

Up to **30 hours**
of free childcare
for eligible families of
3 and 4 year olds

Frequently
asked questions
May 2017



Following publication of the operational guidance and questions received at our recent 30 hour cluster meetings, please find below responses to questions which were asked.

Eligibility checking process

The HMRC checker is now live, the link can be found on the Childcare Choices web page www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

The availability of the HMRC checker is not being actively marketed at present, but we expect it will be soon following the election.

Cumbria County Council verification checker has been made available to providers from Monday 15 May 2017. In order to access this you need to be logged onto the Capita Early Years Portal – please contact: childrens.information@cumbria.gov.uk to register.

Parents will be expected to self-verify every 3 months, HMRC will send parents email and/or text alerts.

Cumbria County Council will conduct an audit six times per year – see table below extracted from the DfE statutory guidance. Cumbria County Council will send alerts to providers using the Capita Early Years Portal:

- Where families have not self-verified so that providers can approach families (if they don't self-verify, they will lose their entitlement to the 30 hours) or
- Where families are no longer eligible and will cease to be able to access the extended hours after the end of the grace period.

If parents have questions about their eligibility who can they contact?

If having checked the published eligibility criteria and they still have questions the **HMRC helpline number is: 0300 123 4097**

What are the grace periods?

| Validity end date | LA audit date | Grace periods end date |
|---------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 1 January to 10 February | 11 February | 31 March |
| 11 February to 31 March | 1 April | 31 August |
| 1 April to 26 May | 27 May | 31 August |
| 27 May to 31 August | 1 September | 31 December |
| 1 September to 21 October | 22 October | 31 December |
| 22 October to 31 December | 1 January | 31 March |

When is the start of 30 hours entitlement once receiving a 'Yes they are eligible' result from HMRC?

30 hours can be accessed the term after eligibility is confirmed, parents wanting to start in September, **must** apply on or before 31st August. **Please note** if eligibility is confirmed between 1st September and 31st December families will be able to access 30 hours in January.

What happens when a child is no longer eligible, but has been stretching their free entitlement hours, therefore accumulating hours for school holidays?

Once a child is no longer eligible to access 30 hours, they will go into the 'Grace Period' any unused hours can be claimed during this time. However they cannot claim more than 30 hours in one week and they cannot carry them past the 'Grace period' cut-off date i.e. 31 March, 31 August and 31 December.

What does 'two sites' in one day mean?

You may have more than one provider on one site, for example you could have a breakfast club, school nursery and private provider on one school site/footprint – therefore a child could access all three providers on one site in one day – although impact on the child should be a consideration.

Example: A child may attend school nursery in the morning, a PVI setting in the afternoon on the same site with separate Ofsted registrations, this would be defined as one site. The child could be dropped off or collected by a childminder who lives elsewhere, therefore three providers and 'two sites' in one day.

A site would usually mean that the providers have the same postcode or one footprint.

Will the rate be set until 2020?

It is dependent on government policy, usually increases are announced in the Government spending reviews or budgets.

Some local authorities have decided to implement the increased funding rate over the next two years. However Cumbria has taken the decision to go straight to the maximum funding rate which must be passed onto providers from this year 2017/2018.

Do families have to use all of their entitlement?

No

Can we set a probationary period for how we want to offer the 30 hours i.e. offer 30 or 22.5 for two terms and then review?

Yes you can, it would be good practice to ensure what you are offering is sustainable; however consideration would need to be given to how it would affect parents/children.

Can providers charge for the lunch period, for example nursery is 8:45-3:15 of which 30 minutes is the lunch time staffed by at least a level 3 practitioner?

The Government have stipulated in the statutory guidance "Where it is reasonably practicable local authorities should ensure that children are able to take up their free hours in continuous blocks and avoid artificial breaks being created throughout the day, for example over the lunch period."

We would therefore suggest, to avoid having the lunch time slot as a condition of accessing free entitlement all day, or children having to go home part way through the day, that sessional providers offer a block where children can access 6 hours of free entitlement and either choose to pay for an additional ½ hour or drop off or collect their child ½ hour at the beginning or end of the day.

EYFS still applies to the lunch period; schools can consider dropping their ratios to 1:8 where at least one member of the staff holds a full and relevant level 3 qualification and a least half of all staff hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification outside the standard two session school day.

What happens if a child comes from another provider part way through a term ?

Both providers need to confirm how many hours the child is eligible for and how many remain and that the appropriate notice period has been given.

What happens if a child comes from another setting out of county and has been in receipt of 30 hrs funding?

The new provider would confirm that the child is eligible and offer them a place, Cumbria County Council have systems in place to check children's hours accessed with other local authorities.

Can parents save banked hours throughout the year for the summer holidays or do they have to use any banked hours within the current term?

Yes parents can save banked hours for summer holidays, or they can be flexible within the term, it is dependent on family's needs/requests.

It is anticipated that more families will want to use their free entitlement in school holidays when parents are working.

If there are 2 providers on 1 site, will each be paid separately?

Yes, each provider will claim the hours that a child access free entitlement in their provision.

Do parents have to inform HMRC of how many hours they want at each provider (if using more than 1)? Do HMRC then confirm to a provider how many hours have been allocated for them for each eligible child?

No – number of hours claimed is checked by the local authority. HMRC are only responsible for checking eligibility.

By using the Parent Declaration Form providers will know where families are planning to access their entitlement.

If a parent misses the deadline to apply for a term (and would otherwise meet the criteria) but still need childcare, can they then pay a provider privately for that term?

Yes.

If numbers are not viable for September could we begin e.g. January?

Yes, providers need to assess if it is sustainable for them to offer 30 hours, if a provider is unable to offer 30 hours, then working with another provider may be an option.

Is the four week notice on the 30 hours protected?

It is up to individual providers to set their notice period, (the norm is usually four weeks).

Providers should make every effort to ensure that the parent has given their previous provider notice as the local authority cannot double fund a place.

If Cumbria County Council have to make the final decision between providers on the split of funding the signed parental declaration, provider notice period and family circumstances will be taken into account.

Does Cumbria County Council know what percent of families will be eligible?

When we initially conducted a survey in summer 2015 providers estimated that 56% of children will be eligible for a 30 hours place of which 54% were already purchasing extra hours. The results of the provider survey conducted this term should give us an indication of current supply of places and estimated demand.

However as you would expect it varies from provider to provider and area to area. The most accurate way to estimate demand is to ask your existing parents as parents chose providers for many reasons, for example: quality, flexibility, availability, peer friendships, location, etc.

How will we know which providers are offering 30 hours?

Cumbria County Council will be publishing a list of providers who have indicated that they are intending to offer 30 hours from September 2017 on their web site. We will email providers to advise when it is available.

Cumbria County Council contacts

Early Years and Childcare Project Officer: joan.bradley@cumbria.gov.uk

Early Years Team Managers: Allerdale and Copeland: karen.rutter@cumbria.gov.uk
Barrow and South Lakeland: ann.breeze@cumbria.gov.uk
Carlisle and Eden: lynsey.armstrong@cumbria.gov.uk



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HMRC help line number:

0300 123 4097