

Childcare support is expanding

Enter your details on the [Childcare Choices website](#), to help find out how you can save money on your childcare

[Childcare Choices](#) | [30 Hours Childcare, Tax-Free Childcare and More](#) | [Help with Costs](#) | [GOV.UK](#)

How many hours of childcare can you get per week?		
Age 3 – 4 years	Age 2 years	Age 9 – 23 months
All families	Families receiving some additional forms of government support	Eligible Working families
15 hours – NOW	15 hours – NOW	15 hours – September 2024
Eligible Working Families	Eligible Working Families	
30 hours – NOW	15 hours – April 2024	
From September 2025, all working families may be eligible for 30 hours childcare per week (based over 38 weeks per year)		

To access childcare support hours, eligible working families will need to set up an online government gateway account – see here for details

[Sign in to your childcare account - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Childcare Support for children from 9 months to 4 years old

All funded childcare support must be with an Ofsted registered early years provider who has been approved to offer the sessions by the local authority.

For further local information and support, call Family Hubs on:
01273 293545 or email familyhubs@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Search online for childcare providers at www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk

[Section One – Children aged three and four years](#)

ALL three and four year olds can receive up to 570 hours of childcare support per year. This is often taken as 15 hours a week during term time, or you can take fewer hours and spread across the year. This starts from the term after the child's third birthday.

Some three and four year olds of **eligible working parents** can receive up to 1140 hours of childcare support spread per year. This is 30 hours a week if taken during term time, or you can take fewer hours per week and spread them over the year.

[Section Two – Children aged two years](#)

15 hours childcare support for children whose **parents can apply locally (see table below)** and for **eligible working parents**, coming soon from April 2024. (Applications start now.)

If eligible, families can receive up to 570 hours of childcare support per year. This is often taken as 15 hours a week during term time, or you can take fewer hours and spread across the year.

[Section Three – Children aged 9 to 23 months](#)

15 hours childcare support for children of **eligible working parents**, from September 2024. (Applications start in April 2024)

If eligible, families can receive up to 570 hours of childcare support per year. This is often taken as 15 hours a week during term time, or you can take fewer hours and spread across the year.

[Section Four](#) - Who is eligible and How to apply – for all children above

[Section Five](#) - Advice and Top Tips

[Section Six](#) - Other funding / Childcare Choices

[Section Seven](#) - EAL and SEND

Section One – Children aged three and four years

ALL three and four year olds receive up to 570 hours of childcare support per year.

This is often taken as 15 hours a week during term time, or you can take fewer hours per week and spread across the year. This starts from the term after the child's third birthday. This is called the "universal entitlement".

You do not have to apply for the universal entitlement. Once you have decided on your childcare provider, you should contact them to discuss whether they have spaces and if they are able to offer your preferred hours. You can search online for childcare providers at:

www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk

WHEN can my child start in a place?

If your child's third birthday is between	Places start from	Term
1 Jan – 31 Mar	1 Apr	Summer term
1 Apr – 31 Aug	1 Sep	Autumn term
1 Sep – 31 Dec	1 Jan	Spring term

Some three and four year olds of eligible working parents can receive up to 1140 hours of childcare support spread per year.

This is 30 hours a week if taken during term time, or you can take fewer hours per week and spread across the year. This is the "extended entitlement".

The table below shows the first term your child could start their place and when you can check if they are eligible.

30 hours eligibility by date of birth

Child turns 3 years old between these dates – you can apply for their code during this time	With their valid code, they can start their place, from	Term
1 Jan to 31 Mar	the beginning of term on or after 1 Apr	Summer term
1 Apr to 31 Aug	the beginning of term on or after 1 Sep	Autumn term
1 Sep to 31 Dec	the beginning of term on or after 1 Jan	Spring term

Section Two – Children aged two years

15 hours childcare support for children whose **parents should apply locally (see table below)** and for **eligible working parents**, coming soon from April 2024. (Applications start now)

If eligible, you can receive up to 570 hours of childcare support per year. This is often taken as 15 hours a week during term time, or you can take fewer hours and spread across the year.

Are you eligible ?

Apply locally to Brighton & Hove City Council:	Apply on the gov.uk website:
<p>If you get one of the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Credit, and your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, not including benefit payments • income support • income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) • income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) • the guaranteed element of Pension Credit • the Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit) <p>2-year-olds can also get funded childcare support if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are looked after by a local authority* • have an education, health and care (EHC) plan* • get Disability Living Allowance* • have left care under an adoption order, special guardianship order or a child arrangements order* <p>If you're a non- UK citizen who cannot claim benefits:</p> <p>If your immigration status says you have 'no recourse to public funds', you may still get free childcare for your 2-year-old* You must live in England and your household income must be no more than £26,500 for families (outside of London) with one child, or £30,600 for families with two or more children. You cannot have more than £16,000 in savings or investments.</p> <p>*You will need to provide evidence if any of the above apply to you - see application form for details</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both parents must be working and earning at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage*, but less than £100,000 per person a year (see below for exceptions) • Single parents must be working and earning at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage, but less than £100,000 per year • Self-employed parents must have earnings over a set period of time that equate to at least 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage but do not exceed £100,000 per year. <p>See Section Four for additional eligibility exceptions.</p>
How to apply locally	How to apply
<p>Free early learning for 2 year olds (brighton-hove.gov.uk) Email: FamilyHubs@brighton-hove.gov.uk Call: 01273 293545</p>	<p>Apply for free childcare if you're working - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Helpline: 0300 1234 097</p>

If you are not sure, apply to Brighton & Hove City Council first – we will support you and give you further guidance.

If eligible by applying locally, you may benefit from;

- an immediate start to funding,
- not having to wait until the start of the next term
- applying at any time throughout the year, if your child is eligible by age
- less administration, as you do not need to set up a government gateway account

Eligibility by date of birth

Child's 2 nd birthday falls between	You can apply for their place during this time	They can start their place from	Term
1 Sep - 31 Dec 2023	local applications: Apply now	local applications: from 1 Jan 2024	Spring term
	eligible working parents: 1 Jan – 31 Mar 2024**	eligible working parents: From 1 Apr 2024	Summer term
1 Jan - 31 Mar 2024	local applications: 1 Jan – 31 Mar 2024	From 1 Apr 2024	Summer term
	eligible working parents: 1 Jan – 31 Mar 2024**	From 1 Apr 2024	Summer term
1 Apr - 31 Aug 2024	local applications: 1 Apr – 31 Aug 2024	From 1 Sep 2024	Autumn term
	eligible working parents: 1 Apr – 31 Aug 2024**	From 1 Sep 2024	Autumn term

**** As an eligible working parent, if you do not apply within this application window, your funding start date will be delayed by a term. This means you will lose a term's funded childcare support.**

Section Three - Children aged 9 to 23 months

15 hours childcare support for children of **eligible working families**, from September 2024.
(Applications start in April 2024)

If eligible, families can receive up to 570 hours of childcare support per year, from the term after they turn 9 months old. This is often taken as 15 hours a week during term time, or you can take fewer hours and spread across the year.

The table below shows when your child can start their place and when you can check if they are eligible.

Eligibility by date of birth

Child's date of birth between	Child reaches 9 months old between these dates – you can apply for their place during this time	Funding starts	Term
1 Sep 2022 – 30 June 2023	*You can apply for a pro-rata amount of childcare support to start from 1 Sep 2024	1 Sep 2024	Autumn term
1 Jul 2023 – 30 Nov 2023	1 Apr 2024 – 31 Aug 2024	1 Sep 2024	Autumn term
1 Dec 2023 – 31 Mar 2024	1 Sep 2024 – 31 Dec 2024	1 Jan 2025	Spring term
1 Apr 2024 – 30 Jun 2024	1 Jan 2025 – 31 Mar 2025	1 Apr 2025	Summer term

Apply online at [Childcare Choices | 30 Hours Childcare, Tax-Free Childcare and More | Help with Costs | GOV.UK](#)

Section Four - Who is eligible and how to apply

For the children of eligible working families :					
Age of child	Hours available		Applications start from	With their valid code, they can start their place, from	
9 to 23 months	15 hours per week, term time	570 hours per year	1 Apr 2024	1 Sep 2024	Autumn term
Two year olds	15 hours per week, term time	570 hours per year	Can apply now	1 Apr 2024	Summer term
Three and four year olds	30 hours per week, term time	1140 hours per year	can apply now	1 Jan 2024	Spring term

To qualify:

- **Both** parents must be working and earning at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage*, but less than £100,000 per person a year (**see below for exceptions**)
- Single parents must be working and earning at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage*, but less than £100,000 per year
- Self-employed parents must have earnings over a set period of time that equate to at least 16 hours per week at the national minimum wage* but do not exceed £100,000 per year.
- Foster carers may be eligible for 30 hours free early learning for three and four year olds that they foster, if they meet certain conditions.

Earnings per week, must be at least (national minimum wage*)

Age:	Per week total (16 hrs) (from 1 Apr 2023)	Per hour rate (from 1 Apr 2023)	Per week total (16 hrs) (from 1 Apr 2024)	Per hour rate (from 1 Apr 2024)
Over 23	£166.72	£10.42	£183.04	£11.44
21-22	£162.88	£10.18	£183.04	£11.44
18-20	£119.84	£7.49	£137.60	£8.60

(* [National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk))

If you work less than 16 hours, but earn at least the amounts above, you will still be eligible.

What are the exceptions?

Children **may** be eligible for funded childcare support, if in a two parent household where one parent is working, the other parent is in receipt of one of the following;

- Incapacity benefit
- Severe disablement allowance
- Long-term incapacity benefit
- Carers' allowance

- Contributory Employment Support Allowance (ESA)
- National Insurance Credits on grounds of incapacity for work
- Universal Credit element for carers or limited capacity for work
- Statutory sick pay
- All forms of parenting and adoption leave

In a single parent household the parent is eligible if they are away from work and in receipt of

- Statutory sick pay
- All forms of parenting and adoption leave

**Single parents who are not working or on work-related leave,
are NOT eligible.**

Many people have varied work patterns, for example zero hour contracts, or self-employment which means that earnings can change from week to week. If in doubt – apply!

How can you check if you are eligible?

You can check your eligibility at [Welcome to GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

You will need to verify your identity online and set up a government gateway account. You will then be given a childcare service account, where you can re-confirm your eligibility and manage your childcare funding.

If you apply more than three months before your child's start date, you will need to reconfirm your eligibility before your child takes up the entitlement.

How do you apply?

Go to [Childcare Choices | 30 Hours Childcare, Tax-Free Childcare and More | Help with Costs | GOV.UK](#) and choose the funding section which applies to your child's age.

You should apply the term before your child is eligible by age, to ensure that you can access a place when you want it. If you do not receive a code before the deadline, you will need to wait until the following term before you can access your free place.

You can apply up to 31 days before taking up or returning to work. The earliest you can receive a code is 16 weeks before your child is eligible.

For eligible working parents you must apply on time otherwise your child will have to wait until the start of the next term to take up their extended entitlement. However, if your child is three they will still be able to take up their 15 hours funded early years, "universal entitlement" place.

What happens next if you are eligible?

You will be given an 11 digit code that you must give to your childcare provider. They will verify your code and discuss your childcare needs.

You will need to hold onto your code, as you must reconfirm your eligibility online every three months. If you forget your code, log into your childcare service account online - you can then view your "secure messages" where a copy of your eligibility letter is saved. If your working status changes, at any point when you're receiving funded childcare support, you should let your childcare provider know.

Tax-Free Childcare

You cannot claim both Universal Credit and Tax-Free Childcare. The childcare service online will check whether you are eligible for Tax-Free Childcare and opt you into the scheme if you are eligible. **If you would prefer to stay on, you must opt out of Tax- Free Childcare when asked.**

If you have an enquiry about your funded childcare support or the online application process, call HMRC's childcare service helpline on 0300 1234 097

Section Five - Advice and Top Tips

How to choose a childcare provider

- Give yourself plenty of time and visit several early years providers
- Ask lots of questions and talk to other parents and staff
- Make sure you understand how the early years provider offers the childcare support sessions and that they offer them at the time that suits you – ***look at the fees and funding section of their website for more details.***
- Make sure you understand if your place is completely free or if you will be charged for additional hours or services. Ask them to put this in writing so that you have a record to keep. If anything is unclear, ask them to explain what they mean before you agree to take up the place.
- If you already pay for your child to attend a setting, the days and times the childcare support sessions are offered, may be different
- Make sure you ask how the setting offers childcare support sessions for your child. They may be at different times from how they offer the sessions for other age groups.
- Think about whether you want your child to attend 15 (or 30) hours a week during term time only, or whether you want to spread your hours across the year.
- Ask to see a copy of the early years provider's terms and conditions

Where can children take up their place?

Most Ofsted registered childcare providers in Brighton & Hove offer the funded childcare. You can search for Ofsted registered childcare providers that offer places at www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk

Funded childcare support cannot be backdated, so you will lose any of the hours that you do not use. If your chosen provider has a waiting list, or is unable to offer you a place, you can contact Family Hubs who can help you to find another childcare provider.

How will my child's place be offered?

There are limits set by the government about how the place can be offered:

- No session can be longer than 10 hours
- Sessions must not start before 6am or finish after 8pm
- A maximum of two single sites in one day

You should discuss with each provider how they will spread the hours over the week. Some offer specific packages; others may be more flexible.

Can parents take more or fewer hours over the year?

You do not have to take any of the childcare support hours if you don't want to, or you can take fewer hours if you wish.

If you need additional hours, you will have to pay for them. Help towards the cost is available, if you are eligible, through Universal Credit. Alternatively, you may be eligible for Tax-Free Childcare.

Childcare providers will offer funded childcare support places in different ways and they may restrict the number of places that they offer. You may not necessarily be able to get all your hours with one provider. For example, some providers are open term time only or will choose not to offer places over holidays.

Can the childcare support hours be split between more than one provider?

Yes. You can split your hours between a maximum of 2 providers per day, as long as you don't exceed your entitlement of 570 or 1140 hours per year.

Some providers give priority to children who want to take up their full entitlement with that provider.

Can I use a childcare provider in a neighbouring local authority?

Yes. You can decide which childcare provider is best for your child depending on the vacancies available and your circumstances.

Will I have to pay anything?

If you only want your funded childcare support hours, **this is called a 'standalone' place.**

Childcare providers can set their own admissions criteria for these places and some may restrict them to certain times of the day or week and limit the number of standalone spaces they offer. You may have to pay a small deposit which will be refunded when your child starts. Providers can also charge for food and other consumables as part of a standalone space, but families should be given the choice not to purchase these if they **only** want their funded childcare support hours.

Please bear in mind that some childcare providers cater mainly for families who pay for extra hours of care.

Your childcare provider should give you information about charges for additional hours, sessions, consumables (eg. meals, snacks, nappies, suncream) and extra services such as trips and yoga. These should also be clearly set out on your invoice. Childcare providers can decide their own charges for paid sessions and sessions which include some funded hours but should publish these on their website.

If you are having difficulty finding a childcare provider that can offer you just a standalone place, contact Family Hubs.

Your childcare invoice and additional charges

You should discuss your requirements with the childcare provider before taking up a place.

This should include clarifying any additional charges they may include in your bill.

If you have any queries about your invoice, speak to your childcare provider in the first instance. They should explain how the charges have been worked out and how they are charging you for any extra hours, consumables or services.

Keep a note of any discussions that you have and if you still feel the situation is unresolved, contact Family Hubs.

Notice Period

If you want to leave your childcare provider, they may require you to give a notice period. The notice period for any sessions which include funded childcare support, will be in the contract with your provider, and should not exceed one month.

How will I know my child is safe and well cared for?

All early years providers are registered with Ofsted which carries out inspections to make sure that the premises are safe and that staff are suitably qualified and trained to look after your child.

You can ask to see the early years provider's Ofsted report when you visit, or you can view reports online at www.ofsted.gov.uk Although it is important to look at Ofsted reports, it is equally important that you find out as much as you can about an early years provider before making a decision.

How can I help my child settle in?

You should think about arranging settling in sessions with your childcare provider. This will give you and your child the opportunity to get to know the environment and staff. Short sessions are best to begin with, and you can stay with your child for the first few sessions until they are familiar with their surroundings.

When does the childcare support end?

Most children start reception class in school, the September after their fourth birthday. For more information about applying for school and school start dates, contact the School Admissions team: [Apply for school \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](http://brighton-hove.gov.uk)

For advice and help with school applications:

- send an email to schooladmissions@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- phone 01273 293653, weekdays between 9:30am and 1:30pm

Section Six - Other funding / Childcare Choices

The Childcare Choices website can give you:

- **Information on all government childcare offers**, including those for working families starting in September 2024 and September 2025, mentioned in this factsheet
- **A newsletter for parents** to receive updates on these changes
- **A personal eligibility checker**, to give information on what each of your children may be eligible for – with suggested application and start dates, based on their ages
- **Tax Free Childcare** (for 0 – 11 years or 0 – 16 if disabled)
- **Universal Credit for Childcare** (for 0 – 17)
- **Information on Support While You Study** (for parents at school, sixth-form or further education)
- A link to the government **Help For Households** campaign

[Childcare Choices | 30 Hours Childcare, Tax-Free Childcare and More | Help with Costs | GOV.UK](#)

If you have an enquiry about your eligibility or the online application process, call HMRC's childcare service helpline on 0300 1234 097

Section Seven – Local support for EAL and SEND

The Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) supports families with **English as an Additional Language (EAL)**.

EMAS offer help to understand funded childcare support, find a childcare place and settle in.

[Ethnic Minority Achievement Service \(EMAS\) \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#)

Children with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** may receive additional support to access a funded childcare place.

Families should speak to:

- Their childcare provider – [Early Years Free Entitlement \(EYFE\) and support for children with SEND \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#)
- BHISS - [Brighton & Hove Inclusion Support Service \(BHISS\) \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#)
- Amaze - [For families with disabled children and young people in Sussex - Amaze \(amazesussex.org.uk\)](#)

Brighton & Hove Family Hubs – Our range of factsheets to view online at [Family Service Directory | Useful Information \(familyinfobrighton.org.uk\)](#)

The information included in the factsheet was correct to the best of our knowledge at January 2024. For the most up to date information, please visit www.gov.uk