

You may be wondering what the 30 hour free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds from September 2017 is all about?

The current universal entitlement for all 3 and 4 years olds will continue to be 15 hours per week for 38 weeks (570 hours) of free early education.

The new entitlement is an extension of the current entitlement and provides an additional 15 hours of free childcare for children where parents are eligible.

The additional hours will be available to families where both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family), and

- each parent earns on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at National Minimum Wage (NMW) or National Living Wage (NLW)
 - earns less than £ 100,000 per year (when one parent in a household has an income of £ 100,000 or more, that family will not be eligible to take up the extra free hours).

'Working' means both employed and self-employed persons may be eligible.

*Parents do not necessarily need to actually work 16 hours a week, but rather their earnings must reflect at least 16 hours of work at NMW or NLW, from April 2017 the NMW is £ 7.50 per hour for 25 year olds and over, therefore £ 120 a week at the current NMW rate.

National minimum wage rate from April 2017:

Year	25 and over	21 to 24	18 to 20	Under 18	Apprentice
2017	£ 7.50	£ 7.05	£ 5.60	£ 4.05	£ 3.50

This includes those parents on zero contract hours who meet the criteria.

Families where one parent / or neither parent works will usually not be eligible for these additional hours. However, the government intends to make provision to support families where one parent is in receipt of benefits relating to caring responsibilities or a disability and the other parent is working.

Full details will be set out in regulations, but the government intends that the additional entitlement should be available in the following circumstances:

- both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on parental or paternity leave;
- both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on adoption leave;
- both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on statutory sick pay;
- one parent is employed and one parent has substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits received for caring, or

- one parent is employed and one parent is disabled or incapacitated based on receipt of specific benefits.

Proposed Eligibility checking process (January 2017)

Parents will be notified by HMRC if they are entitled to a 30 hour place. Parents will be given a DERN number (Department for Education Reference Number) early 2017.

Parents will then be asked to present their DERN ref number, the parents National Insurance number and the child's Date of Birth (DOB) to the provider of their choice.

The provider will then complete an electronic check through Cumbria County Council to verify their eligibility. Cumbria County Council is exploring an electronic system to enable providers to do this check. More information will be provided when this is available, however in the mean time we would recommend that the provider attempts to identify families who may be eligible.

Parents will be expected to verify their continued eligibility every three months with HMRC, if they do not continue to be eligible, the additional hours will cease at the end of a notice period (to be determined) this is going to be known as the grace period.