

ENGLAND

2027 - 2028

Parent Funding Guide

Finding clear information
about childcare funding
doesn't need to be difficult.

That's why we've brought everything
together in one place. This guide
explains the funding support
available, how it works at Bright
Horizons, and what you may need to
do to access it.

You'll find information on available
funding, eligibility, application
timelines, how funded hours are
applied in our nurseries, and the
choices available to families.

*If your child attends an employer sponsored nursery
there may be some differences to the funding
details. If you'd like more information, please speak
to your nursery manager.

Our funding guide is here to help you through the process.

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Government Funding

Depending on your child's age and your family's circumstances, you may be able to access government-funded childcare.

There are different funding options available, including support for working families, funded childcare for eligible 2-year-olds and universal funding for 3 and 4-year-olds. The information below explains what's available and when you'll need to apply.



What's available, eligibility, and how to apply

Working Family Funding from 9 months

If you're an eligible working parent, your child can receive up to 30 hours of government-funded childcare each week, starting from the term after they turn 9 months old.

Early Learning for 2-year-olds

Eligible 2-year-olds can receive 15 hours of government-funded childcare each week, starting from the term after their second birthday.

Universal Funding for 3 and 4-year-olds

All 3 and 4-year-olds in England can receive 15 hours of government-funded early education and childcare each week, starting from the term after their third birthday.



Working Family Funding

Eligibility:

- For children aged 9 months to 4 years.
- Up to 30 hours per week (term-time equivalent).
- At Bright Horizons, on a stretched model, 30 hours = 22.35 hours per week.
 - » Calculation: $(30 \text{ hours} \times 38 \text{ weeks}) \div 51 \text{ weeks} = 22.35 \text{ hours per week}$.

Criteria:

- Both parents (or one parent in a single-parent family) must:
 - » Earn, or expect to earn in the next 3 months, the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the National Minimum or Living Wage.
 - » Have maximum earnings of £100k Net Adjusted Income each.
- If one parent earns above the £100k limit, the family will not be eligible, even if the other parent earns less.

How to Apply:

1. Go to **beststartinlife.gov.uk** website.
2. Create a Government Gateway account.
3. Apply for funding.
4. Once approved, you'll receive an 11-digit code. This must be reconfirmed every 3 months to remain eligible.
5. Provide the code to your nursery before the start of the new term.
6. Complete a Local Authority Declaration Form.
7. The nursery will add your funding model before the new term begins.

To help avoid any delays, we recommend applying at least **six weeks** before the term in which you'd like your funded hours to begin.

Universal Funding (3 & 4-year-olds)

- 15 hours per week for all children aged 3 & 4.
- No financial eligibility criteria.
- Funding starts from the term after the child's 3rd birthday.

If eligible for **Working Family Funding** as well:

- You will receive 15 hours Universal Funding + 15 hours Working Family Funding.
- Total: 30 hours (or 22.35 hours stretched).

Early Learning for 2-year-olds

Funding amount:

- 15 hours per week (11.17 hours if stretched).

Criteria:

Parent(s) must be receiving one of the following:

- Income Support.
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).
- Universal Credit with a household income of £15,400/year or less (after tax, excluding benefits).
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit.
- No recourse to public funds (non-UK citizens).

Also available for children who:

- Are looked after by a local authority.
- Have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.
- Receive Disability Living Allowance.
- Have left care under:
 - » An adoption order.
 - » A special guardianship order.
 - » A child arrangements order.

How to Apply:

1. Apply via your local authority.
2. The local authority will provide confirmation of eligibility.
3. Provide this confirmation to the nursery before the next term.
4. The Funding Team will add the funding model before the new term begins.

Dual Eligibility

If your child is eligible for both **Early Learning for 2-year-olds** and **Working Family Funding**:

- Local authorities require claiming 15 hours of each.
- Total: 30 hours (or 22.35 hours stretched).



9-month-old

Are you eligible for
Working Family Funding?

↓
YES

↓
Upon receipt of a
valid code apply
for funding in the
relevant term

↓
**30 hours =
22.35 hours
stretched**

↓
NO

↓
No funding
available

2-year-old

Are you eligible for
Working Family Funding?

↓
YES

↓
Upon receipt of a
valid code apply
for funding in the
relevant term

↓
**30 hours =
22.35 hours
stretched**

↓
NO

↓
Does your child
qualify for
Early Learning
for 2-year-olds?

↓
YES

↓
Apply via local
authority. Once
confirmed apply
for funding.

↓
NO

↓
No
funding
available

3 & 4-year-olds

Universal funding for all
3 & 4-year-olds from the term
after their 3rd Birthday

Are you eligible for
Working Family Funding?

↓
YES

↓
Upon receipt of a
valid code apply
for funding in the
relevant term

↓
**15 hours =
11.17 hours
stretched**

↓
NO

↓
**15 hours =
11.17 hours
stretched**

Dual Eligibility

If your child is eligible for both **Early Learning
for 2-year-olds** AND **Working Family Funding?**
Parents should apply for both.

Funding will be applied as 15 hours (11.17)

Early Learning Funding for 2-year-olds
and 15 hours (11.17)

Working Family Funding

Total hours 30 hours (22.35 hours stretched).



When to apply for funding

Good to know

Funding doesn't begin on your child's birthday. It starts from the beginning of the following funding term. The guide below explains when funding can start.

Spring Term
1st January



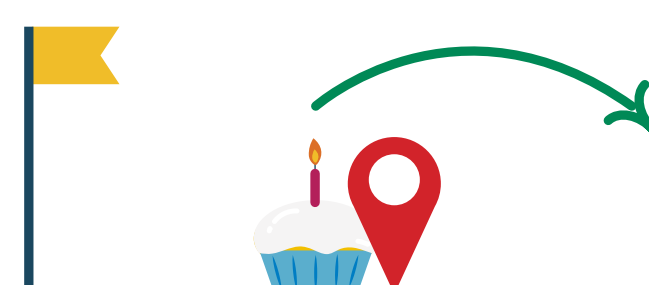
Your child's birthday is here

Summer Term
1st April



Your child's birthday is here

Autumn Term
1st September



Your child's birthday is here

You should apply for your funded hours prior to the term your child becomes eligible.

Additional funding support

Some families may be eligible for additional government funding to help children access the support they need to thrive.



Early Years Pupil Premium Funding

The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is extra funding that nurseries can receive to help support your child's learning and development.

For children aged 9 months and over who are accessing government-funded childcare, EYPP provides additional funding to support their learning and development.

Important to know

The funding is paid directly to the nursery and helps us provide additional learning opportunities, resources and support that can enhance your child's nursery experience and development.

How to apply

If you think you might be eligible, simply tick the relevant box on your Parent Declaration Form. We'll take care of the rest and apply for the funding on your behalf.

When is it checked?

EYPP is reviewed once a year, so we'll check eligibility annually to make sure your child continues to receive the support they're entitled to.

Disability Access Funding

Disability Access Funding (DAF) helps us make adjustments and provide additional support to ensure children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can fully participate and thrive in our nursery environment.

Important to know

Eligibility is dependent upon an award of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and can be claimed once your child is eligible for Government funded hours. Eligibility is reviewed annually to ensure the funding can continue to be claimed where the qualifying criteria remain met.

How to apply

Inform your Nursery Manager and indicate eligibility on the Parent Declaration Form, you will need to provide a copy of your child's DLA award letter to the nursery

When is it checked?

DAF is reviewed once a year, so we'll check eligibility annually to make sure your child continues to receive the support they're entitled to.

Making the
best of your
funded hours



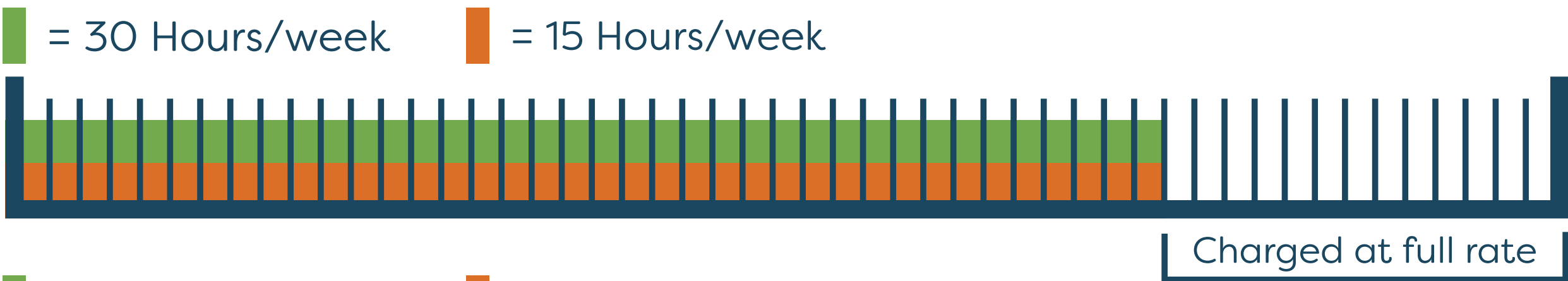
30 hours of funded childcare adds up to 1,140 fun-filled hours of play and learning a year!



15 hours of funded childcare adds up to 570 fun-filled hours of play and learning a year!



Our Stretched funding breakdown over a year
(Stretched hours also applies to 15 hours universal funding)
30 hours and 15 hours



30 hours lasts **38** weeks
22.35 hours lasts **51** weeks

15 hours lasts **38** weeks
11.17 hours lasts **51** weeks

Good to know

Our nurseries are open 51 weeks a year so our stretched funding model mirrors our nurseries operational weeks, meaning no unfunded weeks per year.

Term Time places

Subject to availability and individual family circumstances, some Bright Horizons nurseries are able to offer term-time-only places. Please speak to your Nursery Manager to discuss the options available at your nursery.



How are the funded hours applied at Bright Horizons?

To help families benefit from funding throughout the year, funded hours at Bright Horizons are stretched across 51 weeks and applied to your child’s earliest booked attendance days each week, in blocks of up to 10 hours per day.

In the example, once the 22.35 funded hours on Thursday have been used, any remaining attendance on that day will be charged at the applicable fee rate.

Good to know

There is no minimum booking requirement to access funded hours. Where attendance is booked beyond a child’s funded entitlement, the additional hours will be charged at the applicable private fee rate.

●	Example
●	If your child attends nursery on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and is entitled to 22.35 funded hours per week, the funded hours would usually be allocated as follows:
●	Tuesday = 10 hours funded ✓
●	Wednesday = 10 hours funded ✓
●	Thursday = 2.35 hours funded ✓
●	Total = 22.35 hours funded
●	

How we make funding go further

For children attending on a stretched-year basis:

- **A child entitled to 11.17 funded hours per week** may access up to one 10-hour funded day each week.
- **A child entitled to 22.35 funded hours per week** may access up to two 10-hour funded days each week.

Because funded hours are allocated in daily blocks of up to 10 hours, some children may not use their full weekly entitlement at Bright Horizons. Where additional attendance days are booked, any remaining funded hours will be applied to those days in attendance order. Subject to local authority funding rules, unused funded hours may also be accessed with another provider.

For term-time places, attendance patterns and available sessions will be discussed and agreed with your Nursery Manager, subject to your child’s entitlement and nursery availability.

Arrangements for accessing funded hours may vary slightly at some nurseries due to local operational requirements.

What's included



Exceptional care and early years

education: Helping every child to have a healthy, happy start and enabling them to thrive.



Passionate and inspiring teams: Making a difference to each child, every day.



Nappies, wipes, and other essentials! No need to worry - we've got you covered.



We use **Funding Loop**, a secure online system that helps us manage government funding applications and declarations.

You'll receive your Parent Declaration Form by email, with much of the information already completed for you. Simply review the details, complete any required sections, and submit the form online using your computer, tablet or mobile device.

To continue claiming funding, declaration forms must be completed whenever requested. Unfortunately, we're unable to submit funding claims without a completed and signed declaration.

[**Funding Loop Privacy Policy**](#)



Understanding additional charges

Food Fee & Magical Mealtimes

Children at Bright Horizons enjoy freshly prepared meals and snacks throughout the day as part of our **Magical Mealtimes approach**, helping to support healthy eating habits and positive mealtime experiences.

The Food Fee contributes towards the cost of these meals and snacks, including breakfast, nutritious snacks, lunch and tea.

Government-funded childcare does not cover the cost of food and meals, so families can choose whether or not to pay the Food Fee.

Children attending funded sessions will continue to receive meals and snacks regardless of that choice.

To help us manage allergies and maintain food safety standards, food from outside the nursery is not permitted.

For more information about funded childcare, additional charges and the options available to families, please see our **Funding Policy**.

Some Bright Horizons nurseries offer additional optional activities that families may choose to purchase. Details of the activities available and any associated charges can be obtained from your Nursery Manager.



Tax-free childcare (TFC): Your questions answered

? Can I get TFC?

The rules for TFC are similar to those of the 30 hours funding, for example you (and your partner) need to be working and earning more than national minimum wage but less than £100,000 a year.

? Does Bright Horizons accept TFC?

Yes we do! Bright Horizons is a government-approved provider, and all of our nurseries are registered with Ofsted, inspected by them regularly to ensure we provide the best quality of care and education.

Of course, you can also choose to use TFC to pay for a nanny, childminder or playscheme, as long as they are approved by the government. You can check if a childcare provider is approved at the government's childcare webpages.

? How does it work?

You open an online account through the government website which you use to pay for your childcare. For every 80p you pay in, the government will top up an extra 20p.

- So, for every pound you pay for your childcare, you're getting a 20% contribution from the government: this is equivalent of the tax most people pay - 20% - which is how the scheme got its name.
- The government will top up the account with 20% of childcare costs up to a total of £10,000 - the equivalent of up to £2,000 support per child, per year (or £4,000 for disabled children).
- The scheme covers all your children, including adopted children, provided they live with you and are under the age of 12 years, (or 17 for children with disabilities).

? How do I apply?

If you've checked your eligibility and decided that the TFC scheme is right for you and your family, you can apply in about 20 minutes. You'll need your NI number (or if you're self-employed your Unique Taxpayer Reference) and if you have a partner, you'll need theirs too.

? Does TFC work with my other benefits?

You can't use TFC if you're already claiming Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, or Universal Credit. So, if you applied for Tax-Free Childcare and were accepted, your Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit would stop at once and you wouldn't be able to receive them again.

? What about TFC and Childcare Vouchers?

The TFC scheme was set up by the government to replace the Childcare Vouchers you could get from your employer. If you joined the Childcare Voucher scheme before 2018 you can continue to use it, but you can't use the TFC scheme at the same time.

FAQs & useful links

We hope you have found this Funding Guide helpful, here are a few FAQs and links

? Can I use more than 10 hours of funding in a day?

Government funding can be used for up to 10 hours per day. This limit is set by government funding rules and applies to all providers.

? Can I access a fully funded place at Bright Horizons?

Yes. Government-funded childcare hours can be accessed free of charge at Bright Horizons. Where a nursery is open for more than 10 hours per day or 51 weeks per year, families can still access their funded entitlement, subject to the attendance arrangements set out in our [Funding Policy](#). Your Nursery Manager will be happy to discuss the options available to you.

? Do I need to pay a Registration Fee?

A registration fee applies to privately paid childcare. If your childcare is fully funded, with no additional privately paid hours, you will not need to pay a registration fee.

? Do I need to pay a deposit?

No. Bright Horizons does not require a deposit to secure a nursery place.

? Can I bring my own food?

No. For the safety and wellbeing of all children, food from outside the nursery is not permitted. This helps us manage allergies, maintain food safety standards, and provide a consistent mealtime experience for all children.

? Can funded hours be used on another day if my child is absent?

Unfortunately, no. Funded Hours cannot be transferred, banked, or carried forward if a child is absent from a funded session. This is because funding rules and requirements vary between local authorities, and we must administer funded hours in accordance with the guidance.

? What happens to my funded hours during a prolonged period of absence?

Please inform your Nursery Manager as soon as possible if your child is expected to be absent for an extended period, whether planned or unexpected. Local Authority requirements regarding prolonged absences can vary, so it is important that you discuss the circumstances with us. We will review the relevant local authority guidance and advise you on any implications for your child's funding entitlement.

In some cases, extended periods of absence may affect continued funding, which is why early communication with your Nursery Manager is important.

? Can my child start nursery at any time of year?

Yes. Children can join Bright Horizons at any time throughout the year. However, it is important to note that joining mid-term, or making changes to attendance patterns, may affect when your government-funded hours can begin.

Local authorities set the dates and deadlines for funding claims and any permitted adjustments. As these arrangements can vary, we recommend speaking with your Nursery Manager, who will be able to advise you on how your start date may impact your funding entitlement.



? Will changes to my booked attendance impact my funded hours?

Potentially, yes. Changes to your child's booked attendance may affect the number of funded hours that can be claimed. The impact will depend on the nature of the change, as increasing or reducing sessions may alter the allocation of funded hours. If you are considering making changes to your child's attendance pattern, please speak with your Nursery Manager, who will be able to advise you of any implications for your funding entitlement.

? How will I know when to reconfirm my Working Family Funding code?

If you are receiving Working Family Funding you must reconfirm your eligibility through your Government Gateway account every 3 months.

Gov.uk will send you reminders as your reconfirmation deadline approaches, but please remember that it is your responsibility to reconfirm on time.

Failure to reconfirm your eligibility may result in your funding becoming invalid, which could lead to a break in funding and, in some cases, prevent funding from being accessed until the following term. For further information about funding codes and reconfirmation, please visit the [Best Start in Life website](#).

? Can I use my funded hours at more than one provider?

Yes. You may choose to split your funded entitlement between more than one childcare provider, subject to a maximum of two settings per day.

If you intend to split your funded hours, you will need to provide your Nursery Manager with details of the other setting and the allocation of hours to ensure the funded hours recorded on your Parent Declaration Form are correct.

? What happens if my funded hours are affected by Bright Horizons INSET day?

Where a Bright Horizons INSET Day impacts your child's funded hours, we will make reasonable arrangements to offer the missed funded hours on an alternative day, subject to availability and local authority funding requirements.

Your Nursery Manager will be able to provide further details about the options available at your nursery.

For more details please refer to our [Funding Policy](#) and [Funding Terms and Conditions](#).



Government webpages:

- [Best Start in Life](#)
- [Childcare Calculator](#)
- [Apply for Working Families Funding](#)
- [Early Learning for 2-year-olds](#)
- [Check if you can apply for Tax-free Childcare](#)
- [Finding an approved childcare provider](#)
- [Apply for Tax-free Childcare](#)



Need help understanding your options?

Every family's circumstances are different. If you're unsure which funding you're eligible for, or how funding works at Bright Horizons, our nursery teams are here to help.

Speak to your Nursery Manager, visit our funding webpages, or book a tour to learn more.



Book a visit
at your nearest
nursery and take a
look around.

Why not come and see
what we have to offer
you and your child?



More help from Bright Horizons...



Find a Nursery



Events



Who we are



Bright Horizons®