

How do I apply for 30 hours?

- Find out if you're eligible at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk and apply online via the Gov.uk website.
- It is one application for 30 hours free childcare and Tax-Free childcare. As part of your application, you will find out if you're entitled to both.
- Take your eligibility code (for each child) to your chosen provider(s) along with your National Insurance number and child's birth certificate.
- Your provider will then need to verify this code with Wigan Council. Your code is checked prior to your child starting their entitlement. Should you no longer meet the eligibility criteria, you will only be able to access the universal 15 hours, any additional hours with your childcare provider, will need to be paid for by yourself.
- You can re-apply in the following term if you meet the 30 hour criteria. It is not possible to start accessing the 30 hours scheme part-way through a term (see table in this leaflet for start dates).
- You can apply up to 16 weeks before your child turns 3, however you may need to re-confirm your child's eligibility before they start accessing their childcare place.

For example, if your child turns three on 25th March, and you apply for your 30-hours on 27th March, your child will be eligible for a place from 1st April (the start of the spring term). However, if your child turns three on 25th March but you don't apply for the 30 hours until 5th April, your child won't be eligible for a place until 1 September (the start of the autumn term).

Tax-Free Childcare

You can use Tax-Free Childcare at the same time as 30 hours free childcare if you're eligible for both. For the full eligibility criteria visit www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

It is for families with children aged 0-11 (or 0-16 if disabled) and cannot be used alongside Tax Credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers to pay for childcare costs. You could get up to £500 every 3 months (up to £2,000 a year) for each of your children. This goes up to £1,000 every 3 months if you have a disabled child (up to £4,000 a year).

Am I eligible?

You, and your partner must be over 16 and each expect to earn (on average) at least £152 per week (this is about equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living wage). If you, or your partner, are on maternity, paternity or adoption leave or you're unable to work because you are disabled or have caring responsibilities you could still be eligible. You can't get Tax-Free Childcare if either you, or your partner, each individually expect to earn £100,000 or more.

What can you use Tax-Free Childcare for?

You can use it to pay for approved Ofsted registered childcare or Childminder Agency, for example:

- Childminder, nurseries and nannies
- After school clubs and play schemes

Your childcare provider must be signed up to the scheme before you can pay them and benefit from Tax-Free Childcare. Check with your provider to see if they're signed up.

Getting 30 hours free childcare might affect how much you get in tax credits. Make sure you apply for what is best for you and your family, by reading the full eligibility criteria. The childcare calculator can check what help you can get www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator?

3-4 year old funded childcare

I'm entitled to free early education



15 hours free early education

From the term after their third birthday, all 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to at least 15 hours free early education for 38 weeks of the year (term time). This is known as the universal offer and applies until children enter a school reception class or until they reach compulsory school age: the term following their fifth birthday.

Children accessing the universal offer only simply contact your chosen childcare provider and arrange a start date.

How do I find a childcare provider?

If you need support to find a childcare provider in your area you can search using the Family Directory at www.wigan.gov.uk/familydirectory

Meals and services

Childcare providers can only charge for additional items or services if a parent opted in. Items that may incur additional costs include meals, nappies, trips or other activities. If you don't want meals provided you should be given the opportunity to provide your child with a packed lunch from home at no additional cost to your childcare.

When can a child start?

A child can start their 15 and 30 hours entitlement at the same time; it is the term following their third birthday.

30 hours free early education

Working parents may be entitled to increase up to an additional 15 hours a week to 30 hours. For the full eligibility criteria please visit: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Accessing the 30 hour entitlement

You may be able to take your 30 hours over the course of the year rather than the school year. Stretching the entitlement for longer than 38 weeks, can offer children the opportunity of attending the same provider all year round without the need to purchase additional childcare during the school holidays. It may also help you budget your childcare finances better too. Your chosen provider(s) may offer you various options.

As a parent, you can also chose to split the hours with more than one childcare provider, providing they are all registered with Ofsted. Your chosen childcare providers can give you more information on this.

Do I have to take up the full 30 hours?

No, providing you use the full 15 universal hours, you can agree additional hours with your chosen provider(s). Any hours over the 30 hour entitlement will need to be paid for by you the parent. You can use the Tax-Free childcare scheme, childcare vouchers or may be able to claim up to 85% of your childcare costs back depending on what benefits you receive to pay for any additional hours and services that you buy from your childcare provider.

When do I apply?

You can apply for the 30 hours 16 weeks before your child turns 3. You must apply and have obtained your code before the start of the term your child is supposed to start as it is not possible to accessing the 30 hours partway through a term.

If you are self-employed, HMRC may need time to review your application before they make a decision. We advise you apply in good time and before the deadline date in the table above to ensure you have your code before the start of term.

If you already use tax-free childcare to pay for childcare, you will be generated a code automatically before your child's third birthday.

When child turns 3	Can get 30 hours from	Apply before**
1st April to 31st August	1st September (Autumn Term)	31st March
1st September to 31st December	1st January (Spring term)	31st August
1st January to 31st March	1st April (Summer term)	31st December

Re-confirmation and grace period

At the time of applying, you will be given a deadline for when you must re-confirm your eligibility. This will usually be every 3 months. Reminders by HMRC will be issued (Usually by text or email). Failure to re-confirm your eligibility may result in funding for your additional hours being withdrawn.

Eligibility is rechecked by your childcare provider at the time of your child starting the 30 hours entitlement, even if they have already checked your eligibility code beforehand.

Should your circumstances change and you no longer meet the eligibility criteria, a grace period, set by HMRC will come into operation. Your provider will notify you of this and when the period will come to an end. After this universal 15 hours. Arrangements for access and payment of the additional hours will need to be discussed with your provider.

Did you know you can get further help with your childcare costs?

The government offers help to parents with childcare costs for children of all ages. Find out how you could get support at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

