

Extended Childcare entitlement for 3 & 4 year olds (30 hours) Frequently Asked Questions

**Solihull Family
Information Service**

This fact sheet details the offer you can expect to receive from Early Education childcare providers who are registered with Solihull MBC to provide the early education funding entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

What is the extended childcare entitlement?

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to up to 15 hours a week (to a maximum of 570 hours a year) of funded childcare.

For 3 and 4 year olds whose parents are working they can apply to double this number up to 30 hours a week (to a maximum of 1140 hours a year). The aim is to help working families by reducing the costs of childcare, to support parents to increase the number of hours they work and to support more families into employment.

Who will be eligible?

The additional hours will be available to families where:

- Both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family);

Note: To be classed as working, the following are included:-

- Temporarily away from the workplace on parental, adoption, maternity or paternity leave;
 - Temporarily away from the workplace on statutory sick pay;
 - Have substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits received for caring; or
 - Are disabled or incapacitated based on receipt of specific benefits
- Each parent has a weekly minimum income equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage or living wage (parents do not necessarily need to actually work 16 hours a week, but rather their earnings must reflect at least 16 hours of work at national minimum wage or national living wage), and;
 - Neither parent has an individual income of more than £100,000 per year

The definition of 'working' will include employed and self-employed persons and parents on zero hours contracts who meet the criteria. Many parents have irregular work patterns and the government are keen that the childcare is offered flexibly to meet parent's needs. Parents who are studying and grandparents or other family members with parental responsibility for a child aged 3 or 4 will be eligible for the extended entitlement if they meet the above criteria.

Solihull Family Information Service

Call: 0800 389 8667

Email: familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk

Web: www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo



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What will the extended entitlement look like?

The guidance issued to us so far proposes that:

- A session should be no longer than 10 hours a day or shorter than 3 hours between 9am and 3.30pm. There will be no minimum session length for funded places before 9am or after 3.30pm. This should allow childcare providers to be funded for short term wraparound provision;
- The funded hours can be taken between 6am and 8pm to support those who work shifts;
- The 1140 hours can be taken as a flexible “**stretched offer**” across the year. This could be 30 hours per week during term time (38 weeks), 22.5 hours per week across the full year (52 weeks) or somewhere in between. You will need to speak to your chosen childcare provider about the different ways they are able to offer the funded hours.
- There is no requirement that funded places must be taken on, or delivered on particular days of the week or at particular times of the day and parents are not to be charged for any part of their child’s funded place, including providers charging top up fees.

How will eligibility be checked?

The government has developed a single online childcare application system which allows parents to apply for Tax-Free Childcare and the extended childcare offer at the same time.

Parents will be able to access the extended entitlement at any participating provider with availability once their eligibility has been confirmed.

How do I apply?

You can apply online at the following link www.childcarechoices.gov.uk. Should you have problems with your application you can call the HMRC helpline on 0300 123 4097

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When should I apply?

Applications for the extended entitlement must be made to HMRC the term before a family wish to take this up. The application must be received no later than the end of the month before the term starts but we would recommend submitting your claim earlier than this in case of any delays processing applications.

Successful applicants will be given an eligibility code and a 'grace period' date setting out how long funding will remain available should the family circumstances change and they cease to be eligible.

Please note If you apply after the end of the month before the term starts you will have to wait until the following term to take up the additional funded hours.

How do I maintain eligibility?

If your application is approved it means that online checks show that you meet the eligibility criteria at the time of application. Often family circumstances change so the system requires that the applicant reconfirms their details every 3 months – HMRC will send you a reminder by email or text when you need to reconfirm your details. It is vital that you follow the instructions you are given to complete the reconfirmation on time or you will cease to be eligible once you reach the 'grace period' date.

The Grace Period

The grace period is intended to allow parents to keep their funded childcare place for a short period if they stop being eligible for the extended entitlement. This will provide continuity for the child, give parents the opportunity to regain employment and give the childcare provider certainty that if they offer a place they will not risk having an empty place immediately if a family's circumstances change.

If you no longer meet the criteria for the extended funded hours following a re-check you will be permitted a 'grace period' whereby your child will still have access to 30 hours entitlement for a set number of weeks after your check. You will be told how long the grace period is when you have been re-checked. If the grace period has lapsed and you still no longer meet the criteria you will revert back to the standard 15 hours entitlement.

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Do Schools and Childcare Providers have to offer the extended funded hours (30 hours)?

No, providers can opt out of offering the full 30 hours funding. This doesn't affect the funded hours an eligible child can receive and the Family Information Service can inform parents of alternative options so that children can receive their full entitlement.

How will quality be maintained?

Providers will be expected to maintain a clear focus on the experience of children and the quality of their provision and as such, all funded hours must meet EYFS and Ofsted requirements.

Government has maintained a commitment to retaining existing staff ratios and are developing a workforce development strategy for the early year's workforce.

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