**Islington Childcare Bursary Scheme**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Am I eligible for a childcare bursary?**

Yes, if you are an Islington resident and a parent then you may be able to apply for a childcare bursary. To be eligible, you must:

* Be an Islington resident or placed out of borough by Islington Council
* Be on a low income i.e. claiming Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, or other means-tested benefits and / or eligible for up to Band 3 in the Council’s subsidised childcare policy (Funded Early Years Charging Policy) which is currently up to £39,999 total household earnings
* Have a child aged 0-16 (or up to 18 with disabilities) who needs childcare
* Have no alternative to paid childcare e.g. a partner not working
* Be unable to get childcare funding by any other means
* Be out of work, or in low paid / insecure work – the aim of the bursary is to help parents move into work
* Have sourced registered childcare, either within or outside of Islington
* Have a National Insurance number

**How do I apply for a childcare bursary?**

You can complete the application form which can be found on our website at:

<https://www.islington.gov.uk/children-and-families/help-with-childcare-costs/childcare-bursary>

If you are getting support to find work from our iWork team, your work coach will be able to help you to make an application.

If you have contacted our Family Information Service to get help and advice on finding childcare, they will be able to help you submit an application.

And if you have contacted our Income Maximisation Team for advice on claiming benefits, and whether you will be better off in work, they will be able to help you make an application.

**What costs can a childcare bursary cover?**

The aim of our Childcare Bursary Scheme is to help parents to be able to move into employment or, for those who are in low paid, insecure jobs, to be able to train for or progress to a better job.

**If you are looking to move into work**, you may be able to get a childcare bursary to help cover childcare costs for you to:

* Attend an interview or short-term training
* Pay a deposit to secure a childcare place
* Cover the first 8 weeks of childcare costs when you start your new job, whilst you make an application for childcare costs through Universal Credit
* Cover the equivalent of 8 weeks childcare costs when you start a new job, but spread over a longer period of time where this would help you to manage your budget whilst you apply for childcare costs through Universal Credit

**If you are already in work**, you may be able to get a childcare bursary to enable you to:

* Cover 8 weeks childcare costs where you are returning to work after being on maternity leave or on long-term sickness absence and claiming Statutory Sick Pay
* Cover an additional 15 hours childcare per week, if you are in receipt of 15 hours free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds until you become eligible for 30 hours free childcare
* Attend a short training course to help you progress in work
* Cover additional childcare fees for up to 8 weeks if you are moving from part-time to full-time work

There is also **discretion** to award a childcare bursary for other circumstances, where this will help you to move into, progress and remain in work.

NB: In all cases, a childcare bursary will only be awarded to cover costs with a **registered** childcare provider. Contact our **Family Information Service** for more advice.

Tel: 020 7527 5959

Email: fis@islington.gov.uk

**Can I get help with childcare costs so that I can attend training to help me get a job?**

Yes. You can apply for a childcare bursary to cover childcare costs while you are attending a short-term training course that will help you gain skills to move into, or progress in work.

If you are attending a course at one of the Council’s Adult Community Learning Centres, they may be offering a free creche for learners or can help you to apply for a childcare bursary.

**Can I have a childcare bursary to cover more than one purpose?**

Yes, it may be possible to apply for funding to cover more than one circumstance.

For instance, you may be able to get help to cover childcare costs to attend an interview and, if successful, 8 weeks childcare costs to cover the period when you first move into work.

Each application will be dealt with on its own merits. The aim is to help those parents for whom childcare costs are a real barrier to taking up employment.

**Does my childcare provider need to be in Islington?**

No. The only requirement we have is that you are using a registered childcare provider (to ensure safe, quality childcare). The provider could be a nursery or a childminder. It could also be a nanny, but only if the nanny is registered with Ofsted.

Our Family Information Service will be able to provide you with a list of registered childcare providers, either close to your home or to your work, whichever works best for you.

But if you are using a private provider – either in Islington or in another borough - you may want to check if you are eligible for a subsidised place in one of our nurseries.

Find out more by contacting our **Family Information Service:**

Tel: 020 7527 5959

Email: fis@islington.gov.uk

**Will the childcare bursary funding be paid to my account, and will it affect my benefits?**

No. The childcare bursary is paid direct to the provider. It will not affect your benefits, but you will not be able to claim childcare support through Universal Credit during the period that the childcare bursary is being paid. You can start claiming government support through benefits after the childcare bursary payment period.

**Can I apply for a childcare bursary to cover a backlog in my childcare payments?**

No. A childcare bursary is to help parents cover costs to enable them to move into work.

It can also help a parent train or progress into a better job that will provide more financial stability.

But it is not a means to cover debts or backlogs in payments to your childcare provider.

If you are struggling to cope, you can contact our **Income Maximisation Team** and they will be able to help you check that you are getting all the benefits and support you are entitled to.

Tel: 020 7527 8600

Email: claimit@islington.gov.uk

**Is there an upper limit on how much I can get through a childcare bursary?**

No. Each case is considered on its own merits. However, we do need to ensure that as many parents as possible are helped through our Childcare Bursary Scheme, so we may offer a lower award where a parent has applied for a large sum of money.

But a childcare bursary can only cover a short-term period or event. It cannot be used towards ongoing childcare costs over several months or years.

When deciding on whether or not to approve your application, we will be looking at whether you will be able to meet childcare costs in the longer term.

If childcare costs are likely to be a struggle for you, we can put you in touch with our **Family Information Service**, who can check if you could get a more affordable childcare place in one of our subsidised nurseries.

Tel: 020 7527 5959

Email: fis@islington.gov.uk

Our **iWork service** may be able to help you get a job that works around your childcare needs or earn more money to help meet costs.

Tel: 020 7527 2706

Email: islingtonworking@islington.gov.uk

Our **Income Maximisation (IMAX) Team** will be able to check if you are getting all the benefits and support to which you are entitled. If there is a benefit you could be claiming, but are not, it could make a big difference to you and your family.

Tel: 020 7527 8600

Email: claimit@islington.gov.uk

**Can I apply for a childcare bursary retrospectively i.e. when I’ve already started work?**

No. In most cases, retrospective requests for a bursary after a parent has already started work will not be accepted. The bursary is to help parents who are not currently working to be able to make the move into work.

For those who already have a job, but are on low income, it can be used for training to get a better job or to move from part time to full time work.

There is discretion to pay a bursary for another reason, but only if it meets the aim of the scheme i.e. to help parents move into and secure sustainable employment.

The bursary cannot be used to help those already in work but who are struggling with the costs of childcare.

Parents on low income should be claiming Universal Credit or Tax Credits. Our **Income Maximisation Team (IMAX)** can help with making a claim.

Tel: 020 7527 8600

Email: claimit@islington.gov.uk

For those already in work and struggling to meet childcare costs, our **Family Information Service** may be able to help find more affordable childcare in one of our subsidised nurseries.

Tel: 020 7527 5959

Email: fis@islington.gov.uk