

Thousands of families can receive help with Easter childcare costs

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is reminding working parents in the UK to not miss out on the opportunity to get up to £2,000 a year to pay for regulated childcare, including holiday clubs and other out-of-school activities, during the Easter holidays.

Tax-Free Childcare provides thousands of eligible working families with up to £500 every three months (or £1,000 if their child is disabled) towards the cost of holiday clubs, before and after-school clubs, childminders and nurseries, and other approved childcare schemes.

For every £8 deposited into a Tax-Free Childcare online account, families will 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.

About 328,000 working families used Tax-Free Childcare across the UK in December 2021, receiving a share of £34 million in government top-up payments towards their childcare costs.

This scheme can help working families including the self-employed and is one of many ways the government is supporting households to reduce their costs and keep more of what they earn to help pay for other bills.

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

There are lots of brilliant holiday clubs and childcare providers to help working parents during the Easter holidays, and Tax-Free Childcare is a great offer that can help cut the childcare bills.

I urge families across the UK to take advantage of this support and put extra pounds in their pocket – sign up now and save on your childcare costs.

By depositing money into their accounts, families can benefit from the 20% top-up and use the money to pay for childcare costs when they need it. Accounts can be opened at any time of the year and can be used straight away.

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 Any unused money that is deposited can be simply withdrawn at any time.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 16 February 2022. Data is available up to December 2021.

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.

[CMA blocks planned Cargotec / Konecranes merger](#)

Cargotec and Konecranes both offer a range of container handling equipment and services to port terminals and other industrial customers worldwide. The two companies announced an agreement to merge in a \$5 billion deal in October 2020.

Following an in-depth Phase 2 investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) found that the merger would harm competition in the supply of a wide range of container handling equipment products. Within these markets, the CMA's investigation found that Cargotec and Konecranes are competing closely for business in the UK, and that UK customers would have few remaining alternative suppliers after the merger.

While the merging businesses suggested that there would be an increased competitive threat from Chinese suppliers across all markets in future, the CMA found that this would not be sufficient to prevent the significant loss of competition that the merger of two key established suppliers would bring about.

This loss of competition could have serious consequences for UK port terminals and other customers, including higher prices and lower quality products and services across a wide range of container handling products.

Cargotec and Konecranes submitted remedies to seek to address the CMA's concerns. The proposed remedies would have involved carving out packages of assets from within each of their existing container handling equipment businesses, which could then be sold as a new combined business.

Having tested the proposed remedies thoroughly, the CMA found that these asset packages lacked important capabilities, so would not enable whoever bought them to compete as strongly as the merging businesses do at present. The process of carving out these assets from the merging businesses' existing operations, and knitting them together into a new combined business, would be complex and risky, so could significantly impair how effectively the purchaser of that business would be able to compete.

As Cargotec and Konecranes declined to consider alternative remedies that would have involved the sale of one of their existing container handling equipment divisions, the CMA concluded that only the prohibition of the merger could effectively address the wide-ranging concerns that have been identified.

Martin Coleman, chair of the CMA inquiry group, said:

These are global businesses that make significant sales to UK customers, which is why it is critical for us to ensure that competition in the UK is protected.

Container handling equipment is key to the smooth running of UK ports, and events in recent years have shown us how quickly problems in the supply chain can cause problems for UK consumers and businesses.

The solutions put forward by Cargotec and Konecranes failed to effectively address our concerns, which is why we were left with no choice but to block this merger in order to ensure that UK consumers and businesses are not worse off as a result of the deal.

The deal is being reviewed by a number of competition authorities. While each investigation is being carried out independently, the CMA has engaged closely with other agencies throughout its investigation. The European Commission announced the outcome of its investigation on 24 February 2022 and investigations in several other jurisdictions (including Australia and the US) remain ongoing.

For more information, [visit the case page](#).

1. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.
2. The CMA announced [its provisional findings](#) on 26 November 2021. It provisionally found that the proposed merger raised competition concerns in the supply of container handling equipment.
3. The CMA found competition concerns in relation to the supply of seven different types of container handling equipment (rubber-tyred gantry cranes, automated stacking cranes, reach stackers, heavy duty forklift trucks, empty container handlers, straddle and shuttle carriers and automated terminal tractors).
4. In most of these markets, the CMA's investigation found that Cargotec and Konecranes are competing closely for business in the UK, and that UK customers would have few remaining alternative suppliers after the merger. In the emerging market for the supply of automated terminal tractors, the CMA's investigation found that the deal could damage competition between the merged entity and Terberg (which is currently working with Konecranes), who are the two main players at present.

[Ambitious reform for children and young people with SEND](#)

Better support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is at the heart of a new national plan to level up opportunities, with a key focus on ending the postcode lottery that leaves too many with worse outcomes than their peers.

The Government's SEND and alternative provision green paper, published today (Tuesday 29 March), sets out its vision for a single, national SEND and alternative provision (AP) system that will introduce new standards in the quality of support given to children across education, health and care.

The ambitious green paper is the result of the SEND Review, commissioned to improve an inconsistent, process-heavy and increasingly adversarial system that too often leaves parents facing difficulties and delays accessing the right support for their child.

The plans to reform the system will be open for a 13-week public consultation, giving families frustrated by the existing, complicated and bureaucratic system of support the opportunity to shape how a new system will work in the future – and give them confidence that their local school will meet their children's needs so they can achieve their full potential.

Detailed proposals in the SEND and alternative provision green paper include:

- Setting **new national standards across education, health and care** to build on the foundations created through the Children and Families Act 2014, for a higher performing SEND system;
- A **simplified Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** through digitising plans to make them more flexible, reducing bureaucracy and supporting parents to make informed choices via a list of appropriate placements tailored to their child's needs, meaning less time spent researching the right school;
- A new legal requirement for councils to introduce **'local inclusion plans'** that bring together early years, schools and post-16 education with health and care services, giving system partners more certainty on who is responsible and when;
- Improving oversight and transparency through the publication of new **'local inclusion dashboards'** to make roles and responsibilities of all partners within the system clearer for parents and young people, helping to drive better outcomes;
- A new **national framework for councils for banding and tariffs of High Needs**, to match the national standards and offer clarity on the level of support expected, and put the system on a financially sustainable footing in the future;
- **Changing the culture and practice in mainstream education** to be more inclusive and better at identifying and supporting needs, including through earlier intervention and improved targeted support;
- Improving workforce training through the introduction of a new **SENCo NPQ for school SENCos** and increasing the number of staff with an accredited level 3 qualification in early years settings; and
- A **reformed and integrated role for alternative provision (AP)**, with a new delivery model in every local area focused on early intervention. AP will form an integral part of local SEND systems with improvements to settings and more funding stability.

The proposals are backed by new funding to implement them, worth £70 million. This will build on the £9 billion government investment in local authority high needs budgets next year and £2.6 billion for new places for children with SEND over the next three years.

Taken together, this is a significant, transformational investment for children who need the most support, sitting alongside recent increases to the respite and Supported Internship programmes, as part of measures to invest in the SEND system and in helping children achieve.

Education Secretary, Nadhim Zahawi, said:

Every child has the right to excellent education – particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities, who often need the most support.

We are launching this consultation because too often this isn't the case. We want to end the postcode lottery of uncertainty and poor

accountability that exists for too many families, boost confidence in the system across the board and increase local mainstream and specialist education to give parents better choice.

I want to make sure everyone knows what to expect, when to expect it and where the support should come from. I know there are strongly held views and I want to hear from as many parents, teachers and children with experience of the system so they can help shape a future policy that works for them.

The proposals, part of a package of education measures being announced this week and following on from the Schools White Paper, outline a vision for a more inclusive, consistent, transparent and accountable SEND system. The emphasis is on providing the right support to children in the right place and at the right time by:

- boosting confidence in the system and raising standards all over the country;
- changing the culture of mainstream education, putting it on a par with specialist settings;
- streamlining the system from the early years to post-16 so that every pupil receives a good foundation in support all the way through their education;
- requiring the different services involved in providing support for children with SEND, from schools and councils to healthcare providers, to work more closely together increasing accountability and scrutiny; and
- ensuring the SEND system is financially sustainable by making sure funding is targeted where it makes the most difference.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Sajid Javid said:

Every child, regardless of their background, should be able to access the education they need and deserve. These plans will level up opportunities for children and young people with special educational needs.

It is vital that children, families and teachers have confidence in our education system, no matter where they live; we need to hear from them so this new national, integrated system works for the people who need it most.

Capital funding allocations worth £1.4 billion have also been published today for councils to pay for new places and improve existing provision for children and young people with SEND, or those who will benefit from high-quality AP. This funding will help stabilise local systems ahead of any

further legislation from the green paper proposals.

The Government will also look to approve up to 40 new special and AP free schools in regions where they are most needed. This is in addition to over 60 special and AP free schools already in the pipeline.

Low-income families with seriously ill or disabled children will be further supported through investment of £27.3 million next year. This funding will help pay for equipment, goods or services – from washing machines and fridges to sensory and educational equipment that they might not otherwise be able to afford.

Over £10 million will also be invested to train over 200 more educational psychologists from September, to give advice and input into EHCP assessments, advise schools on how to support pupils with SEND and offer wider wellbeing support to them, their families and teachers.

The Government will work with Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission to strengthen ability to hold local areas to account against these standards.

Dame Christine Lenehan, Director of the Council for Disabled Children, said:

I am very happy to welcome this green paper. It shows that Government has listened to the frustration across the sector and the toll that has taken on parents, children and professionals alike.

The green paper proposes a welcome framework for change which should support children and families getting the services and support they need close to home. However, this is just a framework and so the consultation response to it will be key as it develops into a programme that delivers the change we need to see. We hope that everyone takes the opportunity to respond and support that happening.

Mrunal Sisodia and Tina Emery, Co-Chairs of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, said:

The SEND Green Paper has been a long time in coming. We welcome its publication and are pleased that the challenges faced by families, the problems in the current system and the underlying causes are so clearly recognised. This represents an opportunity to reset the SEND system and improve the opportunities and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. We encourage all parent carers to engage in the consultation processes – it is vital that the voice of families continues to be heard if we are going to make the changes we need to see.

Mark Vickers, Chair of the Alternative Provision and SEND Multi-Academy Trust CEO Network, said:

The proposals in the SEND and AP Green Paper provide a welcome opportunity to set out the important role that alternative provision can play by operating within a continuum of inclusive practice, centred on the individual needs of children and young people to ensure high quality outcomes.

These proposals are an important first step in terms of providing much needed funding stability for the sector.

Dame Rachel de Souza DBE, Children's Commissioner for England, said:

I really welcome the Special Educational Needs and Alternative Provision Green Paper, in particular the focus on children's experiences and outcomes. We know from the largest-ever survey of over half a million children 'The Big Ask' that children with Special Educational Needs or a disability, were ambitious for their future and for themselves.

These children deserve a system that matches that ambition, they or their parents shouldn't have to go to great lengths or adversity to get the support they need. These children should receive high quality support in school, where they are likely to be happier than the overall cohort and doing better. And a consistent national approach will help to overcome the local lottery in variations of quality of support.

The Green Paper proposals will help to improve these children's lives, and alongside a system that dovetails with children's social care and the Schools White Paper we will have all the pieces of the jigsaw to making the system better for them. It is on all of us working with and for children to help create a system that facilitates this, and we must now listen to as many children and families as possible to make sure that these proposals work for them.

Over the course of the Review government has listened to the experiences and insight of hundreds of children and young people, their families, sector organisations, teachers and partners. The Government's SEND and alternative provision green paper sets out a response to their feedback. The consultation will be open for 13 weeks.

Following a contract award, Premier Advisory Group will provide support throughout the Department's application and assessment process for new waves of mainstream, special and alternative provision free schools.

Vulnerable children in care or with a social worker will also continue to be supported through continued Virtual School Head (VSH) funding, backed by £16.6 million for the next financial year, to keep championing the needs of looked-after children and support them with their attainment.

£2.5 million package announced to help disabled people travel more confidently

- £2.5 million package to improve the accessibility of transport for disabled people
- Accessibility Minister announces £1.5 million to help disabled people travel more confidently
- £1 million new funding to enhance access to lifeline ferry services

The government has today (29 March 2022) announced a £2.5 million package to support disabled people travel more confidently on our transport network as it reopens after coronavirus (COVID-19).

The new funding will include £1.5 million allocated to support all 13 Mobility Centres across England roll out a 'Hubs Mobility Service'. These vital services help people stay mobile after they have been advised to stop driving or if they are unable to learn to drive due to their disabilities, offering them advice on alternatives such as powered wheelchairs, community transport and local services.

The hubs have been successfully piloted at 7 of the centres over the past 2 years and have already helped over 4,000 people regain and retain confidence to travel. The real-life benefits of staying mobile were highlighted in the [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#), which sets out the link between reduced mobility and access to transport with loneliness and social isolation.

Ahead of the announcement, Accessibility Minister Wendy Morton visited Queen Elizabeth's Foundation (QEF) for Disabled People's Mobility Centre in South London last Thursday (24 March 2022), where she met people who had benefitted from the Mobility Centre's services, to help them stay connected and independent.

Wendy Morton Accessibility Minister said:

This funding will help people travel with confidence and comes just in time as our nation rebuilds from COVID-19.

We want to help everyone to be mobile and these vital Hubs Mobility Services will provide life-changing travel advice, keeping people connected to their friends, work and support networks.

I was delighted to meet people benefitting from this service and to hear about the difference this important work has made to their lives.

The visit coincided with QEF's 40th anniversary, celebrating opening the UK's first Mobility Centre and their first Mobility Open Day since the pandemic.

The Minister was able to see and experience some of the assessments funded by the Department for Transport and carried out at Mobility Centres, including for people interested in using wheelchair accessible vehicles, adapted cars and powered wheelchairs.

Karen Deacon, QEF Chief Executive, said:

We were delighted to welcome Minister Wendy Morton to QEF's Mobility Service to discuss how important it is to support people to improve their independent mobility and access public transport, to enable people to live the life they choose.

Whether that be for young children through the fantastic Bugzi powered wheelchair, or people with a life-long disability or who have had a life changing medical event.

Independent mobility and public transport should be equally accessible to everyone, and it was great to see the Minister personally experiencing the challenges some face when relearning to drive in an adapted car and listening to the day-to-day travel challenges disabled people face on public transport.

DfT has also announced that it will provide £1 million to lifeline ferries and seaports serving the Isle of Wight and Isles of Scilly to improve accessibility. The funding will improve access to services for passengers with disabilities.

The government has also confirmed that the 1,000th accessibility audit has been conducted at Oban station in Scotland. As part of the [Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail](#), the government committed to audit all 2,565 rail stations in Great Britain.

This 1,000th audit is a huge milestone as we highlight existing areas of excellence and identify scope for improvements. They will help produce a new public database, so people can better plan their journeys in advance and, along with input from disabled passengers, will shape future investment in

accessible rail travel.

DfT has today also published a number of reports on transport accessibility:

[Green aerospace tech to receive record government funding](#)

- Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI) Programme to receive a record £685 million of government funding over the next 3 years, an increase of more than 50%
- more than £1 billion total funding with industry will support the development of zero-carbon and ultra-low-emission aircraft technology, key to the Green Industrial Revolution
- ATI Programme also to reopen to new funding applications, having already secured more than 81,000 jobs in the past decade

The UK's aerospace technology research programme, the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI), is to receive record levels of government funding, Industry Minister Lee Rowley confirmed today (29 March 2022), driving forward the research and development of green aviation technology.

The ATI will receive £685 million from the government for the financial years 2022-2023 through to 2024-2025, an increase of £235 million on the previous three-year period. Industry will provide co-funding, taking the total to more than £1 billion.

Funds will be used to capitalise on the UK's world-leading R&D system and support the development of zero-carbon and ultra-low-emission aircraft technology, cementing the UK's place at the forefront of advancing new green technology, whilst supporting tens of thousands of jobs.

Previous projects supported include ZeroAvia's six-seat hydrogen-electric aircraft, which is the largest such aircraft in the world, as well as Rolls-Royce's development of the largest, most efficient aircraft engine ever.

Industry Minister Lee Rowley said:

Since its formation in 2013, the Aerospace Technology Institute has been an enormous success, already funding world-leading innovations like hydrogen aircraft and 3D printed components. These projects are making a real-world impact and could one day help the global aviation industry transition to net zero.

Today's commitment is a sign of our increasing ambition and will give large and small businesses the confidence to invest in the

technologies that will bring civil aviation into the next generation.

Aerospace Technology Institute CEO Gary Elliott said:

I am delighted that the UK Government's commitment to R&T investment in sustainable aircraft has today resulted in an uplift to £685 million for the UK aerospace sector over the Spending Review period, in addition to the commitment at the Budget that the ATI Programme will continue until 2031. With the support of the Aerospace Growth Partnership, and with government investment matched by industry, the ATI will be able to invest more than £1 billion over the next 3 years in the cutting-edge technology needed to move towards our net zero targets. This has allowed us to reopen ATI funding to new applications from April and we will work with BEIS and Innovate UK to ensure that this funding drives UK economic growth and reduces global aviation emissions.

The government has also confirmed today that the ATI Programme will reopen to new funding applications on Monday 4 April.

The ATI Programme began in 2013, has secured more than 81,000 high value jobs and added £97 billion in value to the economy to date. It co-funds industry-led innovation in civil aerospace technology and manufacturing, supporting the development of the next generation of zero-carbon emission or ultra-low emission aircraft, while growing the UK's competitive position in civil aerospace.

As a result of its success, the ATI Programme has received an extension to 2031. This commitment gives industry the confidence to continue to co-invest with the government, driving growth, jobs, innovation and reducing aviation emissions.

Aviation Minister Robert Courts said:

As the government prepares to publish our Jet Zero Strategy this summer it is great to see new funding to support the development of new aerospace technology.

This funding, in addition to £180 million of government funding already announced to support the UK sustainable aviation fuels, demonstrates how we are supporting our aviation sector to decarbonise whilst maintaining its critical role in connecting people.

The ATI Programme is a key component of the government's Jet Zero policy, which includes the Jet Zero Council, established to convene government, industry and academia, and jointly chaired by the Business Secretary and

Transport Secretary. A final Jet Zero strategy will be published this summer.

This funding is in addition to £180 million of new government funding announced in the Net Zero Strategy to support the deployment and commercialisation of Sustainable Aviation Fuel plants in the UK.