

Working Parent Entitlement - frequently asked questions

When will the parent / carer find out if they are eligible?

When a parent / carer applies they may find out if they're eligible straight away, but it can take longer if they need to provide further information. Once their application has been approved, they'll get a code for free childcare to give to their chosen childcare provider.

What happens once the parent / carer receives a code?

They'll need to give the code to their chosen childcare provider, along with their National Insurance Number and child's date of birth.

The childcare provider will check the code and then allocate their child a place, if available.

It is recommended that parents / carers speak to their chosen provider to see if they are able to offer them a place.

Some providers are able to amend invoices if they have issued them before a parent / carer has received their code. It is recommended for the parent / carer to speak to their provider if they are in this situation.

How is a parent / carers eligibility calculated?

Eligibility is calculated on an individual basis rather than by household. This means that if a parent / carer has a partner who lives with them, they must both individually earn between these two amounts. There is an exception to this if they are in a couple and one person is claiming one of the following benefits:

- Carer's Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance or
- Certain additional elements of Universal Credit

In which case they may still be eligible.

Can a parent / carer apply for a code whilst they are on maternity, paternity or adoption leave?

If a parent / carer is applying for childcare for an older child, who is not the subject of the parental leave, they can apply as normal.

They can also apply for the child that is the subject of the parental leave, though when they return to work will affect when they can take up the childcare. The dates below apply:

Date of starting or returning to work	When a parent / carer can apply from	When parent / carers can access the entitlements from
1 October to 31 January	1 September to 31 December	1 January
1 February to 30 April	1 January to 31 March	1 April
1 May to 30 September	1 April to 31 August	1 September

If the parent / carer is eligible for Universal Credit can they get the working parent's entitlements?

Yes, if they meet the eligibility criteria. Whilst they cannot claim Universal Credit and Tax-Free Childcare at the same time, those on Universal Credit will still be able to claim the working parents entitlement, as long as they meet the [eligibility criteria](#) (GOV.UK).

This will not affect their ability to claim Universal Credit. If they are taking up more than 15 hours childcare (or 30 hours if they are also using the universal entitlement), they can claim Universal Credit Childcare, which can support them with up to 85% of the cost of additional childcare they pay for outside of their entitlement to 15 hours. Please see [Universal Credit childcare costs](#) (GOV.UK) for more information.

Alternatively, there is a separate entitlement which means that parents of 2-year-olds who are already receiving some additional forms of support, such as Universal Credit or tax credits, can receive [15 hours of early learning for 2-year-olds](#). This is separate from the new entitlement for working parents.

All parents / carers regardless of employment status, family circumstances, or income levels are eligible for the universal [15 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds](#).

How often do parents / carers need to log into their childcare account?

They need to log into their childcare account every 3 months to reconfirm that their details are up to date and that they remain eligible for the childcare entitlements for working parents and / or Tax-Free Childcare.

Will they be reminded to reconfirm their details?

Yes, they will receive a reminder:

- the first email reminder is sent 4 weeks before reconfirmation is due
- a further reminder is sent 2 weeks before reconfirmation is due
- a notification is sent on the deadline date of reconfirmation to notify them that their eligibility for funded childcare for working parents has stopped and asking them to confirm their details as soon as possible

This message will come from GOV.UK. Please remind parents / carers to make sure that their details are up to date.

How long does reconfirmation usually take?

In most cases, reconfirmation should only take a few minutes, but it may take longer if parent / carers need to provide further information.

How do parents / carers log into their childcare account to reconfirm?

They need to log into their [childcare account](#) (GOV.UK) using their Government Gateway ID to reconfirm. The dates between which they should reconfirm will be displayed when they log in.

Are students eligible for the working parent entitlement?

Students who work in addition to studying are eligible for this entitlement if they meet the income requirements.

Students who do not work are not eligible, but other schemes are available for those in further or higher education. If they're a full-time student, they may be eligible for [help with their childcare costs](#) (GOV.UK). They can find further information about [help with childcare while you study](#) (GOV.UK).

The parent / carer missed out on the working parent entitlement because of a computer glitch

If a parent / carer is eligible for the working parents entitlement but were unable to take up a free place in time due to a technical issue with their application, they [may be eligible for compensation](#) (GOV.UK) if, for example:

- they applied before the deadline but their code has a start date which is on or after the start of the term
- they were unable to reconfirm their eligibility due to a system error

What are the immigration requirements for parents?

They must have a national insurance number to apply. If they have a partner who lives with them, they must also have a national insurance number. The parent who is making the application must have at least one of the following:

- British or Irish citizenship
- [settled or pre-settled status](#), or they have applied and are waiting for a decision
- permission to access public funds – their UK residence card will tell them if they can't do this

What if the parent / carer is disabled, claims Personal Independence Payments or has caring responsibilities?

If the parent / carer or their partner are unable to work because they get one of the following benefits, they could still be eligible for the working parent entitlement as long as they have a partner who is working and meets the eligibility criteria:

- Carer's Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance or
- certain additional elements of Universal Credit

However, if the parent / carer is a single parent on one of these benefits they will also need to be working and meet the income requirements to be eligible for the working parents' entitlement.

Claiming Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment for themselves or their child does not automatically grant them eligibility to use this entitlement. They would still need to be working and meet the [income requirements](#) (GOV.UK) in order to claim it.

However, parents / carers who are already receiving some additional forms of government support can receive [15 hours of early learning for 2-year-olds](#). This is separate from the new entitlement for working parents and is available to parents whose child is entitled to Disability Living Allowance. All parents regardless of employment status or income levels are eligible for [15 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds](#).

What do the entitlements cover?

Government funding is intended to pay for 15 or 30 hours a week of high quality, flexible childcare. The 15 or 30 hours must be able to be accessed free of charge to parents.

Government funding does not cover

- meals
- nappies
- additional hours
- additional activities, such as trips

Parents / carers might be asked to pay for these things. However, these charges must not be mandatory, or a condition of accessing a funded place and they can speak to their provider about what alternative options they may have.

What if the parent / carer wishes to start using them later, or if their child is already older than 9 months?

If the parent / carer wishes to use their entitlements later than the period after their child turns the relevant age, then they can apply closer to the time they wish to start. Provided that they still meet the eligibility criteria for that entitlement at that time, they will not lose their ability to apply.

Can parent / carers use the entitlements for a nanny?

No, parent / carers are not able to use the entitlements for a nanny or a home carer.

Can parent / carers use the entitlements for childcare with a relative?

No. They cannot use the entitlements for childcare provided by a relative, such as a grandparent.

Can parent / carers add another child to their account between reconfirmation windows?

Yes, a parent / carer who is already using the childcare service for another child can add a new child to their account at any time.

What happens if a parent / carer misses their reconfirmation window?

If they miss their reconfirmation window, their eligibility for Tax-Free Childcare and / or the childcare entitlements will lapse. However, if their child already has a place, a grace period for their free childcare will apply. This means that their child can continue in their place for a short time, but the parent / carer will need to submit another application as soon as they can to keep getting the childcare entitlements and / or Tax-Free Childcare.

What happens if a parents / carers circumstances change, and they no longer meet the eligibility criteria?

If their child is already in a place, a grace period for their childcare entitlement will apply. This means that their child can continue in their place for a short time, but they need to reconfirm their eligibility during this period as soon as they can to keep getting the childcare entitlements and / or Tax-Free Childcare.

If their child is aged 2-3 years old and the parent / carer or their child receive some additional forms of government support, they may be eligible for [15 hours of early learning for 2-year-olds](#) under a separate scheme.

When can parent / carers submit a new application if they missed their reconfirmation window or fell out of eligibility?

They can submit a new application any time they meet the eligibility criteria for childcare entitlements or Tax-Free Childcare. They must then present their code to their chosen childcare provider to confirm their place can continue.

What is the entitlement for parents / carers already receiving some additional forms of government support?

Parents / carers of 2-year-olds who are already receiving [some additional forms of government support](#) (GOV.UK) may be eligible for 15 hours early learning for their child.

If the parent / carer is not eligible for 15 hours early learning for families receiving additional forms of government support, they may be able to get childcare if they're working under a separate scheme.

If the parent / carer meets both sets of eligibility criteria, they must [apply through the 15 hours early learning for families receiving some additional forms of government support](#) scheme.

Some households that have no recourse to public funds [may be eligible](#) (GOV.UK) for this entitlement for their 2 year old.

What other support is available?

Parents / carers can also apply for [Tax-Free Childcare](#) (GOV.UK) or [Universal Credit childcare](#) (GOV.UK). They cannot use both of these at the same time.

They may be able to use these other forms of support to help pay for childcare that is not covered through the entitlements. For example, they can use it to help pay for any additional hours, or to pay for a nanny if their nanny has registered on the Voluntary part of the General Childcare Register. It can also be used to pay for certain additional services that are charged by their chosen childcare provider.