

Protections for working parents eligible for childcare support

Working parents who are on the Government's coronavirus support schemes will still be eligible for childcare support even if their income falls below the minimum threshold requirement.

The Government has confirmed that from Sunday 1 November, eligible working parents who receive support through the Government's new Job Support Scheme (JSS) and extended Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue to receive their childcare entitlements, including the 30 hours offer and Tax-Free Childcare, even if their income levels fall below the threshold temporarily whilst on these schemes.

It comes as [new data](#) shows that more parents are returning to their formal childcare settings and getting back to work after the impact of the pandemic. Official statistics on early years have found that children's attendance at the majority of nurseries, preschools and childminders is starting to climb back to pre-pandemic levels.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

This Government is increasing the safety net available to families, protecting working parents and our dedicated early years sector. This has been our constant priority, which is why I am so pleased to see attendance rates rising, as more parents return to work and take up the formal childcare arrangements they used before Covid-19 struck.

It's testament to the hard work of early years professionals that these numbers are returning to what we would have seen before the pandemic.

We know challenges remain for many families, which is why we continue to protect parents' eligibility for our free childcare offers so they retain this vital support.

[Attendance data](#) reveals that more parents are returning to their formal childcare settings, with attendance at early years settings now at 86% of pre-coronavirus daily levels. This is set to increase further as, [data published today](#) in the latest parent survey by Ipsos MORI, shows that in September 94% of parents whose child received formal childcare before the pandemic were either using formal childcare now, or were intending to return their child to formal childcare if they could by January 2021.

It also shows that among those families who had returned to using formal childcare in September 71% were at the same nursery, preschool or childminder as before the pandemic, while exactly half were using the same number of

hours of formal childcare as before. Only one in eight were using fewer hours, while more than one third (35%) had increased their hours of formal childcare.

Karl Khan, Director General HMRC Customer Service said:

HMRC has been at the forefront of the Government's response to the pandemic, and we remain ready to help all customers, including those who benefit from Tax-Free Childcare. It's a generous offer and these easements will ensure that it continues to help working families across the UK in the winter months.

Protecting the eligibility and giving vital support to many working parents across the UK with the costs of childcare – including parents with school aged children up to age 11 and disabled children up to 17 – helps those families return to work when they are able to.

The Job Support Scheme and extension to Self-Employed Income Support Scheme have been launched to replace the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which ends on 31 October.

The minimum income threshold for 30 hours free childcare and Tax-Free Childcare is usually equal to 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage. In response to the challenges faced by working parents during the pandemic, the Government announced in May that those who were previously eligible, but whose income temporarily dropped as a direct result of the pandemic, retained access to support through 30 hours free childcare or Tax-Free Childcare.

The Department for Education provides 30 hours free childcare to eligible 3- and 4-year-olds in England and has seen 180,000 applications and around 430,000 reconfirmations for 30 hours places since March 2020 demonstrating the importance of protecting parents' eligibility.

Extending the support further builds on the Government's continued commitment for those parents who still need it. In addition to protecting parents' eligibility, the government has provided a significant package of support for the early years sector over the past months to provide stability and reassurance, including providing extra security to nurseries and childminders that are open by 'block-buying' childcare places for the rest of this year at the level that would have been funded before coronavirus – regardless of how many children are attending.

Providers will also benefit from a planned £3.6 billion funding in 2020-21 for free early education and childcare places. Providers in the sector remain optimistic about the future as a provider's survey published today has found that in September, open and temporarily closed GBPs and CMs expect a minimal reduction in their opening days a week compared to before COVID-19.

Peter Freeman appointed as new Chair of Homes England

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick has today (26 October 2020) confirmed Peter Freeman as the new Chair of Homes England, the government's housing delivery agency.

The 3-year appointment follows a hearing by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee Monday 12 October, after which they endorsed his suitability for the role.

Peter Freeman is co-founder of the property developer Argent and is well known as one of the visionaries behind the revival of Kings Cross, as well as major developments in Birmingham and Manchester. He has a track record of planning and delivering the regeneration of local areas and creating places that are both socially and economically vibrant.

As Chair, Peter Freeman will lead the continued transformation of Homes England into a commercially focused organisation that works with the public, private and voluntary sector to deliver much needed homes and infrastructure across the country.

He will help to deliver the Secretary of State's ambitious vision for housing, driving the delivery of new homes and infrastructure to support economic recovery and ensure everyone has the opportunity to access a decent, secure and affordable place to call home.

Peter's unique experience and expertise will also boost Homes England's placemaking partnerships with councils, in which Homes England provides investment and expert support to help deliver more homes and the local infrastructure that supports them.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

As the visionary behind the revival of Kings Cross, Peter has a track record of world-class regeneration and it is this along with his drive to create places people want to live that makes him the best person to support our ambitious housing agenda.

We will work closely on our shared goal to deliver more homes, of high-quality design and environmental standards, with green spaces and new parks close at hand and tree lined streets are the norm – all as part of creating communities that people want to be a part of.

Peter Freeman said:

Homes England has a vital role to play in improving the lives of all those affected by the housing crisis by providing land, investment and expertise to accelerate housebuilding. I will be working closely with government and the housing sector to deliver on their promise to provide homes that support successful communities and allow all to experience a better quality of life.

Based on my own experience, I strongly believe that we can deliver the necessary quantity, quality and variety of housing that is needed, while creating home where people can enjoy a real sense of belonging to vibrant communities.

Nick Walkley, Chief Executive of Homes England, said:

I am delighted to welcome Peter Freeman as the new Chair of Homes England at such an important time for the housing sector. I know that everyone here will be energised by the knowledge and experience that he brings.

I would also like to thank our interim Chair, Simon Dudley, who has steered the agency for a year so ably during very challenging times, and I am grateful that he is continuing as the Senior Independent Director on our board.

Under Peter's leadership, Homes England will play an important role in creating a development pipeline that can support our economic recovery and ensure housing and employment opportunities are spread across England. Homes England will also continue to support smaller builders to maintain the diversity and the resilience of the housebuilding sector in a challenging economic environment, with plans underway to improve access to land and funding for smaller firms.

Homes England will also support the Secretary of State's recent commitment to increase the use of modern methods of construction (MMC) by including MMC criteria in the distribution of funding to housing associations. This will form part of the delivery by Homes England of the new Affordable Homes Programme outside London, which is designed to increase homes for affordable ownership and rent.

The 3-year appointment follows a hearing by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee Monday 12 October, after which they endorsed his suitability for the role subject to Peter taking measures to avoid any suggestion of a conflict of interest. The Secretary of State has welcomed this advice and Peter Freeman has confirmed that he will meet these conditions.

The Chair of Homes England is responsible for providing effective strategic leadership of the agency.

Peter Freeman is also the co-founder and a Non-Executive Director of Argent

Group and Chair of Mayfield Market Towns Ltd. His previous roles include:

- Publisher of Freeman Guide to the Property Market
- Non-Executive Director of Land Securities property company
- Non-Executive Director of MEPC property company
- Chair of property industry steering group 'Investment Property Forum'
- Chair of Judging Panel for Home of 2030 competition
- Awarded CBE in recognition of his services to housing and communities
- Principle author of industry report 'Housing Sprint', March 2020

Homes England is the government's housing accelerator, with responsibilities including:

- unlocking public and private land for development where the market cannot do it alone
- ensuring a range of investment products are available to support housebuilding and infrastructure, including more affordable housing and homes for rent through the government's new affordable homes programme
- improving construction productivity through increased use of modern methods of construction
- creating a more competitive and sustainable market by supporting smaller builders and new entrants, and promoting better design and higher quality homes
- offering expert support to local authorities for priority locations to support more ambitious plans to get more homes built
- delivering government-backed financial products including Help to Buy to increase home ownership

[WTO Dispute Settlement Body: Appellate Body Appointments](#)

World news story

The UK delivered this statement to the WTO Dispute Settlement Body on 26 October 2020 under the following agenda item – 'Appellate Body Appointments: Proposal by Various Members.'



Thank you, Chair.

The United Kingdom continues its support for this proposal to launch the selection process and we refer to our previous statements on this agenda item. We also support the statement made by Mexico on behalf of all co-sponsors.

We continue to be concerned that the WTO Membership has not been able to launch the selection processes for new Appellate Body members. The increasingly frequent impairment of rights arising from this situation cannot be in the interests of any Member, or the system more broadly.

We have listened carefully to the concerns raised and recognise the need for reform. We also recognise that there will be many challenges involved in agreeing reform. However, we continue to view two-stage dispute settlement with the support of all Members as a central pillar of the multilateral trading system.

We call on all Members to engage in a solutions-based discussion on permanent reform.

Thank-you.

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WTO Dispute Settlement Body: UK Statement on Measures Affecting Trade in Large Civil Aircraft



The United Kingdom supports a rapid settlement of the Airbus and Boeing disputes and believes the circumstances are now ripe to conclude one.

The United Kingdom was pleased that nearly \$4 billion in countermeasures has been awarded in relation to the Boeing dispute. The level determined by the arbitrator recognises the adverse effects caused to the United Kingdom and the European Union on this matter.

We hope that this arbitral award and the steps the DSB will take this morning will lead to substantive progress in negotiations for a fair and balanced settlement, in order to finally put an end to these disputes. It is the United Kingdom's preference to find a negotiated outcome that resolves the disputes, ends countermeasures and re-establishes effective subsidy discipline for the aerospace sector.

The United Kingdom is determined to settle these disputes in a fair and comprehensive manner as soon as possible. For sixteen years the United Kingdom has worked closely with the European Union and the United States to find a long term resolution and will continue to do so.

From January 2021, the United Kingdom will represent itself fully and independently at the WTO and will pursue all avenues to reach a satisfactory outcome.

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Work begins on a major new government hub in Peterborough

- Work has begun on the new Fletton Quays hub in Peterborough
- This is part of the Government Hubs Programme, which promotes regional growth and saves taxpayers' money
- It signifies expansion of the government's levelling-up agenda and commitment to basing civil servants outside London

The new hub, due to be completed in 2022, will house 1,000 civil servants from HM Passport Office and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, at the Fletton Quays development in Peterborough city centre. This is part of a £120m regeneration of the Fletton Quays site led by Peterborough Investment Partnership and site developer Bride Hall.

The new site is part of the Government's Hub Programme, which is driving forward plans to move thousands of civil servants out of central London, to improve opportunity and level up across the UK.

Cabinet Office Minister Julia Lopez said:

The new hub at Fletton Quays is a great example of the Government's commitment to Peterborough and will provide a real boost to the area.

Developments like these and others across the whole of the UK are a key part of our work to spread jobs, growth and prosperity.

I look forward to seeing the progress the Government Hubs Programme makes and I know this development will create a wonderful new facility for Peterborough and the people who work here.

The Government Hubs Programme has so far seen the development of 17 office hubs announced in areas including Glasgow, Belfast, Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham,

Cardiff, Birmingham, and Bristol to support around 60,000 civil servants.

The aim of the programme is to relocate civil servants from existing poorly designed, often fragmented office locations, to modern, multi-departmental workplaces which will make the most of emerging working practices and technology.

Government hubs are located close to public transport connections and local amenities, providing flexible workspace where the lessons from working from home over recent months can be incorporated to make offices a safe

environment for civil servants to meet and work.

The Peterborough development will minimise the carbon footprint of the materials used in the construction process and will be energy efficient, resulting in a well-maintained and sustainable building. This hub will contribute to the government's target of at least a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions across the public sector estate by 2032, with a goal of net zero by 2050.

The location of the hub is accessible to the whole of Peterborough by bicycle, with a less than 35 minute cycle ride, and leads to an off-road, shared foot and cycle lane which joins onto the National Cycle Network. This combination of location and accessibility to cycle networks, and the availability of 110 bicycle racks, ensures that cycling is a feasible mode of transport for workers at the hub.

The site is being developed by Bride Hall Developments which recently awarded and signed a contract with contractor Bowmer + Kirkland, paving the way for the construction phase to begin. When completed, the hub will house civil servants across seven floors, with a total internal area of 8,010m².

In a boost to the regional economy, a number of apprentices local to Peterborough will be working on this project covering areas such as cladding, electrical work, bricklaying, joinery, groundworks and design. The contractor will also source site labour, cleaners, administrative and logistical staff from the local area.

Chief Executive of the Government Property Agency, Steven Boyd, responsible for delivery of the programme, said:

Entering the construction phase of our new hub in Peterborough marks another milestone achieved in our ambitious Government Hubs Programme.

The Government Property Agency is creating great places to work for civil servants in locations across the UK. We will continue to work closely with departments to ensure their people can build their careers outside of London in strong regional centres that enable efficient, collaborative and flexible working, driving engagement and improving staff productivity and wellbeing.

Learning from the Coronavirus pandemic, it is more important than ever to provide flexible workspaces, and I look forward to welcoming civil servants when the building completes.

Councillor John Holdich, leader of Peterborough City Council, said:

The government hub is the next key stage in the Fletton Quays development. We're delighted with the progress being made which is playing a significant part in transforming our city centre and

demonstrates the government's commitment to Peterborough.

Fletton Quays is just one part of a forthcoming transformation of our city centre. Our current regeneration plans are the most ambitious in decades and will attract millions of pounds of investment. We are one of the fastest growing cities in the country and our forward thinking city centre transformation plans will make Peterborough an even greater place to live, work and visit in years to come.

Nigel Desmond, Managing Director of Bride Hall Developments said:

We are looking forward to developing another landmark building in the city of Peterborough and be part of the Government Hubs Programme. It's great news for Peterborough and the region, stimulating economic growth and maintaining its presence as a key destination for the public sector.

Bowmer + Kirkland Regional Director, John Clarke, said:

We are delighted to have been chosen once again by Bride Hall Developments for another project in Peterborough. This project will boost the local economy during construction, provide apprenticeships for local people and hopefully bring further investment to the town.