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Applying for help with childcare and

code validation:   
Frequently asked questions for parents

This document gives information on your validation code for childcare entitlements. Before reading, you might need to know: [**What help can I get to pay for childcare?**](https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/)

**How do I apply for the working parent entitlement?**  
[**Find out how to apply here**](https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/how-apply-help-childcare-working-parents).

You will need to make sure you have the following information to hand before starting the application:

* your national insurance number (or unique taxpayer reference if you are self- employed).
* the date you started or are due to start work.
* details of any government support or benefits you receive.
* the UK birth certificate reference number (if you have one) for your child.

If you are a foster carer, there is a separate application process. Speak to your social worker to find out more.

**When do I need to apply?**

We recommend you contact childcare providers as early as possible to secure your place.

You will be able to take up your hours from the term after you meet all the eligibility criteria for the entitlement for which you are applying. These terms begin on 1 January, 1 April, and 1 September.

You need to apply before the deadline to receive a code for Government funded childcare to give to your childcare provider. The deadline is the day before the new term begins, but we encourage you to apply earlier and recommend applying at least 6 weeks before the deadline. Some providers may ask for codes before the deadline, so we recommend you speak to your provider to find out if this is the case.  
  
The deadlines are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **When you would like to use your entitlements from** | **The deadline to apply for a code** |
| 1 January | 31 December |
| 1 April | 31 March |
| 1 September | 31 August |

If you do not apply by the deadline, you will not be able to take up your entitlements in that term.  
  
**When will I find out if I am eligible?**

When you apply you may find out if you are eligible straight away, but it can take longer if you need to provide further information.

Once your application has been approved, you will get a code for free childcare to give to your childcare provider.

**What happens once I receive my code?**

You will need to take the code to your childcare provider, along with your National Insurance Number and your child’s date of birth.

Your childcare provider will check the code and then allocate your child a place if available.

We recommend parents speak with their chosen provider about when they will be able to offer them a place.

Some providers are able to amend invoices if they have issued them before a parent has received their code, so we recommend you speak to your provider if you are in this situation.

**Can I apply for a code whilst I am on maternity, paternity, or adoption leave?**

If you are applying for childcare for an older child, who is not the subject of the parental leave, you can apply as normal.

You can also apply for the child that is the subject of the parental leave, though when you return to work will affect when you can take up the childcare.

Parents in this situation will need to apply online as normal but will then receive a letter in the post within 1 to 2 weeks, enabling them to access their entitlement.

From 1st October, the below dates will apply:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date of starting or returning**  **work** | **When you can apply from** | **When you can access**  **your 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 |

**How often do I need to update my details?**  
You need to log into your childcare account every 3 months to reconfirm that your details are up to date and that you remain eligible for the childcare entitlements for working parents and/or Tax-Free Childcare.

**Will I be reminded to reconfirm my details?**Yes, you will receive a reminder:- when your reconfirmation window opens- a week before your reconfirmation deadline- and on your reconfirmation deadline.

This message will come from HMRC. Please remember to make sure that your 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 you need to provide further information.

**How do I log into my childcare account to reconfirm?**You need to log into your childcare account using your Government Gateway ID to reconfirm. The dates between which you should reconfirm will be displayed when you log in. **Reconfirming your eligibility for the working parents entitlement**

**Can I add another child to my account between reconfirmation windows?**Yes, a parent who is already using the childcare service for another child can add a new child to their account at any time.

**What happens if I miss my reconfirmation window?**  
If you miss your reconfirmation window, your eligibility for Tax-Free Childcare and/or your childcare entitlements will lapse. However, if your child is already in a childcare place, a grace period for your free childcare will apply. This means your child can continue in their place for a short time, but you need to submit another application as soon as you can to keep getting the childcare entitlements and/or Tax-Free Childcare.  
  
**When can I submit a new application if I missed my reconfirmation window or fell out of eligibility?**  
You can submit a new application any time you meet the eligibility criteria for childcare entitlements or Tax-Free Childcare. You must then present your code to your provider to confirm your place can continue.

**I’m using an entitlement for my 2-year-old, what happens when they turn 3?**

Parents can access the universal 15 hours childcare support from the term after the child’s third birthday through to when they start school.

If your child is accessing the 15 hours entitlement for 2-year-olds with working parents and you remain eligible, your child will automatically be moved onto 30 hours (universal 15 hours + 15 hours for working parents) from the term after your child turns 3.

You will just need to keep reconfirming your code as normal, and it will become usable to claim 30 hours. You should also speak to your provider to let them know you intend to take up 30 hours.

If you are accessing the [disadvantaged 2-year-old childcare entitlement](https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds-claim-benefits), you will also able to access the universal entitlement from the term after your child turns 3. This is an automatic process will no application form. Speak with your childcare provider for further information.

For more information you can speak with your local council’s Family Information Service or your childcare provider.