

# Press release: Free childcare to be extended to foster carers for the first time

The Government also announces that over 340,000 children were in a 30 hour place in the first year of the policy.

Foster parents will have access to the Government's flagship 30 hours free childcare offer for three-and-four-year-olds from September, giving them the same rights as other working families in England.

The extension marks a significant step forward in improving the support available for foster families who work, allowing them to take up the additional 15 hours of free childcare already available to other working parents since September 2017.

Today (21 June) the Department for Education has also published data showing over 340,000 children aged three and four years old benefitted from a 30 hours place in its first year, giving thousands of families access to high-quality, affordable childcare. Parents benefiting from the 30 hours free childcare offer can save up to £5,000 per year on their childcare costs, and some parents have been able to increase their work hours or work more flexibly – helping to put more money back in families' pockets and balancing work and home lives.

Minister for Children and Families, Nadhim Zahawi said:

We know childcare is one of the biggest issues affecting working parents of all kinds, which is why I am pleased that 340,000 people have benefitted from 30 hours of free childcare. Foster parents do an incredible job caring for children whose young lives have been disrupted in difficult and often traumatic ways, bringing them back into a supportive family unit and providing a more settled home life.

We want to make sure foster parents have the option of being able to work on top of their caring responsibilities, where it works for them and the children they care for. For many, this could make the difference between being able to foster or not, so it's absolutely right that we support them with this challenging but rewarding role.

The 30 hours free childcare offer is backed by the government's record investment of around £6 billion per year in childcare, which includes an extra £1 billion per year by 2020 to deliver the free entitlements.

Kevin Williams, Chief Executive of The Fostering Network said:

We warmly welcome this announcement which has rectified the initial exclusion of fostered children from this policy, and are pleased that the Department for Education listened to our calls for change.

The 15 extra hours will not be appropriate for all fostered children, but some foster carers, particularly family and friends carers and those offering long-term fostering, will need or want to combine fostering with work outside of the home, and this change will enable them to be able to do so. This is particularly good news for the recruitment of foster carers and is consistent with the message from Government that fostering can be combined with other work.

The move widens the range of childcare support already available from the Government, which parents who are not eligible for 30 hours may be able to access. This includes the universal offer of 15 hours of free childcare for three and four-year-olds, 15 free hours for the most disadvantaged two-year-olds, and Tax-Free Childcare, which can cut childcare costs by up to £2,000 per year for each child under 12 years old.