



Help with childcare costs

December 2020

There are a range of schemes available to help parents with childcare costs, which support parents to take up training and employment and enable children to experience an enriching childcare environment. Numerous studies and local evidence show that high quality childcare and early education supports children's development and prepares them to thrive at school and in later life.

For full details of support with childcare costs go to the [Childcare Choices website](#):
www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

2 years

Parents are eligible for free 15 hours childcare and early learning for 2 year olds if they are out of work, or if they are in work but earning less than £16,190 per year (£15,400 if they are claiming Universal Credit), or if their child has special educational needs or disabilities, is looked after or adopted. You can see a full list of the eligibility criteria and apply on [Islington's website](#): www.islington.gov.uk/free2

3 and 4 years

All 3 and 4 year olds can get 15 hours a week (up to 570 hours a year) free early learning with a registered childcare provider (nursery or childminder). Parents can start using the scheme the term after their child turns 3. Some working parents can get an additional 15 hours free (30 hours per week in total).

30 hours free childcare and tax-free childcare

30 hours free childcare and tax-free childcare help working parents with the cost of childcare. To qualify, parents must be in work and each earning the equivalent of 16 hours per week on the national minimum wage (on average), and not more than £100,000 each per year. The scheme is also open to self-employed parents.

30 hours free childcare is for 3 and 4 year olds attending registered early years providers (school nurseries, children's centres, private and voluntary nurseries and childminders).

Tax-free childcare can be used with registered childcare providers, including after-school and holiday schemes for children up to the age of 12, or 17, if the child has special educational needs or disabilities. For every £8 you pay in to your childcare account, the government will add an extra £2, up to £2,000 per child (£4,000 if the child has special educational needs or disabilities).

Please note, you can't use tax-free childcare and tax credits at the same time. For information about which scheme will suit parents best, use the [online childcare calculator](#):
www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator

Parents can check whether they are eligible for 30 hours free childcare and tax-free childcare by using the [online Childcare Service](http://www.gov.uk/apply-30-hours-free-tax-free-childcare) www.gov.uk/apply-30-hours-free-tax-free-childcare

Further support with childcare costs for working parents

Tax credits

Working Tax Credit and Universal Credit are paid to people in work to top up low wages. Working Tax Credit is gradually being phased out and replaced by Universal Credit. [Working Tax Credit](#) can include a childcare element which covers up to 70% of childcare costs; [Universal Credit](#) can cover up to 85% of childcare costs.

Childcare vouchers

Employers may be able to help with childcare costs using childcare vouchers or other schemes, for example a staff nursery. The childcare vouchers scheme has now closed to new applicants; parents already using childcare vouchers can continue to do so.

National Insurance credits for adults who care for a child under 12

Grandparents or other family members can claim for [National Insurance credits](#) if they are caring for a child while their parent (or main carer) is working.

Flexible Support Fund

This fund is offered by local job centres at the discretion of work coaches. It can be offered to help with short-term childcare costs as parents move into employment. Parents should speak to their job coach for further information.

Further support with childcare costs for students

Care to Learn

This scheme is for parents under 20 who are taking a publicly-funded course.

Discretionary Learner Support

This is for parents aged over 19, on a further education course.

Childcare Grant

This is for parents in full-time education.

Further support from Islington Council

Islington Childcare Bursary

This is a scheme run by Islington Council to help parents who are starting work, a work placement, or training, to pay for childcare on a short-term basis. Contact Islington FIS for details.

For information about finding and paying for childcare, contact Islington FIS:
020 7527 5959; by [email](mailto:fis@islington.gov.uk): fis@islington.gov.uk; [Website](http://www.islington.gov.uk/fis): www.islington.gov.uk/fis