

[News story: 30 hours childcare offer helping balance work and family lives](#)

Thousands of parents taking advantage of the government's 30 hours free childcare offer have been able to take on more hours of work, new [research](#) published by the Department for Education today shows (11 September).

The research, published one year on from the launch of the 30 hours childcare scheme, show that working parents and their children are reaping the benefits of better access to formal early education.

It shows that the vast majority of parents (86%) said their children were better prepared to start school ready to learn, due to spending time in government-funded childcare places.

The [survey](#) also showed that more than three-quarters (78%) of parents taking up the free 30 hours offer for their three and four-year-olds, reported having saved money, which they were able to invest back into their families and improve their overall quality of life.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

Every parent wants to give their child the best start in life and that's why it's great to see that the research published today confirms the story I hear so often from parents during my visits up and down the country.

More parents are increasing their working hours, able to work more flexibly, and spending less on childcare so they have spare cash to spend on their families.

Working families of every kind are reaping the benefits, including single mums and parents from lower-income backgrounds, who all told us their children's development had come on leaps and bounds by spending time in free childcare.

In its first year, more than 340,000 three and four-year-olds have benefited from a 30 hours place. Providers have stepped up to the plate to deliver the offer which is having a significant positive impact on families' lives.

Over 3,000 parents were surveyed about their experiences of using the government-funded hours, including whether the offer saved them money and improved their children's development, with families from lower-income backgrounds most likely to say that the hours had made their children more 'school ready'.

Other findings from the research published today showed that the 30 hours

offer:

- Improves finances: 69% of parents using the 30 hours offer said their weekly childcare bills have fallen, while 84% said the 30 hours is making a difference to their family finances.
- Helps increase working hours: 71% of parents said 30 hours helps them balance work with their childcare needs (46% of whom said it was made a 'great deal' of difference), and more than two in five parents (42%) said it gave them more flexibility over their working hours.
- Supports lower-income families: Parents from lower or middle income households were more likely to say that 30 hours makes a 'great deal' of difference to their ability to balance family life with work.
- Can be tailored to a family's needs: 71% of parents using the offer found it flexible to use, fitting it around their lifestyles
- Improves access to childcare: It also showed that 83% of three and four year olds are now able to take advantage of some form of free childcare offer from the government. In June, the Department for Education published census data, which showed 94% of children were benefiting from funded early education from the Government.

The research also looked at the experiences of childcare providers delivering the 30 hours offer, with over 75% reporting they were offering the entitlement, and the majority (74%) saying that they had not been forced to impose extra charges on parents.

The survey results follow recent data from the Office for National Statistics which showed the number of children living in workless households has dropped to 14.3% in the last year. There are now over 637,000 fewer children living in workless households than there were in 2010 and nearly one million fewer workless households overall. The employment figures showed the number of working households continues to rise and real wages are rising.

This builds on the announcement at the weekend (Saturday 8 September) from the Education Secretary Damian Hinds on a £30million [fund](#) to create more high quality school based nurseries in some of the most deprived areas of the country. The Department for Education also published [research](#) which showed a boost in the early social and emotional skills of two to four year olds that attend formal childcare, including nurseries, pre-schools and childminders. These are some of the essential skills children need in order to arrive at school in order to thrive, and demonstrates the benefits of early years education on children's early development.

The Education Secretary also announced additional support for parents to

access the government's free childcare offers through an extension of the Childcare Works scheme, which works with councils to improve uptake of the free childcare available, especially by encouraging disadvantaged families to access the 15 hours free for two-year-olds.

The extension of this local engagement scheme comes as [research](#) shows in local areas where there is lowest uptake of the childcare offers there is a lack of awareness of what support is available.