</b>	96%
<b>Isle of Wight</b>	95%
<b>Kent</b>	93%
<b>Medway</b>	91%

<b>Milton Keynes</b>	93%
<b>Oxfordshire</b>	94%
<b>Portsmouth</b>	96%
<b>Reading</b>	93%
<b>Slough</b>	90%
<b>Southampton</b>	92%
<b>Surrey</b>	94%
<b>West Berkshire</b>	95%
<b>West Sussex</b>	95%
<b>Windsor and Maidenhead</b>	94%
<b>Wokingham</b>	94%
<b>South West</b>	
<b>Bath and North East Somerset</b>	96%
<b>Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole</b>	96%
<b>Bristol, City of</b>	95%
<b>Cornwall</b>	96%
<b>Devon</b>	96%
<b>Dorset</b>	95%
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	95%
<b>Isles of Scilly</b>	92%
<b>North Somerset</b>	95%
<b>Plymouth</b>	96%

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<b>Somerset</b>	96%
<b>South Gloucestershire</b>	95%
<b>Swindon</b>	93%
<b>Torbay</b>	94%
<b>Wiltshire</b>	96%

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## Footnotes

1. Eligibility Checking Service data was aggregated to local authorities using the child's postcode, and the ONS February 2026 postcode directory. Sometimes, a geography cannot be assigned, and the aggregate of LAs may not equal the full national total. This also means that validation rates can only be between 0% and 100%, as the same postcode is used for both (unlike in other statistics relating to entitlements).
2. “Existing” users are defined as those who held an eligible code in the term immediately preceding the term shown. By contrast, “new” users are those whose codes have only just become eligible, whether because the child has reached the qualifying age or because the application was submitted during the current term.

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Source: Spring 2026 codes issued and validated

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## Codes issued, validated, and percentage validated by IDACI

The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) is one of the components of the Indices of Deprivation for England. It measures the proportion of children aged 0–15 living in income-deprived households within each Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA). Nationally, LSOAs are grouped into ten deciles, where Decile 1 represents the most deprived areas and Decile 10 the least deprived.

This section presents validation rates for eligibility codes issued for Autumn 2025 and Spring 2026 terms, broken down by IDACI decile. It shows the proportion of codes validated for existing users, new users, and all users combined, highlighting how validation patterns vary across areas with different levels of deprivation.

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#### **Percentage of codes validated by IDACI (Deprivation) Deciles for Autumn term 2025**

	<b>New</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1</b>	88%	93%	91%
<b>2</b>	89%	94%	92%
<b>3</b>	90%	95%	93%
<b>4</b>	91%	95%	94%
<b>5</b>	92%	96%	95%
<b>6</b>	92%	97%	95%
<b>7</b>	93%	97%	96%
<b>8</b>	93%	97%	96%
<b>9</b>	93%	97%	96%
<b>10</b>	94%	97%	96%

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## Footnotes

1. Eligibility Checking Service data was aggregated to local authorities using the child's postcode, and the ONS February 2026 postcode directory. Sometimes, a geography cannot be assigned, and the aggregate of LAs may not equal the full national total. This also means that validation rates can only be between 0% and 100%, as the same postcode is used for both (unlike in other statistics relating to entitlements).
2. “Existing” users are defined as those who held an eligible code in the term immediately preceding the term shown. By contrast, “new” users are those whose codes have only just become eligible, whether because the child has reached the qualifying age or because the application was submitted during the current term.

Source: Autumn 2025 codes issued and validated by IDACI

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### Percentage of codes validated by IDACI for Spring term 2026

	New	Existing	Total
1	83%	92%	90%
2	84%	93%	92%
3	85%	94%	92%
4	87%	95%	94%
5	88%	96%	94%
6	89%	96%	95%
7	89%	96%	95%
8	90%	97%	96%
9	91%	97%	96%
10	91%	97%	96%

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1. Eligibility Checking Service data was aggregated to local authorities using the child's postcode, and the ONS February 2026 postcode directory. Sometimes, a geography cannot be assigned, and the aggregate of LAs may not equal the full national total. This also means that validation rates can only be between 0% and 100%, as the same postcode is used for both (unlike in other statistics relating to entitlements).
2. “Existing” users are defined as those who held an eligible code in the term immediately preceding the term shown. By contrast, “new” users are those whose codes have only just become eligible, whether because the child has reached the qualifying age or because the application was submitted during the current term.

Source: Spring 2026 codes issued and validated by IDACI

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# Number of Parents Benefiting from the Entitlement

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## Number of Parents Benefiting from Entitlement in England, Autumn 2025

	2025
Parents with a code issued for 9 months to two-year-olds (Autumn term)	1,030,732
Parents with a code validated for 9 months to two-year-olds (Autumn term)	984,093
Percentage of parents with a validated code	95%

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### Footnotes

1. Data based on the address of the eldest child.

Source: Autumn 2025 Number of Parents

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## Number of Parents Benefiting from Entitlement in England, Spring 2026

	2026
Parents with a code issued for 9 months to two-year-olds (Spring term)	1,021,694
Parents with a code validated for 9 months to two-year-olds (Spring term)	969,625
Percentage of parents with a validated code	95%

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[Data symbols](#) 

### Footnotes

1. Data based on the address of the eldest child.

Source: Spring 2026 Number of Parents

### Explore and edit this data online

Use our table tool to explore this data.

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# Background to the policy

All three and four-year-olds in England are entitled to 15 hours a week of funded 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 was staggered such that from April 2024 eligible parents of two-year-olds were able to access 15 hours free childcare. From September 2024 eligible working parents of children from the age of nine months were able to access 15 hours free childcare, and from September 2025 all children aged nine months and above from eligible working families began accessing 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks a year.

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# Background to the data source

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 checks that the eligibility code is valid. This is recorded via the ECS and is referred to throughout this publication as being 'validated'. A parent must have generated an eligibility code, in advance of the start of term, and this must be validated to enable a child to access the offer.

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# Interpreting the data

Typically, fewer eligibility codes for childcare entitlement offers are validated than are issued ([see methodology](#)). The proportion of codes validated can be impacted by several factors, including:

- Parental behaviour. Parents may have applied for a code in advance of the term but subsequently decided that their child was not ready to attend a formal setting by the time the term began. Similarly, the parent may have an issued code but yet to arrange or choose a preferred provider, or their child may not yet have taken up their place at their preferred provider.
- Provider behaviour. The local chosen provider may not have a place available to offer, or may not offer entitlement funded hours. In these cases, the code is not validated, but the child may or may not be attending. This could also reflect a delay (a) while the provider makes a decision, for example if waiting for funding rate confirmation from their local authority, or (b) if the provider routinely validates codes for places taken up later in the term.
- Miscellaneous. There may be issues or delays in the ECS system, meaning a code was issued but not validated. For example, the code may have been issued but the LA has not validated the code, despite a provider confirming the place. Codes issued reflect codes applied for by the application deadline, though a small number continue to be processed and issued beyond this date. This means a small number of parents may not have had chance to validate the code with their chosen provider and LA by the 30th April. Additionally, some codes were automatically issued to parents with Tax-Free Childcare accounts who may not have intended to apply for one (see methodology section for more details).

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## Contact us

If you have a specific enquiry about Expansion to early childcare entitlements: eligibility codes issued and validated statistics and data:

### Early Years Analysis and Research Unit

Email: [EY.AnalysisANDResearch@education.gov.uk](mailto:EY.AnalysisANDResearch@education.gov.uk)

Contact name: Thabang Nonyane

### Press office

If you have a media enquiry:

Telephone: 020 7783 8300

### Public enquiries

If you have a general enquiry about the Department for Education (DfE) or education:

Phone: 0370 000 2288

### Opening times

Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 5.30pm (closed on bank holidays)

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