

More than 500,000 families used Tax-Free Childcare in the last year

New Tax-Free Childcare statistics from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have revealed that 512,415 families received up to £2,000 towards the cost of their childcare during the 2021 to 2022 tax year, up from 374,135 in the previous year.

Tax-Free Childcare provides thousands of eligible working families with vital financial support towards the cost of their childcare with the government paying £240 million annually in top-up payments to families using the scheme.

For thousands of families who use Tax-Free Childcare, the money they save each month on their childcare costs is money that goes back into their pockets.

For every £8 paid into a Tax-Free Childcare online account, families will automatically receive an additional £2 in government top-up, and it is available for children aged up to 11, or 17 if the child has a disability.

Families receive up to £500 every 3 months, per child, or £1,000 if their child is disabled, helping towards the cost of before and after-school clubs, childminders and nurseries, holiday clubs and other approved childcare schemes.

But hundreds of thousands of families could be missing out, with recent research published by HMRC estimating that about 1.3 million families could be eligible for this government support.

Myrtle Lloyd, HMRC's Director General for Customer Services, said:

Tax-Free Childcare can make a big difference to families, helping with the bills for things like nurseries, childminders and after school clubs. It's easy to register – search 'Tax-Free Childcare' on GOV.UK.

Helen Whately, HM Treasury's Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, said:

It's fantastic that more parents are taking up Tax-Free Childcare. This support provides a helping hand with childcare costs for working families.

With over one million families eligible, I want to encourage parents to take advantage of Tax-Free Childcare and keep the extra pounds in their pocket.

The latest monthly comparisons also show that a record number of families were using their Tax-Free Childcare account in March 2022 – 384,280 families compared to 282,230 in March 2021 – an increase of 102,050 families.

The scheme offers a 20% government funded top-up on money deposited into Tax-Free Childcare accounts, which can be used to pay their childcare provider. Accounts can be opened at any time of the year and can be used straight away, and money can be deposited at any time and used when needed.

For example, if parents and carers have school-aged children and use holiday clubs during school holidays, they could deposit money into their accounts throughout the year. This means they could spread the cost of childcare while also benefitting from the 20% government top-up. Any unused money that is deposited can be simply withdrawn at any time.

Tax-Free Childcare is also available for pre-school aged children attending nurseries, childminders, or other childcare providers. Families with younger children will often have higher childcare costs than families with older children, so the tax-free savings can really make a difference.

Childcare providers can also sign up for a [childcare provider account via GOV.UK](#) to receive payments from parents and carers via the scheme.

For more information about [Tax-Free Childcare](#).

For more information about [government childcare offers](#).

Parents and carers could be eligible for Tax-Free Childcare if they:

- have a child or children aged up to 11. They stop being eligible on 1 September after their 11th birthday. If their child has a disability, they may get up to £4,000 a year until they are 17
- earn, or expect to earn, at least the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage for 16 hours a week, on average
- each earn under £100,000 per annum
- do not receive tax credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers

Latest [Tax-Free Childcare statistics](#) were released on 25 May 2022. Data is available up to March 2022 and also gives regional breakdown figures.

HMRC has produced a refreshed [Tax-Free Childcare guide](#) for parents, which explains the reasons and benefits for signing up to the scheme.

Each eligible child requires their own Tax-Free Childcare account. If families have more than one eligible child, they will need to register an account for each child. The 20% government top-up is then applied to deposits made for each child, not household.

Account holders must confirm their details are up to date every 3 months to continue receiving the government top-up.

[Report 05/2022: Track worker struck by a train near Surbiton station](#)

[R052022_220525_Surbiton](#)

PDF, 5.83 MB, 55 pages

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Summary

At around 11:35 hrs on Tuesday 9 February 2021, a passenger train travelling at 76 mph (112 km/h) struck and fatally injured a track worker who was walking in a crossover line between two through lines near Surbiton station, south west London. He was one of four track workers involved in undertaking inspections at the location.

The accident happened because the track worker, who was the Controller of Site Safety and involved in carrying out the track inspections, was unaware of his position relative to the train. He was unaware of his position probably because he had become distracted, either due to teaching an assistant or by undertaking an actual inspection. Once distracted, it is likely his deviation towards the line on which the train was travelling was exacerbated by the layout of the rails at the junction. The train driver sounded the train's warning horn twice during the train's approach but neither of the other two people working with the controller of site safety recalled hearing it.

RAIB's investigation found that:

- The inspection was planned to be completed while trains were running with a safe system of work in place that used unassisted lookouts. This was the least safe type of system of work which could be implemented when working on track, but its ongoing use had not been challenged in the years before the accident.
- Network Rail had a programme in place to eliminate unassisted lookout working but this had not yet led to changes to the safe systems of work at the depot where the controller of site safety worked.

- Safety of people working on or near railway lines relies on the controller of site safety implementing and managing a safe system of work, however where they are also responsible for carrying out the work, they are at increased risk of becoming distracted. This can, and has, led to staff being struck by trains or being involved in near misses.

Recommendations

RAIB has made three recommendations. Two recommendations are addressed to Network Rail. The first of these relates to maintaining members of work groups working on or near the line within designated safe limits, when some or all lines remain open to traffic. The second recommendation relates to understanding the nature and reasons behind rule and behavioural non-compliances observed by RAIB during its investigation. A recommendation has also been made to Rail Delivery Group to work with the wider rail industry to improve the judgement of train drivers on whether track workers are in a dangerous position and to reinforce the use of the train horn to deliver urgent warnings.

RAIB identified five learning points. These relate to: train drivers sounding an urgent warning to track workers where there is doubt whether they have moved clear of the line the train is travelling on; track workers looking to confirm on which line a train is travelling when hearing a train warning horn; track workers having quick access to emergency contact details; those creating patrol diagrams and similar having a correct understanding of the distances of positions of safety from open running lines; and planners and others involved in preparing safe systems of work consulting related patrol diagrams to check for inconsistencies between them.

Andrew Hall, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

“As RAIB publishes its report on the tragic death of a track worker at Surbiton last year, our thoughts are with his family and friends.

“After a period of almost five years with no fatalities involving moving trains, track maintenance staff have died in accidents each year from 2018 to 2021.

“In 2019, two track workers were killed near Margam in south Wales, and our investigation found unsafe working practices that had not been detected by Network Rail’s management assurance arrangements.

“At Surbiton, the accident happened probably because a patroller, who was carrying out inspections and was also responsible for the group’s safe system of work, had become distracted and lost awareness of his position relative to the line the train approached on. The patrol was being undertaken with protection provided by unassisted lookouts. Although this was the usual practice for these inspections working with unassisted lookouts is the least safe type of system allowed for when working on track and this had not been challenged in the years leading up to the accident.

“We found evidence that people at the depot involved were aware of the Margam

accident, but they were convinced that their circumstances were different and that the earlier lessons did not apply to them. Consequently, managers at the depot did not learn from the experience of Margam and continued to allow much work to be carried out under unassisted lookout protection.

“While Network Rail has made great strides in reducing the amount of track maintenance work undertaken when trains are running, it remains the case that many of the recommendations that we made in the Margam report are relevant to the accident at Surbiton. I urge everyone involved with track maintenance to look closely at what happened here, and learn from it, so that deaths at work on the line really do become a thing of the past.”

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

Newsdate: 25 May 2022

[Plans to put victims back at the centre of justice system published](#)

- new draft legislation to cement voice of victims and improve support
- prosecutors obliged to meet victims before certain trials
- offenders forced to pay more for cost of crimes raising extra £20 million for support services

Draft legislation published today by the Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab will pave the way for the first ever Victims' Law – putting their needs and voices firmly at the heart of the justice system.

It will see victims' views sought at regular points during their case, with

greater accountability placed on agencies such as the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and police for the service they provide to them. Victims will also be given clearer routes of redress if they do not receive the support they are entitled to.

For the first time, a duty will be placed on prosecutors to meet victims in certain cases before trial in order to hear their views. Victims will also be given the right to attend Parole Board hearings in full and to submit questions during the process – such as querying an offender's suitability for release. The Parole Board will be required to consider victims' views and concerns before making a decision in a case.

Criminals will also be forced to pay more towards crucial victim services such as rape support centres with a 20 percent increase to the Victim Surcharge that will raise an extra £20 million by 2025. This penalty fee is imposed on offenders when they are sentenced for crimes, to ensure they take responsibility for their actions and pay back to society by contributing to services which support victims.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice Dominic Raab said:

No victim should feel lost in a faceless system. We're amplifying victims' voices, boosting their rights at every stage and making criminals pay more to help victims recover.

We're doing this because it is morally the right thing to do to strengthen the care for victims, but also because it is operationally critical to drive up convictions – and keep our streets safe.

The reforms come as the government continues to drive improvements for victims, in particular those of rape and sexual offences, for which convictions rose 27 percent last year compared to before the pandemic.

There are now 26 courts where rape victims can following a successful application to the court pre-record their cross examination, sparing them the stress of giving evidence under the full glare of a courtroom, with a national rollout due to complete by September.

The draft Bill will outline how the Victims' Code will be set out in law and introduce additional scrutiny on the support victims receive from the police, Crown Prosecution Service, prisons and the Probation Service. Ministers will be able to order the criminal justice inspectorates to undertake regular joint inspections on victims' issues and produce action plans to drive improvements.

Diana Fawcett, Chief Executive of the independent charity Victim Support said:

It is vital that victims have stronger rights, better support and real influence in the justice system.

The Victims' Bill announced today presents a true opportunity to improve victims' experiences and we look forward to continuing our work with the government to ensure that the final bill leads to meaningful change for victims.

It will also introduce a new duty on Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities and health organisations to work together when commissioning services for victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence and other serious violence so that services are more effective.

Victims will also find it easier to make complaints about the service they have received, by removing the requirement for them to go through their local MP before speaking to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

The legislation will also establish a statutory definition for Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) to ensure that these vital roles are more consistent. This will ensure victims know that they will receive a high standard of support from them.

In March the government announced that victim support services would receive £440 million in grant funding over the next 3 years, helping to fund more than 1,000 Independent Sexual and Domestic Violence Advisors and a 24/7 rape crisis helpline.

Notes to editors

- If you have any queries, please contact myself on 07469 579 041 or call our 24-hour newsdesk on 0203 334 3536.
- The [Draft Victims Bill](#) will be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny by the Commons Justice Select Committee, with the Committee's feedback being considered before the Bill's formal introduction
- In March 2020, the government [announced an increase in the Victim Surcharge](#) of five percent. This was part of a commitment made during the 2019 election to increase the surcharge by 25 percent.
- A new cross-government Victims Funding Strategy which will tackle barriers to sustainable funding and drive consistent commissioning, so that victims get the right support at the right time.

[Meeting the robots at Dounreay on](#)

Innovation Day

News story

We held a celebration of innovation at Dounreay recently, recognising how innovation is part of everything we do at the site to achieve our mission.



[Watch the robots at Dounreay](#)

On the day, we celebrated the many successes we have achieved in our approach to decommissioning. It was a showcase for how we have deployed different techniques and equipment to make our work safer and more efficient.

This included using robotic technology ranging from small tracked remotely operated vehicles to the state of the art 'Spot the dog', a very sophisticated four-legged Boston Dynamics robot, supported by our colleagues from Sellafield.

We were delighted to host many of our friends during the event, in particular a young robot designer, Robbie and his dad, who had made the trip from Ross-shire to see the many different ways the site was working with robots.

Robbie's dad said:

We were amazed by the response from Dounreay to Robbie's request for information on how they use robotics, and it has been a real inspiration for him in so many different ways.

DSRL Innovation Manager, Gordon Tait, said:

Robbie was invited, along with his dad, to be our guest of honour for the day because he had demonstrated his interest in robotics, and we want to encourage youngsters who may become future robot designers.

Head of Strategic Planning, Craig Brown, added:

Everyone really enjoyed the day; we have a great opportunity to embrace technological advances such as robotics to make our work safer and to enhance our capability.

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