

Information on free childcare for 2, 3 & 4 year olds



Free Childcare

We know that the rules around the free entitlement can be confusing for parents and childcare providers, and parents understandably have lots of questions about how the funding works.

It is really important that you know your childcare entitlement and what you can expect from your childcare provider—whether that’s a nursery, playgroup or childminder. This leaflet will provide you with more information about how and when you can claim your free childcare and your rights when accessing your free place.

Free childcare is awarded using the following birth dates.

Birthday falls between	Term Funding Starts
1st April—31st August	September
1st September—31st December	January
1st January—31st March	April

Free Childcare for 2 year olds

This funding is not open to every 2 year old. If you meet the criteria for free childcare for 2 year olds as detailed below and have been awarded the funding, you will be given written confirmation either via the on-line portal or Gloucestershire Family Information Service. Any confirmation will advise when the funding starts and should be presented to your childcare provider.

Funding usually starts the term after your child's second birthday and will last until your child receives the 3 and 4 year-old funding.

Eligibility for the free 2 year old childcare is based on a family's income where a family meets the free school meals criteria, or they are in receipt of working tax credit and have a gross annual income of less than £16,190. There are additional circumstances when a family may be entitled to this funding, and details of these can be found by visiting www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk.



Free Childcare for all 3 and 4-year-olds

Every child is entitled to receive 15 hours of free nursery funding from the term after their 3rd birthday and this will remain in place until the start of their Reception Year at school.

What You Can Expect

- Each child accessing the 15 hours of childcare is entitled to a total of 570 hours funded education during a year.
- You can take your FREE hours either termly (15 hours a week over 38 weeks) or stretch over the full year (570 over 50 weeks), if available at your chosen childcare provider.
- Sessions cannot be more than 10 hours in any one day between the hours of 6 am and 8 pm, but may vary depending on the sessions available from your provider.
- You have the choice to only take the FREE entitlement hours if that is all you want, and this is completely FREE to you.
- Your child can take a packed lunch if you do not wish to purchase a meal from your provider.
- You can choose to use your FREE hours at one provider or split the hours between two e.g. a Childminder and a playgroup,

Additional 15 hours of Free Childcare for Working Families (30 hour entitlement)

From September 2017 some 3 and 4 year olds may be entitled to a further 15 hours of free childcare which can either be taken over 38 weeks (totalling 30 hours per week) or, as with the universal 15 hours of free childcare, can be stretched by taking fewer hours over 50 weeks of the year.

To be eligible for the additional hours, you (and your partner if you have one), must be working and earning the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the National Living Wage, live in England, and expect to have an income of less than £100,000 a year (£200,000 per couple). Full details about eligibility and exceptions to the above can be found by visiting www.gov.uk or www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk.

Families claiming the additional 15 hours **must** reconfirm their eligibility every 3 months. Failure to do so **will** result in parents having to meet the full costs.

There is more information available about free childcare entitlement at

www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk

If you have any questions about the funding, contact the Family Information Service on **01452 427362**

Payment and your bills

- If you buy extra childcare hours, any bill/invoice you receive should be clear and should **NOT** show the **FREE** funded hours deducted from the total bill.
- Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) pays your chosen provider(s) directly for the **FREE** hours you receive.
- You **DO NOT** have to buy additional hours or services such as lunches or uniform to receive the funded hours. However, if you have decided to purchase additional services, these should be clearly shown on your invoice.
- You **DO NOT** have to pay towards any **FREE** funded hours. Providers are not allowed to charge you for any difference between their regular prices and the payments they receive from Gloucestershire County Council.

Tax Free Childcare

Tax-Free Childcare is a new Government scheme to help working families with their childcare costs.

Parents will be able to open online childcare accounts to pay their registered childcare providers directly. For every £8 parents pay in to these accounts, the Government will add £2, the total amount in the account can only be spent on childcare. Parents can receive up to £2,000 in Government support per child, per year, or £4,000 for disabled children. Providers need to have signed up for Tax Free Childcare to be able to receive payments from any parents via the scheme.

The system will be quick and simple for parents and childcare practitioners to apply for and use.

Parents wishing to find out more or register to claim Tax Free Childcare can visit www.Gov.uk

This scheme cannot be used in conjunction with any other schemes such as Salary Sacrifice / Childcare Element of Tax Credits / Voucher Scheme. Parents currently using any of these should use the on-line calculator www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator to identify the most appropriate option for them.

Gloucestershire's Family Information Service - featuring the 'Local Offer'



Free, impartial information, advice and support for families with children and young people aged 0-25.


familyinfo@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Direct Line: 01452 427362

Call: 0800 542 02 02

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm
(answering machine at all other times)

 @GlosFIS

 Family Information Service - Gloucestershire

www.glospfamiliesdirectory.org.uk

The Key—*Disabled children's and young people's register*

thekey@gloucestershire.gov.uk



**If you don't know who
to ask....ask us!**

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