



Free childcare and early education for under fives

Information for parents



We want all children in Newcastle to benefit from high quality childcare and early education.

- Free childcare can give your child a great start in life
- Playing and exploring will help your child learn lots of new skills such as speaking, listening and counting
- You'll have time to work, train or just for yourself



Every child is entitled to some free childcare before they start school, for instance all three- and-four-year-olds are entitled to at least 15 hours per week. How much and when varies according to your child's age and your circumstances, for example many two-year-olds are also eligible.

In addition, you can also receive some support to subsidise the cost of paid for childcare for instance through Tax Credits, Universal Credit or Tax-Free Childcare.

The majority of childcare in Newcastle is judged Outstanding

or Good by Ofsted. You can choose between a childminder, school, pre-school playgroup or day nursery.

You can use the free provision during term time or all year-round, whatever suits you and your family's needs.

You can also get extra support and funding if your child has additional needs or a disability.

This guide should help you understand what you may be entitled to. Throughout the guide we use **childcare** to mean all early education and childcare and the term **provider** to refer to all kinds of childcare or school.



When is my child eligible?

Child born between	Two-year-old free childcare	Three-and-four-year-old free childcare
1 st April – 31 st Aug	Autumn term (Sept) after second birthday	Autumn term (Sept) after third birthday
1 st Sept – 31 st Dec	Spring term (Jan) after second birthday	Spring term (Jan) after third birthday
1 st Jan – 31 st March	Summer term (April) after second birthday	Summer term (April) after third birthday

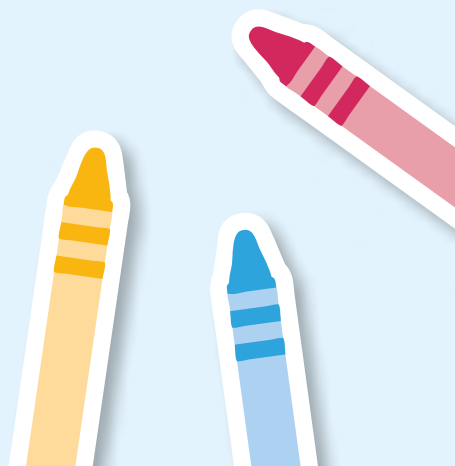
Where can I use my free childcare?

You can use any Ofsted registered provider including:

- Childminder
- Pre-school playgroup
- Day nursery
- Nursery school or nursery class in a school
- Some out of school clubs

For a full list visit:

www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk



How can I use my free childcare hours?

You can use your free childcare at times that suit you, including weekends. Some providers are more flexible for instance a childminder, others offer hours in three or five hour sessions within the following limits:

- No more than 10 hours a day
- Not before 6am or after 8pm
- Up to three different providers but no more than two sites per day

You should discuss with your childcare provider:

- How they offer the hours
- If you can take the free hours only
- Availability of a place for the hours you require
- If you want to pay for extra hours
- If there are any charges for optional extras such as food etc

What about the school holidays?

Some providers are open all year round and you can discuss with them "stretching" your free hours over more weeks of the year for instance if you are entitled to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks this is 570 hours a year or approximately 11 hours if taken over 52 weeks.

You may also get support from your local Sure Start Children's Centre, health visitor or other professionals you have contact with.



Free childcare for two-year-olds

Half of all two-year-olds in Newcastle are eligible for 15 hours free childcare. We send golden tickets to families who we know are eligible, but circumstances change all the time so it is always worth checking your eligibility with a local provider.



Who is eligible?

Families are eligible where:

- They are on a low income (see below) and in receipt of benefits or
- Your child is looked after by the council or has left care through an adoption, special guardianship, or a child arrangements order (previously residence order) or
- Your child receives Disability Living Allowance or has an education, health and care plan

Low income criteria – parents need to be receiving one of the following:

- Any of these benefits - Income Support, income-based Job Seekers' Allowance, income-related ESA or
- The guaranteed elements of the State Pension Credit;
- Support under Part 6 of Immigration & Asylum Act 1999;
- Child Tax Credit, and have annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by HMRC;
- Working Tax Credit with a household income of less than £16,190 as assessed by HMRC;
- Universal Credit - if you and your partner have a combined income from work of less than £15,400 a year after tax

How do I apply or find out if I am eligible?

Visit your local childcare provider who can check if you are eligible. If you have a golden ticket letter take this with you as this proves you are automatically eligible. They will need information about your child as well as your National Insurance or National Asylum Support Service number, your date of birth, name and contact details.

If you are eligible through another route, other than low income, then you also need to take evidence of:

- Your child's Disability Living Allowance award or
- An adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.



Free childcare for three-and-four-year-olds

15 hours free childcare

All three-and-four-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours childcare per week until they start a school reception class.

To apply visit the provider you wish to use.



30 hours free childcare

Three-and-four-year-olds of working parents may be entitled to an additional 15 hours free childcare (30 hours in total) each week.

Who is eligible for 30 hours?

Working parents where:

- Both parents (or either sole parent in one parent family) are working* and earn on average at least the equivalent of 16 hours at the national minimum wage** and less than £100,000
- As above where one parent is working (as before), and the second parent is not working but receiving a carer benefit or is unable to work and receiving a disability benefit

Eligible case study

Dave and Natasha, Walker, both work and their household income is less than 100k.

Natasha works 38 hours a week and Dave works 10 hours per week at £15 per hour, earning more than £131.36 and is therefore eligible for the free childcare provision. Dave's wage is higher than the threshold as his £131.36 is higher than the amount earned at 16 hours per week on minimum wage (over 25s - £8.21 - £8.21 x 16 = £131.36).

If Dave was only earning minimum wage, working only 10 hours, then he would not be eligible as his earnings - £82.10 - would be lower than the required threshold.

Ineligibility case study

Heather from Gosforth is a single parent and receives Incapacity Benefit. Unfortunately, Heather is ineligible as the government only funds extended entitlement where a parent is working.

However if Heather was part of a couple and the other parent was working and meeting the working parent criteria then they would be eligible.

How do I apply for 30 hours free childcare?

- You need to apply online at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk
- You will need to set up a government gateway account which might take some time, so do this as early as possible.
- You can apply in advance when your child is two years and 39 weeks old.
- If you cannot access the internet you can ring **0300 123 4097**.

**working includes parents who are on maternity, paternity, adoption or sick leave and where a parent expects to be working in the next three months (for instance are starting a new job)*

***minimum wages rates vary for different age groups and change every April visit www.gov.uk to check*

Frequently asked questions

My child has additional needs or a disability?

All providers must ensure your child has full access to free childcare and offer support if they have a disability or additional needs. They can apply to the Inclusion Fund if a child needs a higher ratio of staffing, specific equipment or resources. They will discuss this with you or other professionals involved.

Providers can receive an annual payment called Disability Access Fund for all three-or-four-year-olds in receipt of DLA. This support providers in being more inclusive. If your child receives DLA please let your provider has a copy of the award letter.

Will I have to pay anything?

Your child's free childcare place should be entirely free. If you are only taking your free hours you should not be expected to pay for additional hours, services, pay a registration fee or charged in advance for your free hours.

But providers offer free hours in different ways and also offer additional optional extra services, for example:

- Buying extra hours above your entitlement
- Food (but there should be an option to provide a packed lunch)

What if I have a concern about quality?

If you are concerned about the quality of your provider, you should raise the issue with the manager first. If you do not feel your concern has been resolved or you are still unhappy then you need to contact Ofsted directly on **0300 123 4666**

What if I have a concern regarding my free childcare?

You should take this up with your provider first. If you wish to make a complaint about your free childcare offer contact: **complaints@newcastle.gov.uk**



Who pays the provider?

You will not be expected to pay for your 15 or 30 free hours, this is paid to the provider directly by the providers local council.

Other support for childcare costs

As well as free childcare parents can get help with childcare costs:

- Tax-free childcare is for working families and can pay for 20% of childcare costs for children aged 0 to 16 years.

- Tax credits for childcare can pay up to 70% of childcare costs for those in receipt of tax credits
- Universal Credit for childcare can pay up to 85% of childcare costs for those in receipt of Universal Credit
- Students can get help from Care to Learn if under 20 and apply for Learning Support if at college or Childcare Grant if in higher education.

Visit childcare choices to find out more **www.childcarechoices.gov.uk**

Starting or changing childcare provider mid-term

Notice period for funding hours*

Children who move or leave settings mid-term must give their current provider four weeks' notice. If you fail to give notice, we will pay the provider four weeks' notice and you will not be able to start a new provider for four weeks.

Free childcare for two-year-olds

Children eligible for two-year-old free childcare can start from the beginning of the term after their second birthday or the Monday after they become eligible if it is mid-term.

Free childcare for three-and-four-year-olds

Children who are entitled to 15 hours of free children can start the term after their third birthday or the Monday after they contact the childcare provider if it is mid-term.

Extended entitlement for three-and-four-year-olds

Children who are entitled to 30 hours free childcare can only start their extended entitlement at the beginning of a term, they can access the initial 15 hours, but the extended entitlement has to be agreed the term before.

**Providers may have different notice periods for any paid for hours.*

More information from:

Choices childcare

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk
0300 123 4097

Newcastle Support directory

www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk

Newcastle City Council

www.newcastle.gov.uk/freechildcare

Early Help in Newcastle

At times some children and families require additional support if you would like to know more about support available visit:

www.newcastle.gov.uk/earlyhelp

Don't forget you could be missing out on the free Childcare you are entitled to.