



15 Hour Entitlement for 3 and 4 Year Olds

All 3 and 4 year old children in Rochdale Borough are entitled to 15 hours free early years education per week over 38 weeks per year.

The Free Entitlement for 2, 3 & 4 year olds, equates to 15 hours per week over a minimum of 38 weeks of the year. All eligible children can claim up to a maximum of 570 hours within a year.

The 15 hours of free childcare/early education not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables (such as nappies or sun cream), additional hours or additional activities (such as trips). Providers may charge a fee for these additions. If you choose to pay for these it is an arrangement between you and the childcare provider.

New 30 Hours Free Childcare

From September 2017, the government introduced a 30 hour free childcare entitlement for parents of children who meet certain criteria.

Who is eligible?

A parent or family will be eligible if one or more of the following applies:

- Both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family) and each parent earns, on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national living wage and less than £100,000 per year. Working will include self-employed people.
- Parents do not necessarily need to actually work 16 hours a week, but rather their earnings must reflect at least 16 hours of work at the national living wage. This includes parents on zero hour contracts who meet the criteria.
- Both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on parental, maternity, paternity leave, adoption leave or statutory sick pay
- One parent is employed and one parent has substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits received for caring or one parent is employed and one parent is disabled or incapacitated based on receipt of specific benefits.

How to check if I am eligible?

You can check if you are eligible by using the childcare calculator on the Childcare Choices website. (www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

If your child is already in the term after their third birthday, they may have to wait until the start of the next term for a place to be available. For example, your child became three in August and the term began in September but you did not gain an eligibility code until October. This would mean your child's 30 hour place could not begin until the following term (which would be January).

What happens next?

1. Parents will be informed of their eligibility outcome instantly after using the childcare calculator.
2. Eligible parents will receive a voucher code that they should take to a provider as proof of eligibility. This will be validated by the provider and local authority prior to placement beginning.
3. Parents will be prompted by the Childcare Choices website every three months to confirm the details they entered on their application are still accurate. This is to check continued eligibility.
4. Parents will be prompted by text message and or email, four weeks before the reconfirmation deadline and again two weeks before the deadline if you still haven't reconfirmed.
5. Parents who need help with applying can call the Childcare Service Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 123 4097 and apply over the phone. Parents that complete their original application over the phone will need to phone the Customer Interaction Centre to reconfirm their eligibility.
Please note: this telephone service is provided by the government **and not** Rochdale Borough Council. We are unable to access this service for you or on your behalf.
6. Local authorities are required to carry out regular audits relating to the continuing validity of eligibility codes and inform parents and providers if they are no longer eligible as a result of these audits. We assume the majority of families will continue to be eligible. There will, however, be some who may fall out of eligibility due to changes in earnings or work status and their 30 hour funding would then drop to the universal 15 hours per week.

What I need to do if I am eligible?

1. You should speak with your chosen provider and ask them if you will be offered 30 hour of free childcare per week and how this will work.
2. If your chosen provider is not planning to offer 30 hour free childcare per week you may wish to consider alternative providers who may be able to meet your needs. If you do plan to move setting please ensure you are aware of any notice periods that may be required by childcare providers.
3. Assuming your current provider is offering 30 hours free childcare per week and you are using over 30 hours childcare per week you will only be required to pay anything in addition to 30 hours per week.
4. If you have been offered a place you will be required to take the following to your childcare provider: your child's birth certificate, National Insurance number of either parent who made the application to your chosen childcare provider and eligibility code from the Childcare Choices website.
5. The provider will then verify and validate the code, ask you to complete a parental declaration and agree a start date for your child to begin accessing 30 hours free childcare per week

How can I use the free hours?

The government intended the 30 hours of free childcare per week should be accessed by parents and carers flexibly. By flexible, they mean you should be able to access your hours over any pattern of days, hours or weeks. This is within certain limitations and to a maximum equivalent of 30 hours per week subject to your chosen provider's ability to meet your needs.

You will not be able to insist that a provider offers you whatever patterns you want, but you will have the choice to seek a provider who best meets your needs.

You can split your hours over more than one, but no more than two providers. For example, access 20 hours with one provider and ten with another or similar, but this would be subject to those providers agreeing they can offer this.

Does free mean free?

Eligible children are entitled to free childcare

If you are eligible, you would be entitled to a maximum of 15 or 30 free childcare hours per week. These hours must be 'free at the point of delivery', which means you cannot be charged registration or membership fees or have other conditions applied.

If you access more hours than the free 15 or 30 hours per week, you would be liable for additional fees and charges as agreed with your chosen provider.

If you do access additional hours please be aware additional terms and conditions may be applied by your provider in relation to these paid for hours. Please ensure you are clear what you are being charged for and ask this information be clearly shown on any weekly or monthly bill.

Potential additional costs

The following shows an example of where you may incur additional costs as part of your chosen provider's conditions.

Some providers may not offer the facility to bring a packed lunch, as they feel this would present a challenge to them in ensuring the content of lunch boxes does not contain allergens for example nuts that may pose a risk to other children. These providers may insist you buy a prepared lunch from them at extra cost. **It is your decision whether you will agree to this.** If you do not agree to this type of condition you should indicate this to the provider and if this does not resolve the issue you have the choice of using an alternative provider who does not levy this type of charge.

Please remember a charge for a lunch of £3.60 per day can amount to £18 on any weekly bill if your child/ren attends 5 days per week. If you agree to this condition you are agreeing to pay this amount. Some providers also apply extra charges for items such as mid-morning or afternoon snacks, sun cream or nappies if you do not supply your own. Any charges of this type should be clearly explained to you before you begin your place.

Who to contact

Flexible Entitlement Team, **Telephone** 01706 927823, **E-mail** eyfunding@rochdale.gov.uk

Childcare Vouchers

If your employer offers childcare vouchers or arranges your childcare, you can get up to £933 a year in tax and National Insurance savings.

The amount you can get in childcare vouchers depends on how much you earn and when you joined the scheme. You pay for your childcare before tax and National Insurance deductions are made.

You can't use childcare vouchers at the same time as Tax-Free Childcare. Over time, Tax-Free Childcare will replace childcare vouchers and childcare arranged directly by your employer.

Childcare vouchers will remain open to new joiners until October 2018. Parents already using childcare vouchers can continue to do so after this date, as long as the employer continues to offer them. The tax and National Insurance exemption for workplace nurseries will also continue.

Tax Credits

If you are entitled to Working Tax Credit, and you and any partner are working at least 16 hours a week each, you can claim back up to 70% of your eligible childcare costs for children under 16 (or under 17 for disabled children). Depending on your income, you could get up to £122.50 a week for one child or £210 for two or more.

You can use tax credits for childcare to help pay:

- Registered childminders, nurseries and nannies
- Registered after-school clubs and playschemes
- Registered schools
- Home careworkers working for a registered home care agency

You may also be eligible for Child Tax Credit, even if you're not working.

Universal Credit is being phased in over the next few years. It will replace a number of existing benefits, including tax credits. If you are already receiving tax credits, you don't need to do anything now.

You can't claim Universal Credit, tax credits, or Tax-Free Childcare at the same time.

Universal Credit

If you, and any partner, are working, or you're due to start work, and you're claiming Universal Credit, you can claim back up to 85% of your eligible childcare costs for children under 16. You could get up to £646 a month for one child, or £1,108 for two or more.

- You can use it to help pay:
- Registered childminders, nurseries, and nannies
- Registered after-school clubs and playschemes
- Registered schools
- Home careworkers working for a registered home care agency

Universal Credit is being phased in over the next few years. It will replace a number of existing benefits, including tax credits. Whether you can claim will depend on where you live and your personal circumstances.

You can't claim Universal Credit, tax credits or Tax-Free Childcare at the same time.

For more information on all the above please go to www.childcarechoices.gov.uk