

Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I consider using childcare?

Childcare can be good for your child. Research has shown that good quality early years education can

- Support your child's development, for example communication skills
- Give children an opportunity to socialise with other children and make friends
- Support children to get ready for school
- Give children access to a broad range of activities

Childcare is also good for families – it can give you more time to

- Spend time with your other children
- Take up a college course
- Go back to work
- Pick up more ideas for supporting your child to develop and learn at home

Is there a term cut-off date for free entitlement for 2 year olds?

No, but parents should consider the timing of enrolling, e.g. if there are only a few weeks left in the term then the funding could begin the following term. Children can join a childcare provider part way through a term (subject to the individual childcare provider's policy on admissions) but cannot change provider during a term unless exceptional circumstances apply. Approval from the Council must be received prior to any change.

Is there a term cut-off date for the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds?

Children are entitled in the **term after** they turn three. Children can join a childcare provider part way through a term (subject to the individual childcare provider's policy on admissions) but cannot change provider during a term unless exceptional circumstances apply. Approval from the Council must be received prior to any change.

Where can I get the free entitlement to childcare for my child?

There are a number of approved childcare providers in the borough, including childminders, children centres, nursery schools and private, voluntary and council-run nurseries and they can be found using our main web pages www.brent.gov.uk/childcare

Do I need to pay the childcare provider if I am claiming only 15 hours?

No, you should not need to pay the setting any additional fees if you are *only* claiming the free entitlement hours.

Your childcare provider may choose to charge a returnable sum of money payable to hold or reserve a place with the provider ("deposit") of one weeks' free entitlement fee to secure their child's free place but should refund the deposit in full to parents within one calendar month of the child taking up their place with the provider during the agreed start period.

Your childcare provider may also choose to charge for consumables and optional extras but these cannot be a condition of taking up the place at the provider.

What happens if I want more than 15 hours childcare?

If you want or need to pay for extra hours, the free entitlement hours will be taken off your bill and you will need to pay for the additional hours. You may be able to get extra help to pay for extra hours from other sources of funding.

What happens if my child is absent from the childcare setting during the term?

Holidays

If you are planning to take your child for a planned holiday during the term, you will need to discuss this beforehand with your childcare provider. The childcare provider will then discuss this with the council. Please note: this may affect funding for the term when the holiday occurs.

Sickness and other absences

Where a child is absent due to sickness or circumstances beyond the parent/carer's control for more than two weeks or where there are frequent bouts of sickness resulting in absence equalling two weeks or more, you will need to provide your setting with a doctor's certificate. The certificate will be then be passed on to Brent council for discussion.

Please note: the decision from this discussion may affect future funding.

What agreement will I sign with the childcare provider?

Parents should be aware of the agreement that they will sign with the setting as part of enrolling their child. This will outline any notice periods that families need to give if they are considering moving their child. It will also outline any late fees that childcare providers may charge for late collections of children.

30 hour entitlement 3 and 4 year olds in working families

When should I apply for 30 hours?

A parent can apply for 30 hours free childcare up to 16 weeks before their child turns three.

A parent can claim 30 hours from the term after both of the following conditions are met, whichever is later:

- the child's third birthday, and
- the date they receive their eligibility code from HMRC.

Every three months, parents will be asked to reconfirm that they are still eligible. Therefore, if a parent applies very early, they may need to reconfirm that they are still eligible before they have taken up their place.

When do parents have to verify their code with their provider?

Parents should verify their code with their provider in good time to reserve their 30 hours place. This will give parents more certainty over their childcare arrangements and will help providers to plan their allocation of places. A parent can reserve a place for their child with their provider prior to the code being verified, but the code must be verified before the child can take up their place.

It is up to individual providers to decide whether they wish to set deadlines for parents booking childcare places.

When will 30 hours be rolled out in my area?

The entitlement to 30 hours for working families is a national entitlement and became available for families in Brent as of 1 September 2017.

How many weeks of the year is 30 hours available for?

Working families are entitled to 30 hours for the equivalent of 38 weeks of the year. Parents can choose to stretch this offer over up to 52 weeks of the year where this meets their childcare needs, for instance 22 hours a week for 52 weeks, or just under 24 hours for 48 weeks.

Will the 15 hour universal entitlements continue?

All three and four year olds, and eligible two-year olds, continue to be entitled to 15 hours early education a week.

How will a childcare provider know if a child is eligible?

Parents will apply online and will be given a unique code; they must give this code to their provider, along with their national insurance number and child's date of birth, so that the provider can confirm with their local authority or a provider portal that it is a valid code.

What happens if a parent wants to defer their child's entry to reception or school? Can they still get 30 hours?

If a parent continues to meet the eligibility criteria they can continue to take up their child's free 30 hours at a private, voluntary or independent childcare provider until their child reaches compulsory school age. This is provided they choose not to take up their child's right to a place in a state-funded school reception class in the September following their child's fourth birthday.

If a parent accepts a school place in September but defers entry until April (as the child turns 5 in March) can they still get 30 hours?

If the parent meets the eligibility criteria they can take up 30 hours at a private, voluntary or independent provider between 1 September and 31 March.

Can parents use some of their 30 hours for drop-offs/collection from school?

Children who are in a state-funded school reception class are receiving their entitlement through the school. Therefore, they cannot receive 30 hours on top for private childcare before or after school. This is the same as the 15 hour universal entitlement.

I'm a student [midwife/nurse] and my partner works more than 16 hours. Are we eligible for 30 hours?

In order to qualify for 30 hours free childcare each parent must earn the equivalent to 16 hours at National Living Wage or their Minimum Wage. If one partner is in full-time education and does not meet the income requirement, the household will not be eligible. However, they should be entitled to the universal 15 hours entitlement for three and four year olds.

I'm on paid maternity / paternity / adoption leave. Am I eligible for 30 hours?

If you're on paid maternity/paternity/adoption leave then you should be eligible for 30 hours free childcare provided that you can demonstrate that you will either be on statutory leave or you will meet the minimum income criteria in the three months following your declaration to HMRC.

What happens for families where one parent is working and the other doesn't have recourse to public funds. Are they eligible for 30 hours?

If the parent applying has recourse to public funds and the remaining eligibility criteria are met then the household should be eligible.

I have accepted a job offer but not started work yet – am I eligible for 30 hours?

In order to qualify for 30 hours free childcare, parents should be in work or to expecting to be in work within 14 days of applying.

I do not have a Government Gateway ID, what should I do?

You need to sign up and create a Government Gateway account first. You will usually need to provide:

- name
- date of birth
- National Insurance number
- email address
- Proof of ID such as passport

Two working parents – do providers need to see both NI numbers?

No, childcare providers do not need to see both NI numbers. Providers only need to verify the code against either the applicant or the partner listed on the application. Usually, the parent who made the application will share their details with the provider. However, a partner who is listed on the application may come in place of the applicant. In that case, they should bring their own National Insurance number.

I have completed their application and it says I will receive a message but I have not yet had an email.

Messages will appear in the “Secure Messages” section of your Childcare Service account. Parents should log into their account. Their 30 hours eligibility code will be found under “Secure Messages” and under “30 hours free childcare”.

My child was already taking up universal 15 hours with one provider. I have now applied for 30 hours and want to take the additional 15 hours with a second provider. Do I only show my code to the second provider?

No parents should take their code, national insurance number and child’s date of birth to all providers where they are claiming free childcare.

Do I have to take up the full 30 hours?

No, parents eligible for the 30 hours can take up any amount of childcare up to a maximum of 30 hours.

Why should parents, who are splitting the extended offer over two or more providers, have to identify where they are taking the universal element?

If a parent ceases to meet the eligibility criteria, they may, at that point choose with which provider they wish to continue their child’s universal entitlement. The local authority will manage this process with parents and providers. However, asking parents to identify this in advance, and then to confirm that decision if it is needed, helps local authorities and providers to plan and manage places.

Can providers charge for meals?

Providers are able to charge parents for meals, nappies and additional activities such as trips and additional teaching such as learning a musical instrument. However, these charges are voluntary and at the discretion of the parent and therefore cannot be a condition of accessing any free entitlement place.

Providers should deliver the free entitlements consistently to all children accessing any of the free entitlements, regardless of whether they opt to pay for additional hours, services, meals or consumables.

Can a childcare provider insist that a parent pays for the additional hours if they offer a 10 hour day but only 6 of them are free entitlement hours?

A childcare provider cannot insist that a parent pays for additional hours in excess of the funded hours. Providers will need to be clear with parents on the pattern of funded hours they are able to offer. Obviously, if a parent wants additional hours they must

pay for them but parents must not be required to take any additional hours as a condition of taking up their child's free entitlement place.