

Information for Parents/Carers

What is free childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds?

Free early learning and childcare places are funded by Cambridgeshire County Council from money it receives from the Government. These places are available in pre-schools, playgroups, day nurseries, independent schools, with accredited Childminder Networks and in state funded nursery schools/classes, reception classes or units.

The groups or childminders offering early years provision are referred to as 'settings' or 'providers'.

What is the entitlement?

The entitlement is a maximum 570 hours over a year, usually taken as 15 free hours per week over 38 weeks. These hours are tracked over three terms from the term your child becomes eligible. The free hours are exempt from any additional charge, or top up, but hours in excess of the entitlement are charged for¹. The full entitlement can be spread evenly across the year but with fewer hours per week, depending on what your provider offers.

The minimum number of funded hours in a day is 2.5 hours and the maximum is 10 hours. The maximum is 15 hours taken over a minimum of two days. Check with your provider to find out what they can offer.

The hours can be shared across two providers but should be claimed over the same number of weeks in order to maximise the entitlement.

Can any child take up a free place?

The entitlement to a place for a 3 and 4 year old is universal which means it is available to all 3 and 4 year olds.

Your 2 year old child will be eligible to access their entitlement if any of the benefits criteria overleaf is met or, if you are in receipt of Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit and earn no more than £16,190.

There are several ways to find out. You will need the National Insurance Number, date of birth and surname of the person in receipt of the qualifying benefit. You can:

- ♦ Apply online www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freetwos
- ♦ Apply by phone to Education Welfare Benefits Team on 01223 703200
- ♦ Check eligibility at a Children's Centre

What do I have to do to take up my free place at a Private, Voluntary or Independent Childcare Provider?

A form called a *Funding Agreement* will be issued to you by your provider. This is an agreement between you and the provider on how you will take up your free hours over the term. You must provide proof of your child's identity and date of birth (e.g. a birth certificate or NHS card) and then sign your agreement.

When is my child eligible?	A child born in the period	Will become eligible for a free place
Children become eligible from the school term <u>after</u> they turn three through to the school term they turn five. The eligibility dates are different from the school term dates.	1 April to 31 August	Autumn School Term following child's 3 rd birthday
	1 September to 31 December	Spring School Term following child's 3 rd birthday
	1 January to 31 March	Summer School Term following child's 3 rd birthday

Eligible two year olds follow the same date of birth eligibility which starts in the term after they turn two.

¹ If you think a charge is being made for any of the 15 hour entitlement please discuss this with your provider in the first instance. If you are still unsure, call the Early Years Funding Team on 01223 699805.

What is Early Years Pupil Premium?

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is extra government funding for your childcare provider to improve outcomes for eligible children.

Your child will be eligible if they are 3 or 4 years old and receiving free Government funded education with any Ofsted registered early years/nursery provider, and you are in receipt of one or more of these benefits (used to access eligibility for free school meals):

- ♦ Income Support
- ♦ Income-based Jobseekers 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 (unless you're also entitled to Working Tax Credit, and earn no more than £16,190)
- ♦ Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop receiving Working Tax Credit)

or if they:

- ♦ have been in local-authority care for 1 day or more in England or Wales
- ♦ have been adopted from care in England or Wales
- ♦ have left care under a special guardianship order or residence order in England or Wales

How do I apply for EYPP?

There is a space on the *Funding Agreement* where you can put your surname, National Insurance Number and date of birth. If you are in receipt of a benefit, this information must be the claimant's details.

You should receive a letter from the County Council telling you (yes or no) whether your child is entitled. If your child qualifies, a payment will be made to your childcare provider. They will use the money in ways they think will support your child's learning and development.

They may combine the payments for several children, or work with other providers, in order to fund specific activity or training.

What if my circumstances change?

The Early Years Funding is universal and available for all 3 and 4 year olds.

If your child is in receipt of 2 year old funding, they will keep this until they become eligible for Early Years Funding. It will not be affected by a change in circumstances.

Once your three year old is eligible for EYPP, they will remain so until they turn four. At that point, a second eligibility check will be undertaken on your behalf, with no need to re-apply, using the information provided on the original application. You will be informed of any change to your eligibility.

How do I find a provider?

If you need help to find a provider who offers free Early Years places, telephone the Families Information Service on 0345 045 1360 or access their website at

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20064/childcare>

My child is starting school on a part-time basis, may I claim a free place until they are in school full-time?

No. For reception class or special units, unless you have made special arrangements with the school, confirmed by the County Council, your full entitlement of a free place is taken at the state funded setting.

For state funded nurseries or nursery classes, the hours you take up will be counted towards your 15 hour entitlement e.g. if you take up 15 hours then your full entitlement is used. If you take up say, 10 hours, then you have 5 hours remaining to be used at another early years setting. Hours claimed at a state funded nursery or nursery class take precedence over hours claimed at a non state funded early years setting.