

Free Entitlement Policy

Aim:

To make every parent/carer aware of the free entitlement available to them.

Two year old eligibility

2-year-olds can get free early education and childcare if the parent is in receipt of one of the following:

- Income support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit
- Tax credits and you have an annual income of under £16,190 before tax
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- The Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit) A child can also get free entitlement funding if any of the following apply:

- They're looked after by a local authority
- They have a current statement of special education needs (SEN) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- They get Disability Living Allowance
- They've left care under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order

In the event that the family's circumstances change resulting in them no longer being eligible, whilst the child is already accessing the free entitlement, he/she child will continue to receive the two year free entitlement funding until the he/she is eligible for 3 year old funding.

Some eligible families will receive a letter and a free childcare voucher from SCC informing them of their entitlement, how to apply and a copy of the Directory of Early Years Providers. This letter and voucher is confirmation that the family is eligible for two year old free entitlement funding. On receipt of a valid voucher, providers are able to offer a free entitlement place immediately.

Any parent/carer who considers they are eligible for two year old free entitlement, must complete the parent declaration form to confirm eligibility. This form must be fully completed and signed by both the parent/carer and the provider and only returned to the free entitlement team if the parent has not received a voucher.

All 2 year olds eligible for the funding will receive a total of 570 hours a year of free childcare, from the start of the term after their 2nd birthday.

Three and four year olds

Universal free entitlement

All 3 and 4 year olds become eligible for their universal free entitlement of a total of 570 hours a year of free childcare, from the start of the term after their 3rd birthday. Children receive their universal free entitlement until the end of the term in which the child reaches their fifth birthday. Parents are required to complete a parent declaration form at least once every academic year. The provider retains this form for their records.

Extended free entitlement (30 hours)

From September 2017, children from working families are eligible for an additional 570 hours a year free childcare. Working families must meet the eligibility criteria below to claim the extended free entitlement:

- *Both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family), and;*
- *each parent earns, on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage or national living wage and earns less than £100,000 per year. 8*

Parents must confirm their eligibility for the 30 hours on their childcare service account. If eligible, they will receive a 30 hours 11 digit eligibility code. Further information on all free childcare options available can be found at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk.

SCC must ensure that a child has a free entitlement place no later than the beginning of the term after the child and the parent meeting the eligibility criteria for the free entitlements.

Alongside the 30 hours eligibility code, which is the child's unique 11-digit number, and original copies of documentation, a provider must acquire written consent on the parent declaration form, from, or on behalf of, the parent to be able to receive confirmation and future notifications from the local authority of the validity of the parent's 30 hours eligibility code.

Once a provider has received written consent from the parent, they should verify the 30 hours eligibility code with the local authority. The local authority will confirm the validity of 30 hours

eligibility codes through the Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) to allow providers to offer 30 hours places for eligible three- and four-year-olds.

The local authority will complete audit checks to review the validity of eligibility codes for children who qualify for 30 hours free childcare at 6 fixed points in the year, both at half-term and at the end of term across the year (in line with the dates as listed at table A below). It is the local authority's responsibility to notify a provider where a parent has fallen out of eligibility and inform them of the grace period end date.

Table A:

Date Parent receives ineligible decision on reconfirmation:	LA audit date:	Grace Period End date:
1 Jan – 10 Feb	11 February	31 March
11 Feb – 31 March	1 April	31 August
1 April – 26 May	27 May	31 August
27 May – 31 August	1 September	31 December
1 September – 21 October	22 October	31 December
22 October – 31 December	1 January	31 March

The Grace Period - Extended entitlement only

A child will enter the grace period when the child's parents cease to meet the eligibility criteria set out in the Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) Regulations 2016, as determined by HMRC or a First Tier Tribunal in the case of an appeal.

SCC will be able to access information about whether a child has ceased to meet the eligibility criteria and entered the grace period via the Eligibility Checking Service. The grace period end date will automatically be applied to eligibility codes.

SCC will continue to fund a place for a child who enters the grace period as set out in the Early Education and Childcare Statutory guidance for Local Authorities 2017.

SCC will audit all eligibility codes on the dates shown above in table A. In the event that a family is no longer eligible, providers will be informed by SCC via email or telephone that the family and child are no longer eligible with details of the grace period. Providers will continue to receive funding for the duration of the grace period.

Providers will need to ensure that parents are aware of the options available once the grace period has ceased. Any services used after the grace period will be a private arrangement between the provider and the parent.

Parents are required to reconfirm their eligibility for the extended entitlement every three months. Parents will receive notifications from their Childcare Services Account when their reconfirmation is due. In the event the parent is no longer eligible the parents will be informed of the grace period

dates. If a parent 'falls' back into eligibility within the grace period there will be no break in funding.

There is no variation to the free entitlement funding within an academic term unless there are exceptional circumstances. Free entitlement funding will be allocated termly to us, the provider, as identified on the parent declaration form and the free entitlement funding cannot be transferred to another setting once the funding term has commenced.

Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Funding can be used within our sessional times as follows:

8.45.00am-12.00pm, 12.15pm-14.45pm, 8.45am-14.45pm 38 weeks of the year

Review

The policy will be reviewed yearly, in May, and amendments and changes will be carried out in conjunction with the Pre School staff, through liaison by the Proprietor.