



Early Years FREE Entitlement for Childcare and Education for 3 and 4 year olds

A Guide for Parents

Do you have a child who is 3 or 4 years old?

Every child, from the term after their 3rd birthday, is eligible to receive free early years entitlement for childcare and education for 15 hours a week.





What type of setting can you use to claim your child's free entitlement?

- Private, voluntary and independent nurseries
- Pre-schools
- State nursery schools and classes
- Private schools
- Accredited for funding childminders

When will your child become eligible for the free entitlement?

Your child becomes eligible from the start of the term after they become 3 years old.

This means a child born between:

- 1 September and 31 December is eligible from 1 January
- 1 January and 31 March is eligible from 1 April
- 1 April and 31 August is eligible from 1 September

Your free entitlement continues until the end of the term in which your child becomes 5 years old. This means that when your child starts in Reception class, they will receive the remainder of their free entitlement at school. If your child starts reception class on a part time basis and the school has already claimed for the free entitlement you will not be able to claim any funding at another setting.

How can you help your child?

- Prepare your child by visiting the setting and having a settling in period.
- Develop a routine – always attend for the hours you have booked and be punctual arriving at the setting and picking up your child. This not only supports your relationship with the setting but is also crucial for your child's learning.
- Make good links with your child's setting. Keep them informed of any changes that could affect your child and find out what your child has been doing during the day – it's really good to know this so you can talk about and share your child's experiences.





What other financial help can I get?

If you are working 16 hours a week or more, you may be eligible to claim Working Tax Credit and the Childcare Element for help with your childcare costs. For information you can call HM Revenue and Customs on 0845 300 3900.

If you are already receiving Tax Credits, you would need to notify HM Revenue and Customs that you are eligible for the free entitlement.

What will my child learn?

Early learning is part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This is recognised as a distinct stage of development when children learn best through active play, building on their individual needs and interests. The framework which settings should work within is set down in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The settings are responsible for devising their own structures for delivering early learning within this framework. The emphasis is on learning through play so that children can learn with enjoyment the key skills they need for the future.

How can you use your hours?

The entitlement is flexible so that you can use your 570 hours in various ways.

Many settings, such as schools offer 15 hours a week for a maximum of 38 weeks a year, each year has 3 funding periods and these vary in length, but:

- the maximum number of weeks in a funding period is 15 weeks
- the minimum number of hours you can use in a day is 2.5 hours and the maximum is 10 hours
- if you wish to use your full entitlement of 15 hours, this must be taken over 2 days or more
- Some settings offer a 'stretched' offer where the 570 hour entitlement is spread over 51 Weeks, which means that every week 11 hours of care and education are free

The way you use your hours will depend on:

- your choice of setting
- the number of hours the setting is open each day
- the number of weeks the setting is open each year





- the times the setting can offer you the free entitlement

Please be aware that not all settings will be able to offer just the 15 hours free entitlement. You may use your hours in a maximum of 2 settings but you must inform each setting that you are doing this. You will be asked to sign a Parent Agreement form to confirm your child's details and agreement to the hours you will be using at the setting and it is an expectation that your child will remain at that setting for that term and attend regularly. This form may be in addition to other contractual requirements in place at the setting.

What do you have to pay for?

If your child attends a setting just for their free entitlement, the setting must not impose any conditions on you using this place e.g. registration fee, uniform charge or deposit. However, if your chosen hours cover a meal period, this can be part of your entitlement but you may be charged for the cost of the meal supplied.

If you use the setting for more than your free entitlement, you will be charged for any extra hours used. Your bill from the setting must clearly show your free entitlement and then the cost for any additional hours or services.



What do you need to do?

If your child becomes eligible for the free entitlement and already has a place in a setting which delivers free entitlement funding, you will be asked to complete the Parent Agreement form. The setting will then claim for your child's free entitlement.

If your child does not attend a setting, you can access information on www.familyspacecroydon.co.uk about the settings and schools near you where your child can access and benefit from the free entitlement.

What happens if my child leaves?

If your child leaves a setting during the term, your entitlement may be able to be





transferred to a new setting. However, you must adhere to the conditions on the Parental Agreement form which require a minimum of 4 weeks' notice before the entitlement can be transferred.