



Funded Early Education Entitlement

April 2022

Funded Early Education Entitlement Team
St Helens Early Years Hub

Passport
for 2s

Childcare
Choices

ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL



What is 2-year-old Funded Early Education?

Some 2-year-olds are eligible for funded 15 hours' childcare. The criteria for accessing this for your 2-year-old is stated below. This means your child will be eligible for up to 15 hours per week over a minimum of 38 weeks per year. (570 hours in total).

Some childcare settings or childminders may be able to stretch the hours over school holidays so you may access fewer hours over more weeks. The hours can be split between two childcare settings or childminders.

In St Helens, your child can take up their funded early education entitlement (FEEE) at some local authority-maintained schools, at a private nursery or playgroup or with a childminder.

Do I have to send my child for all the hours?

No. You can send them for as many hours as you feel comfortable with, up to a maximum of 570 hours for the year. If you do agree to send your child to a setting, they will have to monitor your child's attendance. Regular absences of 2 weeks or more and attendance that falls under 80% could affect your child's place, as funding from the Local Authority could be at risk of being withdrawn from the setting.

What are the benefits for you and your 2-year-old?

Your 2-year-old may be able to attend funded early education and childcare giving you the chance to do some training or study or take a part-time job.

For your 2-year-old, you can be confident they are receiving quality early education and childcare helping them with their early learning and giving them new experiences with other children.

Currently, all 3 and 4-year-olds are entitled to up to 15 hours of funded early education and childcare before they start school. This is now on offer to some two-year-olds too.

Research shows children who go to high-quality early education and childcare providers make good progress with their language, physical and social development. When the time comes for them to go to school, they are better prepared, and this advantage stays with them right through school and into adulthood.

Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a funded early education place for your 2-year-old (Passport for 2s), you will need to meet one or more of the following criteria.

Your 2-year-old can get funded childcare if you live in England and get one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit, and your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, not including benefit payments

- child tax credits, and your household income is £16,190 a year or less before tax
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- the Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

2-year-olds can also get free childcare if they:

- are looked after by a local authority
- have a statement of [special education needs \(SEN\)](#) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- get [Disability Living Allowance](#)
- have left care under an adoption order, special guardianship order or a child arrangements order

You may have to pay for extra costs like meals, nappies, or trips.

Contact your childcare provider or [local council](#) to find out more.

If you are a non-EEA citizen who cannot claim benefits

Your 2-year-old may get free childcare if you are getting [support under the Immigration and Asylum Act](#) and have either:

- [claimed asylum](#) in the UK and are waiting for a decision (known as 'part 6')
- been refused asylum in the UK (known as 'section 4')

A 2-year-old you care for may also get free childcare if your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, and you have any of the following:

- leave to remain with 'no recourse to public funds' on [family or private life grounds](#)
- support from your local council because you have 'a child in need,' for example they have a disability or a child protection plan
- the right to live in the UK because you're the main carer of a British citizen (known as a ['Zambrano Carer'](#))

Passport for 2s

If you meet one or more of the criteria above, you may automatically receive a 'Passport for 2s' through the post in the term that your child is turning 2-years-old, or you may receive a postcard inviting you to apply.

If you do not receive a 'Passport for 2s' by the end of the term that your child is turning 2 and feel that you meet the eligibility criteria listed above, then please contact the Funded Early Education Team on 01744 676541/676542 or 676557 and we will do an application for you. It could just be that your circumstances have recently changed or that you have just started to

receive Universal Credit and you have not been included in the data that the local authority receive from the Department for Working Pensions to help us to target the eligible families.

Childcare providers in St Helens

You can search for childcare providers via our online directory.

<https://familyinfoservice.sthelens.gov.uk/synergy/publicenquiry/> and can express an interest with them, regardless of the age of your child, by taking the following steps:

Search for a childcare provider

1. Express an interest with the providers you are interested in by clicking the tick symbol on the top right-hand side of the provider information.



2. You will be required to either create or log in to your account.



3. You then complete your details; tick the child you are expressing an interest for and click 'Register Interest'.

4. The provider will then get in touch via your chosen method of contact.

When can my child start?

Your child turns 2 between:	You can apply for a place:	Your child will start their funded place:
1 April - 31 August	1 April - 31 August	1 September (Autumn Term)
1 September - 31 December	1 September - 31 December	1 January (Spring Term)
1 January - 31 March	1 January - 31 March	1 April (Summer Term)

When can I use the 15 hours?

You may use the 15 hours flexibly over the week, within the following parameters:

- Sessions can be taken on any day of the week, including weekends
- Sessions can be no longer than 10 hours
- Sessions must be between 6.00am and 8.00pm
- Sessions can be used at a maximum of 2 different sites in a single day

Please remember that providers may not be able to offer exactly what you want, however, providers should listen to your needs and try to adapt the delivery of their sessions to accommodate you in a way that will allow them to continue as a viable business.

If your child attends with a childcare provider for more additional hours than what you are entitled to be funded, then you will be required to pay additional costs. For example, if your child attends a day nursery full-time for 5 days a week, then you will only receive your 15 funded hours and will have to pay the nursery for the remaining hours. Parents need to be

aware that they can also expect to pay reasonable costs for any meals, consumables or additional activities offered by their childcare provider alongside their entitlement.

Some providers may charge for meals, snacks, or optional extras as these may not always be included within the funded entitlement. Please check with your provider for full details of any additional charges.

Childcare settings claim funding directly from the Local Authority to give your child a Funded early education place. You will not receive any monies or vouchers.

How to secure a place for your child will depend upon how you want to access the funding. Generally, to access a place with a Maintained School provider you will need to complete the Local Authority's application form included in the Nursery Education Booklet which can be found on our website [Nursery school admission - St Helens Borough Council](#)

All St Helens private, voluntary and Independent registered childcare providers are listed in our [directory of providers](#). You will need to choose a provider from the directory when you create your account with us and express an interest with them by using the online directory or if you wish, you can contact them by phone or email. If you use the online directory to contact your provider, the provider and you will liaise between yourselves via your secure council account before both accepting that your place is confirmed. Once your place is secure, the childcare provider will ask you to complete a Parental Contract and at that point you will be asked to provide a copy of your child's identification, such as birth certificate or passport to prove their eligibility.

Internet access is available at all St Helens libraries if you need it, however, if you are experiencing difficulties in applying online, then please contact the FEEE Team on 01744 676541 / 676542 / 676557 who will carry out the check for you and give you an immediate response.

Universal Credit

If you are in receipt of Universal Credit and apply but are told that you are not eligible, we may need to carry out a manual check. To do this, the FEEE team will need the last three online/paper statements proving what your 'take home pay' has been in those 3 periods.

Parents are not allowed to earn any more than £3,850.00 over the 3-month assessment period, with a maximum annual earning per household of £15,400.00.

Parents who have a child who is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment are automatically eligible to receive a Passport for 2s through the post. If you do not receive one, please contact the FEEE Team on 01744 676541.

For parent/carers who are caring for a child who is looked after by the local authority or has a child who has left care through adoption, special guardianship or is subject to a child arrangement order, please contact the FEEE Team on 01744 676541 as the process for application is different and you WILL NOT receive a 'Passport for 2s' through the post.

What happens next?

Once you are in receipt of a 'Passport for 2s', you can take it to your chosen childcare provider who in turn will inform you when your child can start in their funded placement. Your child will be able to start their funding the term after their second birthday in either April, September, or January. **e.g., if a child turns 2 in June, they will start their funded place in September.** You also need to take your child's birth certificate to confirm they are the right age to start and proof of your address.

PLEASE NOTE: only childcare settings and childminders who are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted can offer two-year-old funded places.

What if my income or circumstances change?

Once you have received your 'Passport for 2s' then your child is eligible for funding, and it will not be withdrawn even if your income or circumstances change.

Do I need to tell anyone if I begin to receive funding?

If you are claiming help towards childcare costs through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit you need to inform HMRC by calling 0345 300 3900 as soon as possible before your child starts as you cannot claim help for funded early education and childcare. If you are claiming the childcare element of Universal Credit, then you must also notify the Department for Work and Pensions.

If you delay informing HMRC or DWP you may be paid too much and will have to pay it back. You can still claim the childcare element of Working Tax Credit for any additional childcare you pay for outside of funded early education and childcare.

What happens when my child turns 3 years old?

Your child will be entitled to 15 hours funding for 3 and 4-year-olds from the term after their third birthday until they start school. Your child may also be entitled to the extended entitlement offering an extra 15 hours per week. (Include what the extended entitlement is or signpost)

What do I need to consider when making my choice?

Your child's needs

You should consider your child's needs while looking for a suitable childcare provider. You may want to visit several childcare providers to make sure they offer the right environment for your child. This allows you to see how they can meet your child's needs and give you confidence in the decision you make. When visiting a setting these are some examples of questions you may want to ask:

- Do you have a settling in period, if so, how long?
- Do I have to pay for meals/ activities/ nappies?
- How will you keep me informed about my child's progress?
- Where can my child sleep or rest?

- How will you keep me involved?
- How do you manage a child's emotional wellbeing?
- How will you accommodate my child's dietary requirements?
- What happens if my child is sick?
- How would you contact me in an emergency?
- Do you have any policies or procedures I should be aware of?

Personal requirements

If you have any personal requirements, such as opening hours during specific days, make sure you search for a childcare provider who offers services based on your exact needs.

Ofsted reports

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) are responsible for inspecting services that care for children and young people and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. An Ofsted inspection will look at how well the setting meets the needs of the range of children who attend and ensure that they are meeting the requirements for safety and learning and development.

www.gov.uk

How do I raise a concern about childcare?

If you are a parent or carer and cannot sort out your concern through discussion, you can make a formal complaint by writing to the provider. The law says that providers must have a process for handling written complaints.

If you are a parent or carer and you make a formal written complaint about your provider must carry out an investigation. They must tell you about the outcome of their investigation, and any action they take or plan to take, as an outcome of your complaint.

They must do this within:

- **28 days of receiving your complaint if they are registered on the early years register**
- **28 days of receiving your complaint if they are registered on the childcare register.**

You can ask to have the outcome of their investigation in writing.

If you are not satisfied with their response, or your concern relates to a matter you cannot discuss with your provider, you can contact Ofsted direct on 0300 123 1231.

Where can I get further advice?

[GOV.UK - Childcare Choices website](https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/) - <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

What is 3-year-old Funded Early Education?

It is for all families in England with 3 and 4-year-old children.

Up to 15 hours of free childcare or early education for a minimum of 38 weeks.

A total of 570 hours per year, that you can use flexibly with one or more childcare provider

Some providers will allow you to 'stretch' the hours over 52 weeks, using fewer hours per week

15 hours Funded Early Education

Where can I use it?

It is available at participating:

Full day care (e.g., nurseries)

Schools

Childminders

Sessional providers (e.g., playgroups)

Children's Centre's

Out of school hours childcare

From 1 January, 1 April or 1 September following your child's 3rd birthday.

What isn't covered?

The 15 hours free childcare/early education offer is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables (such as nappies or sun cream), additional hours or additional activities (such as trips). Providers may charge a fee for these additions. If you choose to pay for these it is an arrangement between you and the childcare provider. However, you must not be required to pay any fee as a condition of taking up 15 hours place and must be offered alternative options.

30 hours Funded Early Education

For working families in England with 3 and 4-year-old children

Up to 30 hours of free childcare or early education for a minimum of 38 weeks

A total of 1,140 hours per year, that you can use flexibly with one or more childcare provider.

Some providers will allow you to 'stretch' the hours over 52 weeks, using fewer hours per week.

Am I eligible?

You, and any partner, must each expect to earn equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage

Current rates

These rates are for the National Living Wage (for those aged 23 and over) and the National Minimum Wage (for those of at least school leaving age). The rates change on 1 April every year.

	23 and over	21 to 22	18 to 20	Under 18	Apprentice
April 2022	£9.50	£9.18	£6.83	£4.81	£4.81

If you, or your partner, are on maternity, paternity, or adoption leave, or you're unable to work because you are disabled or have caring responsibilities, you could still be eligible. You **can't** get 30 hours free childcare if **either** you, or your partner, each **individually** expect to earn £100,000 or more.

When can my child start?

Your child can start in their childcare place the term after they turn 3 years old and have received a valid 30-hour code, **whichever is later**. Term start dates are 1st September, 1st January and 1st April.

To keep your 30 hours free childcare place, you need to check your details are up to date every 3 months by logging back into your HMRC Gateway account which would have been created for you then you applied for your code initially. If you do not keep your code up to date, it will expire, and you will lose your entitlement to the additional 15 hours.

Where can I use it?

It is available at participating:
Full day care (e.g., nurseries)
Schools
Childminders
Sessional providers (e.g., playgroups)
Out of school childcare

Please view the step by step guide on [how to use 30 hours free childcare](#):

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/how-to-apply-for-30-hours-free-childcare/>

What isn't covered?

The 30 hours free childcare offer is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables (such as nappies or sun cream), additional hours or additional activities (such as trips).

Providers may charge a fee for these additions. If you choose to pay for these it is an arrangement between you and the childcare provider. However, you must not be required to pay any fee as a condition of taking up 30 hours place and must be offered alternative options.

For further information: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

Tax Free Childcare

If you are not claiming the childcare element of either Tax Credits or Universal Credit and you meet the 30-hour criteria, you will be entitled to Tax Free Childcare.

How does it work?

You apply through the Childcare Choices website <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/> HMRC Childcare Service will confirm your eligibility and then instead of paying your childcare provider directly, you pay your childcare payments directly into this account. For every £8 you pay into this account HMRC will top it up automatically with £2 to help you with the expense of your childcare costs. You can use the top up funding to pay for any registered childcare up to your child being 11 years old so for things like breakfast, after school and holiday club once they go to school. Prior to going to school you can use it to pay for additional hours, lunches, snacks, and consumable charges.

PARENT JOURNEY



30 HOURS

1

Go to Childcare Choices & apply online (this is the application for both 30 Hours & Taxfree Childcare. You need to tick the appropriate boxes for one or both options)*

2

You will be checked for eligibility and if you are eligible you will then receive your code, which will begin with either 500 or 11 (11 is an emergency code and only lasts for 1 term)

3

Now you have your code, head to the new council portal to create your online account with us (only if accessing St Helens based Childcare)

4

You will then receive an email which asks you to verify your council account

5

Once you have verified, log on to express your interest with as many St Helens childcare providers as you wish

6

All settings **MUST** respond to you via your account within 48-72 hours & if they have a place, you will be invited in to view/meet

7

Once you have decided on a childcare provider, both you and they need to accept the place via your online council account. Once both parties have accepted your place is confirmed

8

This also allows the Council to share your details with the provider to enable them to claim the funding. Your childcare provider will directly confirm your child's start date



Childcare
Choices



HM Government

*The Tax-Free Childcare Parent Journey is different from this point. Please refer to the Tax-Free Childcare Parent Journey document. You will need to follow both if choosing both.

FINAL VERSION - FEBRUARY 2019

FOSTER CARER JOURNEY



1

Speak to your social worker, about 30 hours as soon as possible at the start of the term, that your foster child is turning 3

2

You will then complete an application form with your social worker and provide the necessary evidence that you are working outside of fostering

3

Once processed, the council will send you your code, which will begin 400

4

Take your code to your chosen provider as you can't take up your extra 15 funded hours without it. Your childcare provider will validate your code

5

You must reconfirm your eligibility every 3 months by calling the FEEE Team

6

If your foster child is already in a 30-hours place and you stop working (outside of your foster work) you will be given a short grace period during which your 30 hours childcare will continue

Contact the FEEE Team on 01744 876542 should you require further information



Childcare
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*In order for your foster child to access 30 hours funded childcare, you, as foster carers, must be in paid work outside your fostering role. The earnings criteria is the same as for non-foster carers. It must also be consistent with your child's care plan.

FINAL VERSION - FEBRUARY 2019

TAX-FREE CHILDCARE JOURNEY



1

Go to Childcare Choices & apply online (this is the application for both 30 Hours & Taxfree Childcare. You need to tick the appropriate boxes for one or both options)*

2

Your eligibility will be checked by HMRC. If eligible, they'll open your childcare account

3

Ensure the provider you want is already signed up and then add that provider to your account so you can pay them

4

Pay money into your account. The top up will be added automatically

5

Pay your childcare provider directly through your childcare account

Contact the **FEEE** Team on 01744 676542 should you require further information



Childcare
Choices



The 30-Hour Childcare Parent Journey is different from this point. Please refer to the 30-Hour Childcare Parent Journey document. You will need to follow both if choosing both.

FINAL VERSION - FEBRUARY 2019

Employers for Childcare

Employers For Childcare is a free and confidential advice service for families who are not sure what additional financial support is out there to help them with their childcare costs or which root to go down and what they are eligible to claim. This service is for all families regardless of whether you are currently working or not and have saved families £54.5 million over the last 5 years and helped 31,000 families. Please do not hesitate to give them a call and see how they can help you!



EMPLOYERS FOR CHILDCARE

**Employers
For Childcare**

Working For Parents

Family Benefits Advice Service

- **Free, impartial and confidential advice** to parents on the financial support available towards registered childcare costs
- Freephone Helpline, Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm: **0800 028 3008**
- Email: hello@employersforchildcare.org
- Online advice sessions for your parents and staff
- Leaflets and information for your website

employersforchildcare.org   

Case study 1

How Tax-Free Childcare helps working families



Beth and Robert are self-employed and make a joint profit of £64,000 a year. They have two children and annual childcare costs of £18,000.

They can claim £300 per month through Tax-Free Childcare
= saving of £3,600 a year

employers**for**childcare.org   

Case study 2

How Tax-Free Childcare helps working families



Linda and Gary have a joint income of £120,000 a year. Their annual childcare bill for three children is £21,000.

They can claim £350 a month through Tax-Free Childcare
= saving of £4,200 per year

employers**for**childcare.org   

Case study 3

**How Tax-Free Childcare helps
working families**



Colin is a single parent earning £25,000 a year. He has £10,000 in savings. His childcare costs are £4,800 a year.

He can claim £80 a month through Tax-Free
Childcare

= saving of £960 per year