Norfolk County Council

Booklet

v. Apr-25

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

## Introduction

Research shows that having access to high quality early years provision has a significant impact on life chances for children and improves their chances of gaining well paid employment. Alongside educational outcomes, there are wider benefits to families and communities where early years provision offers an opportunity to access effective early help. In Norfolk we have high aspirations for every young child to make good progress in their development and learning from birth to have the best opportunities in life.

## Funded Early Education and Childcare Entitlement

Funded Early Education and Childcare is an entitlement to all families who meet certain national criteria. This entitlement is Government funded and is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week (to a maximum per year) of free, high quality, flexible childcare. It is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional hours, or optional activities. These costs may be charged by your chosen provider, and families should expect to pay.

**What funding entitlement is available for my child?**

**2-year-old funding**

This entitlement is available to families who live in England and either receive some additional forms of support and/or meet other specific criteria as listed below, from the claim period **after** their child's second birthday.

- ✓ Income Support
- ✓ income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- ✓ income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- ✓ Universal Credit, and your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, not including benefit payments
- ✓ the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

or if any of the following apply to the child:

- ✓ they're looked after by a Local Authority
- ✓ they have a current statement of special education needs (SEN) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- ✓ they get Disability Living Allowance
- ✓ they've left care under a special guardianship order; child arrangements order or adoption order

If you are a non-UK citizen who cannot claim benefits and your immigration status says you have 'no recourse to public funds', 2-year-old funding may still be available. You must live in England and your household income after tax must be no more than £26,500 if you have one child or £30,600 two or more.

You cannot have more than £16,000 in savings or investments.

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

Eligible children will get up to 570 hours of funded early education and childcare. It will be necessary to check with your provider how these hours are offered and can be claimed.

To find out if your family or child meet the criteria for a 2-year-old funded childcare place at a childminder, nursery, playgroup or pre-school, there are **3 basic steps** –

## ❶ Complete an eligibility check

If your child is at least 21 months old, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/neo to create or sign in to your existing Norfolk Education Online (NEO) account and add/select your child's details to complete a check.

It is possible to create your NEO account at any time in readiness, but the best time is the school term in which your child is 2 years old, or the week when your child has their 2nd birthday.

## ❷ Eligibility is confirmed

If eligibility is confirmed, you will be emailed an eligibility code. The code must be shown to your chosen childcare provider as proof of eligibility.

If the result is "Not Found", please check your account details, and click "Restart".

If the automatic check result continues to be "Not Found", we can complete a manual check for you, if some documentary evidence is attached (uploaded) to your child's record to show that your family meets the criteria.

Suitable evidence that can be uploaded:

- Take Home Pay (stated on universal credit statement)
- Earnings Reported by Employer (stated on universal credit statement)
- Adoption Certificate
- Special Guardianship Order / Court Order
- Child's DLA statement / award letter
- EHC plan letter that states the plan is agreed or issued
- Letter stating immigration status

If you need some help, call Family Information on 0344 800 8020.

## ❸ Find a childcare provider

We recommend that you visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/neo to -

- read our guide **Choosing quality early education and childcare** to help you choose childcare that works for you and your child, before searching
- access our online **Norfolk Community Directory** where you can easily browse through information about childcare providers in your area.

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

**3 and 4-year-old universal**

This entitlement is available to eligible children the claim period after they turn 3. All 3 and 4-year-olds living in England can receive 570 hours of funded early education and childcare per year, until they either start reception class in a maintained/free school or academy or reach compulsory school age, which is the term after their 5th birthday. This is irrespective of income, benefit status or family circumstances.

**Working Parent (for children aged 9 months to 4-years)**

If you live and work in England this funded entitlement may be available to you from the claim period after your child is 9 months until they either start reception class in a maintained/free school or academy or reach compulsory school age, which is the term after their 5th birthday, provided a valid HMRC code is in place before the start of the claim period and your child meets the date of birth age range.

You (and your partner, if you have one) will need to meet the national criteria to be eligible for the funded early education and childcare:

- ✓ in work or starting a new job
- ✓ on sick leave or annual leave
- ✓ on shared parental, maternity, paternity, or adoption leave
- ✓ receiving certain benefits if your partner is working
  and
- ✓ each will expect to earn over the next 3 months at least the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage for 16 hours a week on average

  This earnings limit does not apply if you're self-employed and started your business less than 12 months ago. If you are self-employed and do not expect to make enough profit in the next 3 months, it is possible to use an average over the current tax year.

If you foster care, please speak to your social worker for more details about applying for this funding.

You're not eligible if:

- ✓ your child does not usually live with you
- ✓ either you or your partner has a taxable income over £100,000
- ✓ you're from outside the EEA and your UK residence card says you cannot access public funds

Childcare Choices

To determine eligibility for these additional hours, you will need to apply and receive a unique code from HMRC via the Government's Online Childcare Service.

For more information visit https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

How to apply for a code?

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

To access this funded entitlement, families must apply via the GOV.UK website and receive a HMRC code by a strict deadline.

It is possible to apply for a code up to 16 weeks before your child turns 9 months old. The recommendation is 6 weeks before the deadline.

There is a risk that you might not receive your code in time if you apply outside of the recommendation, and your provider will require the details of your unique code before confirming your funded hours arrangement (and maximum funded hours available).

| When your child turns 9 months | Working Parent Entitlement is available from | Deadline to receive code |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Jan to 31 Mar | 1 April | 31 March |
| 1 Apr to 31 Aug | 1 September | 31 August |
| 1 Sept to 31 Dec | 1 January | 31 December |

Once a code has been issued, families must reconfirm their details to keep the code valid. Reminders will be sent from HMRC when it is time to reconfirm.

Your code(s) **MUST BE** reconfirmed **every 3 months or by the end date stated on your HMRC notification which might be earlier**. If you applied more than 3 months before the claim period starts, it will be necessary to reconfirm **BEFORE** your child starts receiving the additional hours.

Your working parent funded hours are at risk if a valid code is not in place **by** a claim period start date. Please ensure your childcare provider is aware so that alternative childcare arrangements can be made where required.

A valid code **MUST BE** in place by the deadline which is before a new claim period starts.

| Claim Period | Code must be valid as at |
|---|---|
| 1 Apr to 31 Aug | 31 March |
| 1 Sept to 31 Dec | 31 August |
| 1 Jan to 31 Mar | 31 December |

If you are separated, you and your ex-partner must decide who should apply where there is joint responsibility for your child. Both of you can apply separately, if a decision cannot be made, but HMRC will then determine who gets a childcare account.

It is recommended that you check with your chosen provider to find out if they offer the working parent entitlement, as it is not compulsory for them to do so.

# Extra Funding for your Early Years Provider

**Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)**
EYPP is extra funding paid directly to providers for children of families where the criteria is or has been met in previous claims. The funding if received, must be used to enhance the experience your child has at their childminder, preschool or nursery by improving the teaching and learning, facilities, and/or resources, so that there is a positive impact on your child's progress and development.

If your provider is inspected by Ofsted, they will also need to evidence the impact of this funding on children's progress, how effectively leaders use the additional funding and measure its impact on narrowing gaps in children's outcomes.

To claim this funding, it is necessary for the parent/carer to provide the following details on the parent/carer claim form (Part 2).

- Parent/Carer Name and Date of Birth
- National Insurance (NI) Number / National Asylum Support Service (NASS) Number

The information provided will be passed to the Local Authority (LA) to check and verify eligibility using the Eligibility Checking Service (a service provided by the Department for Education). The outcome of the check will be shared with your provider(s) and they will receive funding based on the number of hours claimed and funded by the LA.

Eligibility checks will be carried out at least once, and if eligible, this funding will not cease whilst your child is in receipt of early education.

The outcome of the check or your decision to not provide your details does not affect your child's entitlement to receive early education funding.

Where an entitlement is shared between providers, EYPP will be proportionally distributed by the LA to ensure fairness where consent has been given.

The eligibility check will confirm at least 1 of the following has been met:

✓ The child's family gets 1 of the following:
- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)

- Working Tax Credit run-on, which is paid for 4 weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit your household income must be less than £7,400 a year after tax not including any benefits

✓ the child is currently being looked after by a Local Authority in England or Wales
✓ the child has left care in England or Wales through:
- an adoption
- a special guardianship order
- a child arrangement order

**Disability Access Fund (DAF)**
This funding is for providers to support children with disabilities or special educational needs. It is intended to aid access to early years places by supporting providers to make reasonable adjustments to their environment.

Children who are in receipt of the child Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and receiving some or all their funding entitlement are eligible for DAF. DAF is paid to the child's nominated provider at a fixed annual rate.

Early years providers are responsible for identifying eligible children. The LA has encouraged providers to speak to parents/carers to find out who is eligible for this funding.

To claim DAF, parents/carers are required to provide a copy of the award letter issued to them by the Department for Work and Pensions. Parents/carers should attach this to their parent/carer claim form and complete Section Five of this form.

Where a child attends more than one provider, the parent/carer must nominate which provider will receive the annual funding payment.

Nominating a provider is a requirement of the Department for Education (DfE).

When the nomination and eligibility is verified by the LA, the DAF will be paid to the provider approximately 6 weeks after the claim form and evidence is received. The 6-week delay allows for children to settle at their childminder, preschool or nursery. It also means that if the childcare arrangement does not work out, the funding can be paid to another provider.

Once the funding has been paid, the LA cannot take back the funding and pay elsewhere, therefore if a child moves from one provider to another within 12 months of the first payment, the new provider will not be eligible to receive any DAF until 12 months has passed, and the new provider has been nominated and eligibility re-confirmed.

## More Information about the Entitlements

**How the Local Authority offers the funded early education entitlement to parents/carers?**
The funded early education and childcare is offered to parents/carers over 3 claim periods annually.

For each claim period there is a recommended maximum number of hours available to claim to ensure there are sufficient hours available throughout the year.

Parents/carers may choose to exceed the number of recommended hours in a claim period where previous claims have been less than the recommendation. If more hours are required, these must be agreed with the provider, and there must be sufficient hours remaining for the 12-month cycle of eligibility. National rules must always be adhered to (eg. no more than 15 or 30 hours per week).

Once the maximum limit in a year or claim period is reached, additional hours (where funding cannot be claimed) will incur a cost, and the provider will charge fees in accordance with their charging policy and/or the parental contract in place.

Children who transition to school part way through a cycle of eligibility will access a proportional number of funded hours.

It is recommended that families keep a note of the hours claimed each claim period so that they are aware when they are likely to exceed the maximum limit based on their child's attendance and therefore when fees will apply.

**When can my child receive their funded early education entitlement?**
The earliest start date will depend on the entitlement and child's date of birth.

**2-year-old and 3- & 4-year-old**

| Born on or between | 15 Hours Funding From: |
|---|---|
| 1 Jan and 31 Mar | 1 April |
| 1 Apr and 31 Aug | 1 September |
| 1 Sept and 31 Dec | 1 January |

**Working Parent Entitlement**

| Born on or between | HMRC Code obtained | From: |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Jan and 31 Mar | On or BEFORE 31 Mar | 1 April |
| | On or AFTER 1 Apr | 1 September |
| 1 Apr and 31 Aug | On or BEFORE 31 Aug | 1 September |
| | On or AFTER 1 Sept | 1 January |
| 1 Sept and 31 Dec | On or BEFORE 31 Dec | 1 January |
| | On or AFTER 1 Jan | 1 April |

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

Your child's entitlement to the funding will end once they either start reception class in a maintained/free school or academy or reach compulsory school age, which is the term after their 5th birthday.

**Where can my child access their funded early education entitlement?**
The entitlement can be offered by a range of providers if they deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in full and are listed as an approved provider by the Local Authority. An approved provider will have signed a Local Authority Funding Agreement. This will be on display for parents/carers to see. By signing this agreement, providers have agreed to adhere to the conditions to offer the entitlement to families in Norfolk.

**How many hours can I claim for my child?**
Your childcare provider will advise how many funded hours are available each claim period.

The hours offered will be dependent on a combination of –

- ✓ the funding criteria met
- ✓ previous hours claimed
- ✓ cycle of eligibility (1st, 2nd or 3rd claim)
- ✓ remaining hours available
- ✓ pattern of attendance
- ✓ how the entitlement is offered to families

Unused hours in one claim period can be carried forward to the next within the **same** cycle of eligibility **unless** they are unused hours received as part of the working parent entitlement. Any unused hours are lost when the grace period ends.

All hours claimed must adhere to the rules concerning the maximum hours available per day, week, and annual entitlement. Any hours not claimed within a cycle of eligibility will be lost.

**The rules when claiming the funding entitlement**

- Not before 6.00am or after 8.00pm
- A maximum of two sites in a single day
- 2 YR OLD & UNIVERSAL ENTITLEMENT: Maximum Hours per Week – 15
- 2 YR OLD & UNIVERSAL ENTITLEMENT: Maximum Hours per Year – 570
- WORKING PARENT ENTITLEMENT (Under 2's/2-year-olds): Maximum Hours per Week – 15 (30 from Sept 25)
- WORKING PARENT ENTITLEMENT (Under 2's/2-year-olds): Maximum Hours per Year – 570 (1140 from Sept 25)
- WORKING PARENT ENTITLEMENT (3- and 4-year-olds): Maximum Hours per Week – 30
- WORKING PARENT ENTITLEMENT (3- and 4-year-olds): Maximum Hours per Year – 1140
- Maximum Hours per Day – 10
- No Minimum Hours per day but subject to the requirements of registration on the Ofsted Early Years Register

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

If parents/carers accept a term time only childcare contract with their provider, the early education and childcare entitlement will be offered as no more than 15 or 30 hours a week over 38 weeks of a year (cycle of eligibility). However, it is possible to accept an all-year-round childcare contract which means claiming less funded hours per week over more weeks of the year. This is often referred to as "a stretched offer of entitlement".

Examples:

| 570 MAX ENTITLEMENT | 1140 MAX ENTITLEMENT |
|---|---|
| **Term Time Only:**<br>15 hours per week x 38 weeks = 570 hours | **Term Time Only:**<br>30 hours per week x 38 weeks = 1140 hours |
| **All Year Round:**<br>12.5 hours per week x 45 weeks = 562.5 hours<br>11.5 hours per week x 48 weeks = 552 hours<br>11 hours per week x 50 weeks = 550 hours | **All Year Round:**<br>25 hours per week x 45 weeks = 1125 hours<br>23 hours per week x 48 weeks = 1104 hours<br>22 hours per week x 50 weeks = 1100 hours |

Where the total hours fall short of the maximum available, it may be possible for your provider within the rules to offer extra hours so that your child receives their full entitlement.

The total number of hours that will be available to claim will be dependent on the pattern of attendance. Parents/carers **should not** assume that claiming 15 hours or 30 hours per week will equate to the recommended hours available.

To determine the number of funded hours available to claim, the actual number of days a child will attend in the claim period must be counted.

In the examples below, both children will receive 15 funded hours per week, term time only, however their actual days of attendance means the total number of hours to be claimed will be different.

Examples:

① Child attends Monday, Tuesday and Friday for 5 hours each day term time only

| September | | | | | October | | | | | November | | | | | December | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| m | t | w | t | f | m | t | w | t | f | m | t | w | t | f | m | t | w | t | f |
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | | | 1 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |

| | Number of Days | Funded Hours | Total Hours |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mo | 14 | 5 | 70 |
| Tu | 14 | 5 | 70 |
| Fr | 13 | 5 | 65 |
| Total Hours to be Claimed | | | 205 |

② Child attends Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday for 5 hours each day term time only

| September | | | | | October | | | | | November | | | | | December | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| m | t | w | t | f | m | t | w | t | f | m | t | w | t | f | m | t | w | t | f |
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | | | 1 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |

| | Number of Days | Funded Hours | Total Hours |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mo | 14 | 5 | 70 |
| Tu | 14 | 5 | 70 |
| We | 14 | 5 | 70 |
| Total Hours to be Claimed | | | 210 |

Your provider will confirm the maximum hours available to claim.

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

**How to claim for your child's early education and childcare entitlement**

The entitlement type that you plan to claim will determine the steps which need to be completed to claim the funding. It is important to remember that

- these steps may have a deadline
- your chosen provider must be registered and approved to offer the entitlement in Norfolk
- your child(ren) must meet the date of birth criteria for the claim period (proof will be required)
- you should discuss with your chosen provider
  - how they offer the funding
  - if there are any chargeable extras and the options available to you
  - the terms and conditions of your childcare contract (eg. notice periods)

**2-year-old funding**

① Create or sign into your NEO account

② Complete an eligibility check

③ Give your unique NEO code to your provider

Once your child's eligibility has been confirmed, your provider will give you a parent/carer claim form to complete and sign.

Your provider can help you to create a NEO account or please call Family Information for support.

If your family receives a letter from the Local Authority advising that your child may be eligible to receive the funded entitlement, please follow the instructions provided.

**3- and 4-year-old funding - Universal**

This funding type does not require a code.

When your child is eligible, your provider will give you a parent/carer claim form to complete and sign.

**Working Parent Entitlement (from 9 months)**

① Create an online HMRC account

② Complete an eligibility check by the deadline

③ Give your 11-digit code to your provider

④ Reconfirm your details every 90 days (or by the deadline provided by HMRC) to keep your code valid

Please remember:

The date that you applied to obtain a code will determine when the hours can be claimed from.

Once your child's eligibility has been confirmed, your provider will give you a parent/carer claim form to complete and sign.

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

Your parent/carer claim form will inform your provider how many hours you wish them to claim on your behalf from the Local Authority and provide consent for them to share the information.

If you choose for your child to receive their entitlement from more than 1 provider, the combined hours claimed must not exceed the maximum available and must meet the rules of the entitlement. Parent/carers **must** inform each provider how the combined hours will be shared between them to avoid an overclaim. An overclaim will most likely result in a charge to you by your provider.

It is important that parents/carers inform providers when their child will be absent as soon as possible, this will allow the provider to adjust the number of staff required for the day/week and for them to amend the funding claim where applicable.

Funding can only be claimed for **actual attendance**. For short term absences (up to four weeks), for example family holiday, sickness, medical appointment, a family emergency, transition events for school readiness, occasionally arriving late or leaving early, funding will not be withdrawn and can be claimed by your provider.

If the absence exceeds four weeks, your provider **must** notify the Local Authority. The Local Authority will use its discretion by considering the reason for the absence to determine if funding can be claimed where the absence is recurring or is for an extended period. An adjustment to the number of funded hours claimed will be made if it is decided that funding cannot be claimed. Your provider may charge for these unfunded hours.

When funding cannot be claimed, it may be possible to transfer these hours to another claim period or alternative day. It is best to speak with your provider to determine the options available.

Although attendance at a provider is not mandatory, there is an expectation that where hours are claimed, attendance will be on a regular weekly basis. As part of an Ofsted inspection, inspectors will explore how well providers work with parents to promote children's good attendance, especially the attendance of children for whom the provider receives the Early Years Pupil Premium.

It is recommended that if you change providers, that you inform the new provider of the number of funded hours claimed to date so that fees and new claims are calculated accurately. Where a notice period has not been complied with, the Local Authority will use its discretion to decide where the funding, if any, will be paid.

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

**How to complete a claim form**

The claim form is split into three parts. Most sections in Part 2 and 3 are mandatory to enable a claim to be submitted.

- **Part 1** is guidance and information
  This part should be issued to all families when their child(ren) initially start accessing an entitlement. It provides notes to assist you to complete the parent / carer claim form and a QR code to read this Booklet

- **Part 2** is about you and your child
  It **must** be completed **every time a new entitlement is claimed**, or when your details change. It is split into 5 sections. Please refer to Part 1 for information marked ❶ to ❿.
  The declaration must be signed to ensure consent has been obtained.

  1. Your Child's Details
  2. Your Details (parent or carer)
  3. Your Child's Funding Entitlement
  4. Extra Funding
  5. Declaration – this **must** be signed to ensure consent has been obtained to claim

- **Part 3a, b or c** is about your funded entitlement claim
  The version to be completed will be based on your child's eligibility start date (Summer, Autumn, or Spring).

| **your child will celebrate (or has celebrated) their second, third or fourth birthday or is/was 9 months in** | **Start Date From** | **Form** |
|---|---|---|
| April, May, June, July or August | 1 September | 3a |
| September, October, November or December | 1 January | 3b |
| January, February or March | 1 April | 3c |

  Your provider will claim for actual attendance notwithstanding short absences.

  It is split into 2 sections
  1. Childcare Provider Details
  2. Funding for Claim Period
     a. Start and End Dates
     b. Weekday attendance (Booked to attend)
     c. Offer (Stretched or Term Time)

Please return your form promptly/when requested to avoid childcare charges.

A provider cannot claim the funding if a completed and signed parent/carer claim form has not been submitted to them. This is because you have not consented to share your information with the Local Authority.

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

**Can my child's eligibility for funding stop?**

**2-year-old funding**

Once the family has claimed the entitlement where a NEO code has been obtained, these children will continue to receive this entitlement until they become eligible for the 3 and 4-year-old universal entitlement. (this does not apply to families who have obtained an HMRC code).

**3 and 4-year-old universal**

All 3 and 4-year-olds living in England are eligible to receive this entitlement provided they meet the age criteria, until they either start reception class in a maintained/free school or academy or reach compulsory school age, which is the term after their 5th birthday.

**Working Parent**

The ability to claim the working parent entitlement will be dependent on the family's circumstances and whether the details of the parent are kept up to date with HMRC. Where the HMRC code is no longer valid due to the parent(s) no longer meeting the criteria or there has been a lapse in updating details held by HMRC (reconfirmation), a Grace Period will be applied.

HMRC will communicate with parents when it is necessary to renew their details. If you have chosen for HMRC to communicate via email, it is recommended that your "junk folder" is checked to avoid missing any vital messages concerning eligibility checks.

Access to the working parent entitlement will cease if the updating of your details has lapsed (reconfirmation deadlines are missed) and the grace period has ended.

It means that although your family may continue to meet the eligibility criteria, the details held by HMRC are no longer "in date", and therefore your code is not valid.

It will be necessary to discuss with your provider your childcare arrangement whilst the working parent entitlement cannot be claimed.

It is strongly recommended that families schedule reconfirmation dates in a calendar (e.g. creating an event in your smart phone calendar app) to ensure that deadlines are not missed.

If families can no longer claim the working parent entitlement a "Grace Period" may apply. This means that for a short period of time these hours can continue to be claimed unless the following applies –

- where a parent falls into the grace period before the child has started their funded place
- where a parent falls into the grace period whilst their child is in a funded place, and the parent seeks to move the child to a different provider

Missing the deadline to reconfirm eligibility whilst in a grace period **WILL** affect your ability to claim funding the following claim period.

This Grace Period has been determined by DfE.

| Date Parent receives ineligible decision from HMRC: | Grace Period End date: |
|---|---|
| 1 Jan – 10 Feb | 31-Mar |
| 11 Feb – 31 March | 31-Aug |
| 1 April – 26 May | 31-Aug |
| 27 May – 31 August | 31-Dec |
| 1 September – 21 October | 31-Dec |
| 22 October – 31 December | 31-Mar |

At the end of the Grace Period if a valid eligibility code has not been obtained then thereafter only the universal entitlement can be claimed for 3- and 4-year-olds and 2-year-old funding where a NEO has been obtained.

The Local Authority will remind providers to check the details held concerning any grace period in place and communicate this detail to families. We will also communicate directly with families where an email address has been provided. Families should seek advice from their childcare provider particularly if considering other childcare arrangements.

It is also important that parents advise their provider as soon as possible when their eligibility for the working parent entitlement has changed to avoid receiving an invoice for hours that can no longer be funded by the Local Authority.

The Local Authority can consider extending the Grace Period set out above for a short time in very exceptional circumstances, if the parent has been forced to leave their home and paid employment, for example, where the parent is a victim of domestic abuse or other serious crime.

A parent can check / update their details by signing into their online childcare account at – https://www.gov.uk/sign-in-childcare-account

Families must contact the HMRC Childcare Service helpline to obtain assistance with their HMRC childcare account and/or code.

It is possible to use the online digital assistant or call **0300 123 4097** (Textphone: 0300 123 9232). The phone line is open Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

If you have experienced technical issues in your childcare account, you may be able to claim compensation if you can prove that you applied or reconfirmed on time.

Please go to the GOV.UK website for more details. Claim compensation for Childcare service issues - GOV.UK

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

**Will I have to pay for anything?**

The hours that your child attends a provider and are funded by the Local Authority (LA) must be FREE. Providers cannot charge for the delivery of this entitlement or apply top up fees, or conditions for your child to receive the entitlement.

However, the provider can charge for –

- attendance which is additional to the hours funded by the LA (private paid hours)
- meals and snacks consumed by your child(ren)
- non-food consumables used by your child(ren)
- extra optional services/activities
  (Such as trips, events, celebrations, specialist tuition (eg. music classes or foreign languages) or other activities that are not directly related or necessary for the effective delivery of the EYFS statutory framework)

These chargeable extras must not be mandatory, or a condition of accessing a funded place. If you are unable to pay or wish to opt out, this must be discussed with your provider so that alternative options are sought.

Generally, it is expected that most families will opt to pay for these chargeable extras, but where a family wishes to opt out, the DfE has recommended that this decision is on a term-by-term basis to help your provider with business planning. Families should expect to pay any chargeable extra in accordance with their providers Charging Policy.

A provider may charge a non-conditional registration fee or a deposit for a parent/carer to secure a childcare place later. A deposit must be returned to the parent/carer no later than 6 weeks from when claiming the entitlement commences where no private paid hours are taken.

Other charges may apply, please refer to your providers charging policy for more information or speak to your provider directly.

In connection with the funded entitlement, the following are not allowable charges –

- Top-up fees
- the supply of or use of any materials, including, but not limited to, craft materials, crayons, paper, books, instruments, toys, or other equipment or learning resources that are necessary for the effective delivery of childcare
- business running costs, including, but not limited to, rent, staff wages, cleaning materials, insurance, or utility bills such as energy, gas or water
- registration fees as a condition of taking up the funded place
- non-refundable deposits as a condition of taking up the funded place
- general charges, including but not limited to, non-itemised enrichment charges, sustainability charges, business continuity charges, additional charges, enhanced ratios, hourly rates, or any other supplementary charges on top of the free hours
- any additional fees that are not specifically identified and itemised as being a chargeable extra

**Tax-Free Childcare**
Eligible families can use Tax-Free Childcare to pay for any approved childcare, including holiday clubs, breakfast and after school clubs, childminders and nurseries. It can also be used for deposits, retainers (for holiday periods), childcare payments in advance and extras, such as lunches or trips, if/when these are included as part of the overall childcare costs charged. **Your chosen provider must be signed up to accept this method of payment.**

Visit the Childcare Choices website for more info –
https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare

**Universal Credit Childcare**
Universal Credit can help with the costs of childcare with 'registered' childcare providers. You may be able to claim up to 85%, if you're eligible for Universal Credit, in paid work or due to start a job in the next month where the costs are considered reasonable.

Visit the Childcare Choices website for more info –
https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/universal-credit-childcare

**What can be claimed where providers offer a staggered intake/settling in period?**
Parents/carers may be offered the opportunity to receive settling in sessions to be sure their choice of childcare is the right option for their child. Funding can be claimed for these hours provided the child is eligible and a claim form is completed, alternatively, fees may apply in accordance with the providers charging policy.

Where a staggered intake takes place, the first date that funding can be claimed is the child's first intake day, which in some cases will not be the first day of the claim period.

Providers must agree with parents/carers in advance how their child will commence their early education and childcare place. Parents/carers should be given the opportunity to commence their child's entitlement at the start of their first claim period so not to place additional financial burden on them, and to enable their child to receive the full entitlement.

**Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)**
The Local Authority and providers must be aware of their duties in relation to the SEND Code of Practice and the Equality Act 2010. Providers have a responsibility to ensure all children have full access to the EYFS statutory framework. They must have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities. This is called the graduated approach and should clearly demonstrate the approach to identifying and responding to the individual child's needs.

Where a setting identifies a child as having SEN they must work in partnership with parents /carers to establish the support the child needs. If it is agreed that additional funding or external third-

party support should be sought, then the provider must obtain consent from the parent/carer to do this.

All providers will have a Local Offer which sets out what provision is offered by them for children with a disability or identified special educational need. This information can be obtained directly from them or may be located on the Norfolk Community Directory at – https://communitydirectory.norfolk.gov.uk/

The Local Authority also has a Local Offer which can be found at – https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/about-the-local-offer

**Data Protection**
A "privacy notice" is a good way to be able to meet data subject's rights. Notices should be readily available electronically or in paper format upon request from your provider.

The Data Protection Act 2018 (the Act) puts in place certain safeguards regarding the use of personal data by organisations, including the Department for Education, local authorities, schools and other early education providers. The Act gives rights to those about whom data is held (known as data subjects), such as pupils, their parents, and teachers. This includes:

- The right to know the types of data being held
- Why it is being held; and
- To whom it may be disclosed

Should you have any concerns relating to how your information or the information relating to your child/ren is being or will be used, please contact your provider or the Early Years Finance Team at Norfolk County Council.

**Additional notes concerning the Funding Entitlement**

- A claim period may not correspond exactly to the school term
- Providers can choose how the entitlement is offered to parents/carers to support their business
- Your provider may not be able to offer the entitlement in the manner you wish to claim
- Your provider may require notice if you are planning to alter your childcare arrangements
- The funding entitlement (hours) must be offered to you by your provider free of charge
- The claim form will be used to settle any dispute over funding between providers and therefore, it must be accurate and signed by you
- Providers can claim funding for short term closures, for example, because of local or national elections or damage to the premises. This will affect a child's ability to receive their full entitlement
- Families must provide consent to enable eligibility checks to take place and allow for your information to be shared with the Local Authority

# EARLY EDUCATION

Information for Parents / Carers

**Where should I look to find out more about childcare?**
There are several online services and places to enquire about childcare.

- Family Information Service – www.norfolk.gov.uk/familyinformationservice
- Childcare Choices – www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/
- Norfolk Education Online (NEO) – www.norfolk.gov.uk/neo
- Norfolk Community Directory – https://communitydirectory.norfolk.gov.uk/
- Choosing quality early education and childcare –
  Choosing childcare - why quality matters - Norfolk County Council

**Complaints**
Provided you feel your child(ren) is not at risk it's always best to speak to your childcare provider directly to raise any worries you have.

If you feel the situation has not been resolved, please request and follow their complaint's policy. It is likely that you will need to put your concerns in writing, which your provider has a legal obligation to investigate and inform you of the results.

Below are details of who you can contact next, if your issue in your view has not been satisfactorily resolved through the investigation.

Concern

- Quality of care – setting is not meeting its regulated standards
  Please contact Ofsted via their complaint's procedure.
  https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure

- Early education funding and other early years issues
  Please contact the LA via our "contact us" page.
  https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/article/30082/Complaints-procedure