

Dear parents,

With all the changes happening regarding funding toward the cost of childcare, we understand that you may have a lot of questions about how it might help you. We have put together this document that may help answer some of them.

### Up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

All parents and carers of 3 and 4-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours a week of childcare support with registered childcare providers. Eligible working parents and carers of children aged 3-4 can also get an additional 15 hours of childcare support, bringing their total up to 30 hours a week.

Some eligible parents of 2-year-old children may also be entitled to 15 hours of childcare support if they receive some additional forms of government assistance.

### From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 onwards

Starting from April 2024, existing childcare support will be expanded in phases. By September 2025, most working families with children under the age of 5 will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare support.

The changes are being introduced gradually to make sure that providers can meet the needs of more families. This means that:

From **April 2024**, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of childcare support.

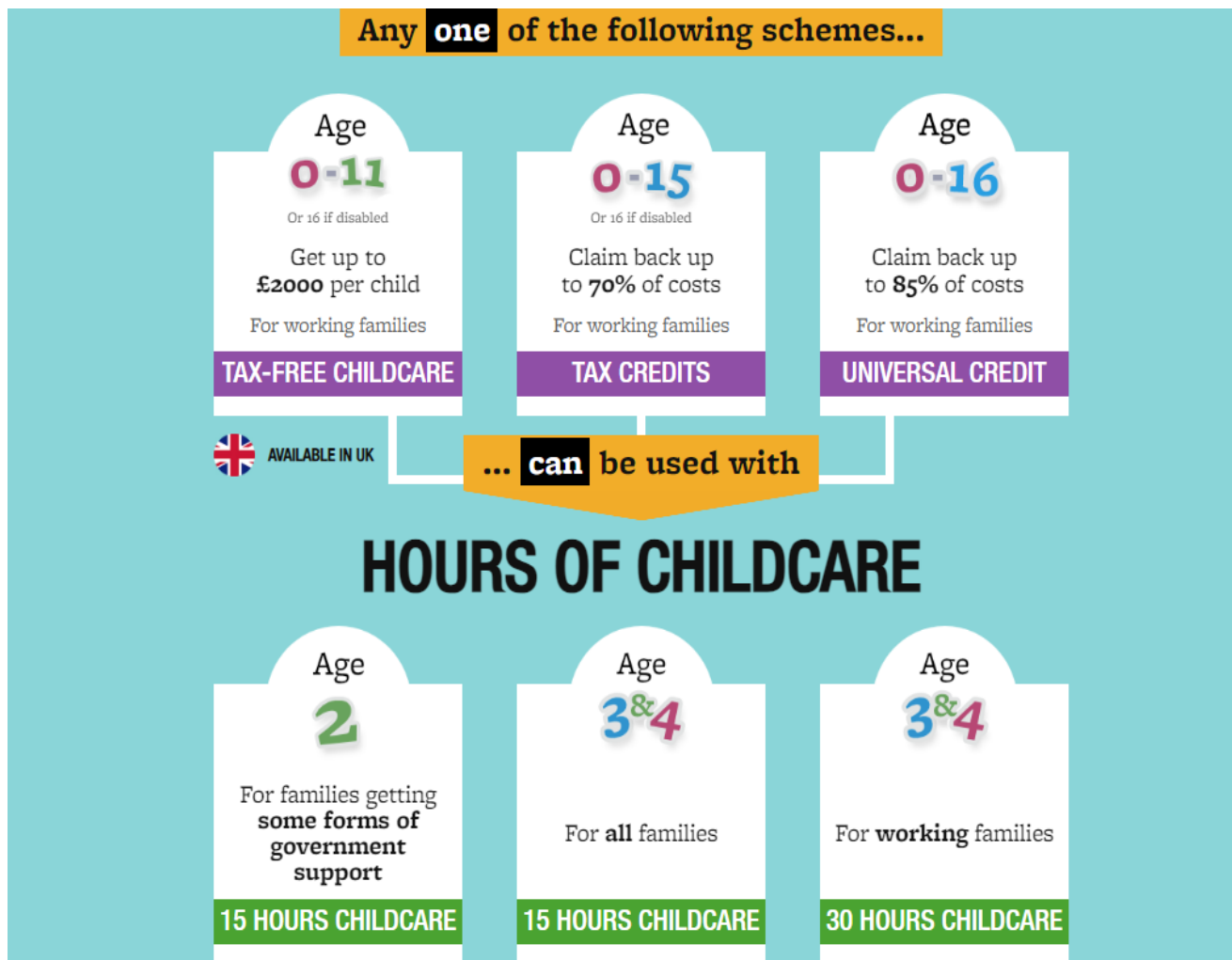
From **September 2024**, 15 hours of childcare support will be extended to eligible working parents of children from the age of 9 months to 3-year-olds.

From **September 2025**, eligible working parents of children under the age of 5 will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare a week.

Age 3-4 years				Age 2 years				Age 9-23 months	
ALL PARENTS				FAMILIES RECEIVING SOME ADDITIONAL FORMS OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT				WORKING FAMILIES	
15 HOURS	15 HOURS	15 HOURS	15 HOURS	15 HOURS	15 HOURS	15 HOURS	15 HOURS	15 HOURS	30 HOURS
Now	APR 2024	SEP 2024	SEP 2025	Now	APR 2024	SEP 2024	SEP 2025	SEP 2024	SEP 2025
WORKING FAMILIES				WORKING FAMILIES					
30 HOURS	30 HOURS	30 HOURS	30 HOURS	15 HOURS	15 HOURS	30 HOURS			
Now	APR 2024	SEP 2024	SEP 2025	APR 2024	SEP 2024	SEP 2025			

As well as receiving funded hours toward your childcare bill, the government offers other options that you can use to give more help. These options are based on individual circumstances.

Please visit <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/> to see what you are eligible for



Parents need to apply for funding codes to give to us. There are deadlines set by HMRC and the local authority about when you need to apply. Please see the table below for suggested timings to ensure you don't miss out. You also need to renew your code by confirming your eligibility every 3 months otherwise you will lose access to the funded hours. This does not apply to parents of 3–4-year-olds receiving only the 15 hours of universal funding as a code is not needed to access these hours. If your child is 2 years old and you are receiving some additional government support then you may be entitled to 15 hours of funded childcare by applying directly to the local authority here [Achieving for Children - two-year-olds free childcare and early education](#)

Child's Birthday	Recommended Time to Apply for Eligibility	Deadline to Give Eligibility Code to the Nursery	Working Entitlement Access Begins (Start of Funding Term)
1 January - 31 March	15 January - 28 February	1 March	1 April (summer term)
1 April - 31 August	15 June - 31 July	1 August	1 September (autumn term)
1 September - 31 December	15 October - 30 November	1 December	1 January (spring term)

Please be aware that you cannot access any funding until the term AFTER your child's birthday. This is for all types of funded childcare for all age groups.

It is important to note that the funded hours are only given for 38 weeks of the year. The other 14 weeks of the year receive no funding at all for any age group. If you need a term time-only place then that will not be an issue for you but if you need childcare for the whole year then you can ask us to 'stretch' the funding.

Stretched funding can seem very confusing but it is simply taking the hours available over a whole academic year which is from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> August and sharing them across all the weeks that we are open for childcare.

If you start to receive hours for the first time at a different time of the year from 1<sup>st</sup> September then you will have a different number of hours to stretch over the remainder of the year. Please see the table below for examples of this.

A	B	C	D	E	F
Starting date of funded hours	No of weekly hours available toward childcare costs	No of funded weeks in the academic year	Total of available hours to put toward childcare (A x B)	No of weeks to stretch funding over at the nursery (start date to 31 <sup>st</sup> August)	No of hours per week to use toward childcare costs (start date to 31 <sup>st</sup> August) (D/E)
1 <sup>st</sup> September	15	38	570	51	11
1 <sup>st</sup> September	30	38	1140	51	22
1 <sup>st</sup> January	15	24	360	35	10
1 <sup>st</sup> January	30	24	720	35	20
1 <sup>st</sup> April	15	12	180	22	8
1 <sup>st</sup> April	30	12	360	22	16

### **Additional costs involved with funded childcare**

There has been a lot of talk about 'free childcare' or 'free hours.' This is very misleading as the rates paid to nurseries by the government are well below the rates nurseries must charge for an all-inclusive session. The government has stipulated that it will cover the cost of the hours but not the consumables – food, drink, snacks, clubs, activities, nappies, wipes, and many other things like the administration of setting up the funded places and all the additional paperwork this creates – so nurseries are often charging consumable fees to cover the cost of these items. This means parents will receive an invoice each month with the consumables charge for each funded hour on their nursery contract in addition to any non-funded hours or additional sessions booked.

Our charges for consumables are currently

*2 year funded - £2.00 per funded hour\**

*3&4 year funded - £2.50 per funded hours\**

We do not have confirmation from the government regarding the 9 month-2-year funded rates yet but it is expected that your consumables charge will be £1.00 per funded hour for this age group.

The charges for the ages are different because the government pays less per funded hour as a child gets older.

Some other local nurseries may say they do not charge a consumables fee but what you may find instead is that they will create what is called an artificial break in a session i.e. offer 8.30am-11.30am and 12.30pm-3.30pm and either up to £15 for the hour in the middle plus make it mandatory that you bring your own food and snacks. Another thing that we are aware is happening is some nurseries do not allow you to put your funded hours towards the entire session i.e. you book 8am-4pm but they will only allow you to use 5 hours of funding and charge inflated rates for the other 3 hours.

We do not impose charges to stretch your funding or insist you can only take it over the term time weeks

**We believe in being clear without any hidden agenda.** Parents can book one of our 4 core sessions

7.30am-6pm

7.30am-1pm

1pm-6pm

9am-3.30pm

and extend the sessions (apart from the full day) either earlier or later in 30-minute increments to have a session tailored to your requirements. We allow funding to be applied in any combination that suits you and everything is provided within the session as it is covered by the consumables charge.

Please see the [interactive page about government funding on our website by clicking this link](#)

<https://www.acorntoaknurseryandpreschool.co.uk/government-funding>

### **Issues obtaining codes**

Some parents have been experiencing problems getting their codes due to an error on the portal. We have received this information

#### **DfE announces workaround to address funded entitlement eligibility code issues**

The Department for Education has confirmed that parents accessing the tax-free childcare scheme who are planning to apply for the new funded two-year-old offer but cannot reconfirm their eligibility – and therefore receive a code for the funded offer – until late February or March will be sent a separate code by letter that they can use ahead of their reconfirmation window opening.

A spokesperson for the DfE said: “We are pleased that thousands of parents have already applied for the expansion starting in April. However, a pre-existing feature in the system, where parents re-confirm their eligibility every three months, is impacting a minority of parents when combined with a small number of providers who are asking for codes much earlier than April.

“Parents who can't re-confirm online until the second half of February or March will therefore automatically receive a letter with a code from HMRC before the middle of February, without needing to take any action.”

We hope that this document is helpful but if you still have questions, please contact Noha at [office@acorntoaknurseryandpreschool.co.uk](mailto:office@acorntoaknurseryandpreschool.co.uk)

*\*Parents who were accessing funding before January 2024 may be charged a different rate for consumables*