



Cheshire West & Chester Council

**Frequently Asked Questions  
about 30 Hours Free Childcare  
for parents.**

**March 2017**



## How do I know if I will be eligible for the 30 hours free childcare that is due to start in September 2017?

The 30 hours free childcare entitlement is available to parents of 3 and 4 year olds where both parents work, or the sole parent in a lone parent family. Check the eligibility criteria below to see if you think your family may be eligible:

The eligibility criteria are as follows, **for families living in England:**

- Each parent (or sole parent) has a weekly minimum income **equivalent to** at least 16 hours at national minimum wage (£107.20 per week)/national living wage (£115.20) and neither parent (or sole parent) has an income of more than £100k per year.
- Both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on parental, adoption, maternity or paternity leave, on statutory sick pay.
- One parent is employed and one parent has substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits received for caring.
- One parent is employed and one parent is disabled or incapacitated based on receipt of specific benefits.

## I currently work less than 16 hours but earn more than £115.20 per week, will I be eligible or do I need to increase my hours?

You won't need to increase your hours as long as you continue to earn equivalent to, or more than £115.20 per week, (based on the hourly rate for a parent over the age of 25 on national living wage).

## Is the upper limit £100,000 per household or per parent?

The £100,000 limit is per individual, therefore in a household where both parents are working each parent can earn up to the £100,000 earnings limit, (up to £200,000 per 2 parent household).

## I think I/we meet the criteria, what should I do now?

From April 2017 there will be an online checking service via [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) where you can check if you are eligible for up to 30 hours free childcare. If you are eligible you will be sent, in most cases, an instant 'voucher code' that you can take to your chosen provider. Providing the nursery/childminder has space you can agree a start date for your child, the setting/childminder will then contact the local authority to activate your voucher code.

## Does this mean I can get 30 hours free childcare every week of the year?

No, the total funded hours for eligible families will be 1140 over the year and can be taken in a number of different ways:

- Term time only – 30 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year
- Stretched – approximately 22.25 hours for 51 weeks of the year
- Alternatively a different offer may be agreed for the free hours that meets the needs of the parent/carer and provider, as long as it is no more than the 1140 hours taken between 6am and 8pm for a maximum of 10 hours. (Any hours over the 1140 may incur an additional charge from your chosen provider/s.)



## When will I/we be able to start my child's 30 hour funded place?

Current guidance suggests that the 30 hours funding will work in the same way as the 15 hours universal entitlement that all children receive the term after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday; see below:

- If your child was born on or between the 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March, you can claim the beginning of the term on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April.
- If your child was born on or between 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> August, you can claim the beginning of the term on or after 1<sup>st</sup> September.
- If your child was born on or between 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> December, you can claim the beginning of the term on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January.

## Who can I use my 30 hours free childcare with?

You will be able to use any provider on the early years register (childminder, day nursery, pre-school, out of school/holiday club), or school with early years provision. However, though many schools and early years registered providers will choose to offer the 30 hours entitlement it is not compulsory for them to do so. If you think you will be eligible it is a good idea to speak to your chosen provider to check their plans and availability for September. Cheshire West and Chester are currently working closely with a range of providers to support sufficiency to ensure that there are enough places for all parents wanting to access the additional hours. We are currently running a parent questionnaire until Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2017, which you can find through the following link:

<http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/30HoursFree>

We would be grateful if you could complete the online form to enable us to make sure there are enough childcare places available going forward.

## I work full time so will need more than 22.25 (stretched offer) per week, what will happen for the extra hours?

As with the existing universal 15 hours funding, you can use additional hours that you will then be charged for by the childcare provider at a pre-arranged rate. The government is currently setting up a new tax free childcare scheme that may be useful for situations such as these. For further information about tax free childcare go to:

[www.gov.uk/government/news/tax-free-childcare-10-things-parents-should-know](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/tax-free-childcare-10-things-parents-should-know)

## What if my circumstances change? Can I/we fall out of eligibility for the 30 hours free childcare?

If for any reason your circumstances change and you no longer meet the eligibility criteria for the 30 hours free childcare, current guidance from the Department for Education suggests that your child will be able to keep their 30 hour place until the end of the current term. If by the end of that term you still do not meet the eligibility criteria your child will then receive their universal 15 hours free entitlement, which is available to all parents regardless of income. Further clarification regarding the 'Grace Period' is expected in the summer term and Cheshire West and Chester will keep you updated on any new information.



**I am a single parent/carer who is working and would qualify but I am living with a new partner. Do they need to meet the eligibility criteria too?**

Yes, eligibility is based on household income, therefore both adults in the household would need to meet the eligibility requirements in order to receive the extended entitlement.

**I am self-employed with a fluctuating income, will I still be eligible?**

It is expected that people who are self-employed will have a fluctuating income, therefore, if on average your family's income meets the criteria listed above, you will be eligible for the 30 hours free childcare. Continue to check [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and complete your eligibility check as soon as the system becomes available.

**I live in Wales, but my child is accessing a nursery in Cheshire West and Chester receiving their 15 free hours, will I be entitled to the additional free childcare?**

No, after seeking clarification from the Department for Education the reason is as follows:

In order for a child to be eligible for the 30 hours free childcare they have to be resident in England which is different to the universal 15 hours, which has to be provided by an English Local Authority. A parent is a 'parent' if the child usually lives with them. Therefore, the parent with their child will need to be living in England in order to qualify for the extended entitlement.

**I am currently on a zero hours contract and working less than 16 hours a week, however I have the opportunity to increase my working hours, will I be eligible?**

Yes, the 30 hours free entitlement is a forward thinking policy, as long as you are able to ensure that you will be working a minimum of 16 hours per week, or equivalent going forward you will be eligible for the additional free hours. You will be asked to re-check your eligibility within 3 months of your first application, if you do not meet the criteria at that point your child would revert back to the universal 15 free hours at the start of the following term.

**My partner works full time and I have recently gone back into education/university, will we be eligible?**

No, both parents must be working a minimum of 16 weeks, or equivalent at NMW/NLW.

**My partner works fulltime and I am currently on maternity/paternity/adoption leave, will we be eligible for the 30 hours?**

Yes, as long as your employment history prior to you maternity/paternity/adoption leave met the eligibility criteria

**Are adopted children automatically entitled to the extended entitlement as is the case for the 2 year old funded places?**

No, there is no automatic entitlement for adopted children unless they meet the eligibility criteria.



**My child starts reception class in September and will only attend half-days for the first month. Can I claim funding for the half day childcare I will need?**

Children in reception class are not eligible for the universal entitlement/extended entitlement as they are on the school register and therefore are funded through school funded channels .

**Can I use the funded hours to pay for a nanny?**

No, both the universal and the extended entitlement have to be taken at a childcare provider who is registered to deliver the early education entitlement and nannies are not registered to do so.

**Can providers charge for meals and snacks in CWaC?**

There must be an option for you to take up your 30 hours free of charge, however there may be additional charges for snacks and/or cooked meals or lunch clubs where these are an option. It would be up to you whether you chose to take these up and we would always recommend that you check with your provider for full details of any additional charges prior to agreeing to take up a place.

**Where do I go for information about childcare providers in my area?**

All provider information can be found on the Cheshire West and Chester Local Offer via the following link:

<http://www.westcheshirelocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/cheshirewestandchester/directory/home.page>

Alternatively you can call the Advice and Information service on: **0300 123 7001**

**Do I have to take up all of the additional 15 hours?**

No, you can take as many additional hours up to the extra 15 as you like. Discuss what suits your family with your chosen childcare provider to see if they are able to accommodate your request.

**We are eligible for the 30 hours free childcare and live in Chester but our child attends a nursery in Wales, will the Welsh nursery be able to claim for the 30 hours free childcare for my child?**

No we would not fund a Welsh provider. Our statutory guidance states we must ensure there are places within CWAC for children to access. Our responsibility is to our providers. If a parent who is eligible for 30 hours wants to attend a setting in Wales they will not be able to access the 30 hours nor will they be able to access the 15 as Welsh Local Authorities are only responsible for paying for children living in Wales who attend their settings.

**I am in receipt of a Personal Independence Payment – PIP (formerly DLA) and my husband receives carers allowance, will we be eligible for the 30 hours free childcare?**

After seeking clarification from the Department of Education in this case you would not be eligible to the 30 hours free childcare, however you would be entitled to the 15 hours free universal offer that all 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to, regardless of family income.

