

## 30 Hours Free Childcare

This information sheet is about the introduction in September 2017 of an additional 15 hours of free childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### What are the free childcare entitlements?

- **15 hours early education per week, term time, for all 3 and 4 year olds.** This is a universal entitlement which seeks to support school readiness and child development.
- **15 hours early education per week, term time for eligible 2 year olds.** This is for families that meet the eligibility criteria and aims to give a 2 year old the chance to play, learn and have fun, make friends, experience different activities and build their confidence in preparation for school.
- **Extended entitlement to 30 hours per week from September 2017.** This is an additional 15 hours of early education per week, term time for 3 & 4 year olds with working parents, which will extend the current 15 hours entitlement for all 3 & 4 year olds. This aims to support working parents and parents wishing to take up work or increase their working hours.

**Please note:** 15 hours a week term time equates to 570 hours a year. Some childcare providers deliver a 'stretched' offer which means the 570 hours can be taken across the full year as opposed to term time only.

#### 30 hours free childcare place: How do I know if my child is eligible for the additional 15 hours free childcare?

Eligibility Criteria: Working parents includes: employed, self-employed and workers on a zero hour's contract.

To take up the additional 15 hours of free childcare from September 2017 families need to meet all the following criteria:

- Each parent earns less than £100,000 per year
- Both parents are working 16 hours a week (in a lone parent family the sole parent must work)
- Each parent works 16 hours a week or earns on average a weekly minimum amount that is equivalent to 16 hours a week at either the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage (on average £115 a week)

There are exceptions to both parents having to work. Families where one parent does not work (or neither parent works) will not usually be entitled to the additional 15 hours of free childcare; however, they will be eligible where:

- both parents are employed but one (or both parents) is temporarily away from the workplace on: parental, maternity or paternity leave; adoption leave; or on statutory sick pay
- one parent is employed and one parent:
  - has substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits received for caring
  - is disabled or incapacitated based on receipt of specific benefits

#### How do I apply for the 30 hours free childcare place?

The application process for the 30 hours free childcare place and Tax Free Childcare (*see below for information on Tax Free Childcare*) will be aligned together so a parent need only apply once for both schemes. This will be through an online application system on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or via telephone to Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

- It is anticipated parents can start to apply to check their eligibility from March 2017
- Parent applies and if successful, they will be presented with an eligibility code
- There will be an eligibility code per parent / child combination, therefore multiple birth siblings will each have their own code
- Parent will take their code to a childcare provider or school nursery of their choice to show they are eligible for the additional 15 hours free childcare. **Please Note:** it is the school / childcare providers choice whether they provide places for the additional 15 hours
- Parent will use this code to access their additional 15 hours of childcare and the school / childcare provider may ask for the parents National Insurance number and the child's date of birth in order to verify the code
- Eligibility codes will be valid for a 3 month period and parents will be asked to reconfirm their eligibility every 3 months and declare any changes to their circumstances

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## How do I reconfirm my eligibility at the end of the 3 month period and what happens if my circumstances have changed?

HMRC will manage the application process and send out reminders to parents about the need to reconfirm their eligibility before the end of the 3 month period and how to do this. It is expected the reconfirmation notifications will be sent about one month before the end validity date and that reconfirmation by the parent will be able take place at any time from then.

The eligibility code for a parent / child combination will not change over time even if its validity lapses and a new application is submitted.

If a parents circumstances change and they are no longer eligible for the additional 15 hours of free childcare, a grace period will apply so that children can continue with their free place for a short period of time. If a parent's circumstances change again whilst they are in the grace period, they may reapply to HMRC and become eligible again.

## When can my child take the additional 15 hours free childcare place?

This extends and builds onto the 15 hours free place universal entitlement that is available to all 3 & 4 year olds. Your child will be able to take up their place from the term after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. For example, if your child was three in October, they would be entitled to take up their place from the beginning of the spring term, which starts in January.

If the child's 3 <sup>rd</sup> birthday is on or between:	The child will be entitled to a free place from:
1 <sup>st</sup> January to 31 <sup>st</sup> March	Summer Term (April onwards)
1 <sup>st</sup> April to 31 <sup>st</sup> August	Autumn Term (September onwards)
1 <sup>st</sup> September to 31 <sup>st</sup> December	Spring Term (January onwards)

## Does my child need to take up the full 30 hours a week?

It is the parents' choice. Some parents feel their child is not ready to attend the full 30 hours a week and they choose to start their child on fewer hours. The hours you wish to take needs to be discussed and arranged with the school / childcare provider.

## My first choice of school / childcare provider cannot offer me the full 30 hours, can I share the 30 hours across more than one school / childcare provider?

Yes, you can access your 30 hours across more than one school / childcare provider. The full statutory guidance for local authorities has not yet been published so it is not yet confirmed whether the 30 hours can be split across two or three different schools / childcare providers.

## I am eligible for the 30 hours free childcare, how can I take this?

Your child is entitled to access up to 30 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year. You may be able to choose a different pattern of attendance depending on which school / childcare provider you choose to use. Consider what kind of flexible option would meet your needs to support you to take up the full 30 hours free childcare. Flexible options may include:

Combination of full and half days; 5 x 6 hour sessions; all full days; 'stretched offer' which would mean taking less hours over more weeks i.e. approx. 22 hours a week over 51 weeks of the year

## Do all schools and childcare providers have to offer the 30 hours free childcare places?

No, it is up to each individual school and childcare provider to decide if they will offer additional hours over and above the current 15 hours entitlement for all 3 and 4 year olds. This decision may be based on the fact that they do not have any spare nursery places for 3 & 4 year olds or the capacity to create new places. Some schools / childcare providers that already offer a flexible choice for parents may review what they currently provide and feel

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the impact of changing what they offer to include the additional 15 hours free childcare would be detrimental to their current service. In addition there is a cost / sustainability factor for them to take into consideration.

The decision for schools / childcare providers on whether to offer the additional 15 hours free childcare will have been taken after much consideration and debate.

## Where can my child take up their free childcare place?

The options open to you are schools with nurseries and childcare providers that are registered on the local authorities Directory of Funded Providers to deliver 3 & 4 year old funded places:

- **School Nursery:** these offer places for 3 and 4 year olds, are part of a school and some schools may also provide places for 2 year olds
- **Private Day Nursery:** these nurseries open all day and usually provide childcare for children 0 to 5 years old
- **Sessional Childcare Provider:** these may also be known as a playgroup or pre-school and some private day nurseries provide sessional care at premises at a different site from the main nursery. These operate on a sessional basis which is usually for three hours at a time and provide childcare for 2 to 5 year olds
- **Childminders:** provide childcare in their own home, usually open all day and have a range of ages from 0 to 8 years old and sometimes older children as well
- **Independent Schools:** these offer places for 3 and 4 year olds and are part of a school and they may also provide places for 2 year olds

**Remember** it is the choice of the school / childcare provider whether or not they will provide the additional 15 hours of free childcare places. Therefore you need to contact your preferred school / childcare provider to find out if they provide the places.

## For school nursery, I apply to Schools Admissions for my 3 year olds nursery place, who do I apply to for the additional 15 hours free childcare place?

The Councils Schools Admission procedure for the nursery place that is available to **every** 3 year old will remain the same, in that the parent submits an application form for a nursery place to the Council, who will then write to the parent informing them which school nursery their child will have a place at.

For a 3 or 4 year old that is eligible for the additional 15 hours free childcare, the parent will contact the school directly to identify if the school is offering the places and then apply using the schools own process and admissions procedure. Every school with additional 15 hours places available will have their own admission procedure and may have a limited number of places. It is important that you check if there are any places available and you follow the schools procedure so you can confirm you have secured a place for your child to access the additional 15 hours.

## Will I have to pay anything for my child's place?

The school / childcare provider **must not** ask you to pay any fee for taking up any part of the 30 hours free childcare place, or put any conditions on you taking up the place. For example, there should be no requirement you to take up and pay for: additional hours; optional extras such as nappies, wipes, sun cream, trips out; lunch or snacks i.e. you must be given the option to bring a packed lunch / snacks etc.

## Where can I get information about the childcare providers who are registered on the local authorities Directory of Funded Providers to deliver 3 & 4 year old funded places?

Doncaster Councils Families Information Service has details of all the childcare providers on the Directory of Funded Providers and schools that provide free places for 2, 3 & 4 year olds.

You can contact the Families Information Service by telephone: 01302 862136 or free phone 0800 138 4568 or you can do an online search for Funded Providers or school nurseries on the website at: [www.doncaster.gov.uk/FIS](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/FIS)

## What is Tax Free Childcare?

Tax Free Childcare is a new Government scheme to help working families with their childcare costs. Parents will be able to open online childcare accounts to pay their childcare providers directly. For every £8 parents pay in, the

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Government will add £2. Parents can receive up to £2,000 in Government support per child, per year, or £4,000 for each disabled child.

## **How does it work?**

Parents will use their online childcare account just like a bank account to pay childcare providers. They'll be able to track how much they've paid in and how much they've spent for each child. Parents can't use Tax Free Childcare at the same time as childcare vouchers. Parents need to decide which scheme they will be using.

## **Who is eligible for Tax Free Childcare?**

Parents could be eligible for Tax Free Childcare if they:

- Earn at least £115 per week but less than £100,000 per year
- Don't receive childcare vouchers, tax credits or Universal Credit
- Have children who are under 12, or under 17 for disabled children

## **When will it be available and how will we be informed?**

Tax Free Childcare will be available from early 2017. It will be rolled out gradually, with parents of the youngest children able to apply first. Parents will be able to apply for all their children at the same time, as soon as their youngest child becomes eligible. All parents will be eligible by the end of 2017.

The Tax Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare will be one single online application system on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or via telephone to HMRC. It is anticipated parents can start to apply to check their eligibility from March 2017.

HMRC will soon be launching a 'keep me updated' tool, where parents can leave their details online and they will receive an email to let them know when they can sign up for Tax Free Childcare. This information will also be communicated through Doncaster Councils Families Information Service, website at: [www.doncaster.gov.uk/FIS](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/FIS)

**If I currently use Childcare Vouchers and want to check my eligibility for the 30 hours free childcare, because it is one single application process (Tax Free Childcare and 30 hours) do I HAVE to change to the Tax Free Childcare scheme?**

A parent can apply for the 30 hours free childcare only and continue to use the childcare vouchers. There is an option within the online application form for this.

*If you have any questions about the content of this fact sheet or would like further information please contact:*

**Michelle Dobbs or Michelle Wagstaff**

Telephone: 01302 862118

Email: [michelle.dobbs@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.dobbs@doncaster.gov.uk)      [michelle.wagstaff@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.wagstaff@doncaster.gov.uk)

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