

Eligibility for government childcare offers protected

Parents who are normally eligible for the government's childcare offers will continue receiving the entitlements during the summer term if their income levels fall due to the impact of coronavirus.

The Government has announced that any working parent usually eligible for 30 hours free childcare or Tax-Free Childcare will remain eligible if they fall below the minimum income requirement due to COVID-19. Subject to Parliamentary approval, parents who are critical workers will also remain eligible for these entitlements if their income has increased over the maximum threshold during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It remains the case that all educational settings – including early years – are closed, except for children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

In response to the challenges many working parents are facing during the pandemic, these changes will mean critical workers and the parents of vulnerable children can still benefit from these entitlements even if their working hours fall as a result of self-isolating, illness, furloughing or job loss – or, in the case of many critical workers, their hours increase.

This temporary flexibility will ensure critical workers can continue to access the childcare they need to enable them to work. These arrangements will be reviewed over the summer.

Minister for Children's and Families Vicky Ford said:

Juggling the demands of work and childcare is never easy for parents, and now more than ever they have our full support. Nurseries, childminders and all our early years settings are working hard to continue offering safe and high-quality childcare places for critical workers and parents of vulnerable children.

No parent whose income falls as a result of this virus should lose their eligibility for free childcare at this time. That's why we are confirming that anyone who was previously eligible should remain so.

I am also asking local authorities to extend the validity of 30 hours codes of any parents who have missed their chance to reconfirm. This will help smooth the transition period when settings reopen.

Parents are required to reconfirm their eligibility for 30 hours free childcare and Tax-Free Childcare quarterly. The 30 hours deadline for the summer term has been extended to the 31st August to give working parents additional time to protect their place.

The temporary changes are in line with wider Government measures to make sure working parents remain eligible for 30 hours free childcare and Tax-Free Childcare even if they fall below the minimum working wage threshold due to coronavirus, equal to 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage.

Local authorities can extend the validity dates on the 30 hours codes received by parents who are critical workers during the summer term, ensuring those who are eligible can access the childcare offer despite having missed their reconfirmation date or the application deadline of 31 March 2020.

[Guidance](#) for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus outbreak will be updated in due course to reflect these temporary changes.

This builds on recently announced efforts to boost access to childcare, giving councils the flexibility to move around government funding for free childcare entitlements in exceptional circumstances to make sure sufficient childcare places are available for vulnerable children and those of critical workers.