

EARLY EDUCATION FUNDING – ELIGIBILITY CODES FOR THE WORKING PARENTS ENTITLEMENT

VERY IMPORTANT - PLEASE DO NOT OFFER, OR CLAIM FOR, ANY WORKING PARENTS ENTITLEMENT HOURS UNLESS THE CHILD HOLDS A VALID CODE FOR THE SPECIFIC TERM IN WHICH THEY WISH TO ACCESS THESE HOURS. PLEASE CHECK PARENTS DO HAVE A CODE, THEN CHECK THE CODE ON THE SYNERGY PORTAL AND CHECK THE VALIDITY DATES TO CONFIRM THE CODE IS VALID FOR THE RELEVANT TERM

- Please signpost parents to www.childcarechoices.gov.uk - there is also information there about Tax-Free Childcare and other help and support with childcare costs. Please use the resources for providers at

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/providers/guidance-and-resources/>

The Local Authority does not issue codes, nor get involved in the application/reconfirmation process (the **only** exception to this is applications from Foster Parents via a Social Worker). **Please do not** direct parents to the Local Authority, if they are having any problems with their codes, or the application or reconfirmation process. Parents should contact the Childcare Service Helpline on **0300 123 4097**

The Local Authority does not hold, or have access to, any information about parents' applications for the codes or what happens during the application or reconfirmation process

- An Eligibility Code is **not** needed for the 3 & 4 Year Old Universal Entitlement (the first 15 hours per week term-time). Children automatically become eligible for the 3 & 4 Year Old Universal Entitlement from the term after the term of their 3rd birthday – providers **must** see proof of a child's date of birth. An Eligibility Code is needed for the 3 & 4 Year Old Working Parents Entitlement 15 hours per week term-time (Extended hours on Synergy), the 2 Year Old Working Parents Entitlement 15 hours per week term-time and the Working Parents Entitlement 15 hours per week term-time for children aged 9 months plus (Expanded hours on Synergy).

*Please note a code is **not** needed for the 2 Year Old Funding under the criteria at-*

<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds-claim-benefits>

- **Free education and childcare for 2-year-olds if you claim certain benefits**

To access the above 2 Year Old Funding, parents must have a letter of confirmation of funding from RBWM AfC. The letter is proof of eligibility to the funding, and only the letter is needed.

- The deadline for applying for codes to be valid for the summer term 2025 was 31st March 2025. Any codes issued after this deadline **can only** be accepted for the summer term 2025 if issued between 1st and 14th April 2025 **and** if parents can provide proof that they did apply by the deadline of 31st March 2025. If you have a code issued between 1st and 14th April, you **must** ask the parents for proof that they applied by 31st March and you will need to email the proof to us. Any codes issued after 14th April can definitely **not** be accepted for the summer term. If a code is valid from or after 1st April and parents insist they did apply by 31st March but cannot provide proof of this, they need to contact the Childcare Service Helpline to take the matter up with them.

If parents applied for a code after 31st March 2025 (even if it was on 1st April 2025), the code cannot be accepted for the summer term, and the relevant Working Parents Entitlement hours cannot be accessed in the summer term

- Please remind parents to reconfirm their eligibility by the valid-to date of the code (not by the Grace Period end date). Parents do receive reminders from HMRC, and it is ultimately parents' responsibility to keep the code up-to-date and valid

- Each code has a Grace Period end date. If any codes have a Grace Period end date of 31st March 2025, then the validity of the code has lapsed, and the code cannot be accepted for the summer term 2025

- As a general rule, a child cannot start accessing a new Working Parents Entitlement place at a setting if the code is in the Grace Period and the valid-to date of the code has actually passed. DfE Statutory Guidance states –

A1.26 Children should not start a new working parent entitlement place at a provider during the grace period. This includes:

- where a parent falls into their grace period before the child has started a place;
- where a parent falls into their grace period whilst their child is in a place, and the parent seeks to move the child to a different provider.

- Children must be age-eligible for the 3 & 4 Year Old Entitlement to be able to access the 3 & 4 Year Old Working Parents Entitlement. Codes can be issued before a child is age-eligible, but a child cannot access either or both parts of the 3 & 4 Year Old Entitlement until they are age-eligible. The relevant dates are as follows -

- Children turning 3 between 1st January and 31st March - the start of the subsequent summer term
- Children turning 3 between 1st April and 31st August - the start of the subsequent autumn term
- Children turning 3 between 1st September and 31st December - the start of the subsequent spring term

- Children must be age-eligible to access the 2 Year Old Working Parents Entitlement. Codes can be issued before a child is age-eligible, but a child cannot access the 2 Year Old Entitlement until they are age-eligible. The relevant dates are as follows -

- Children turning 2 between 1st January and 31st March - the start of the subsequent summer term
- Children turning 2 between 1st April and 31st August - the start of the subsequent autumn term
- Children turning 2 between 1st September and 31st December - the start of the subsequent spring term

- Children must be age-eligible to access the 9 months plus Working Parents Entitlement. Codes can be issued before a child is age-eligible, but a child cannot access the 9 months plus Entitlement until they are age-eligible. The relevant dates are as follows –

- Children turning 9 months by or on 31st March - the start of the subsequent summer term

- Children turning 9 months by or on 31st August - the start of the subsequent autumn term
- Children turning 9 months by or on 31st December - the start of the subsequent spring term

- If parents are splitting any of their entitlement between providers, then each provider must be clear as to who is claiming which and how many hours, so there is no duplicate claiming and no excess of the maximum hours allowed. Parents must clearly communicate their wishes to each provider, and each provider must hold a fully and accurately completed Local Authority Parent Declaration Form, which clearly shows the split in hours between providers. **A child's providers can and should communicate with each other to check claims.** This is extremely important, especially where the providers are in different Local Authorities. It is parental choice where parents access their funded hours, subject to availability and the offer of funding at the setting(s), and how they split the hours between providers

- **ALL** Codes **MUST** be validated on the Actuals BEFORE actual (final) claims are submitted: - If you have a child entered onto the portal for the Actuals, and the child has a code, you **must** use the validation box on the individual child's details. Please make sure you have entered the child's and parent(s)' details and ticked the box to give consent for checking eligibility.

Then complete the child's 'Funding Details' tab, then click the blue box 'Check Eligibility Code', wait for the result of the check and then press 'Save'. Please ensure that the details entered are correct.

There is also a 'standalone' Eligibility Checker on Synergy. If you need to check any codes before submitting Estimates, you can only use this checker. Please complete the mandatory fields (code, child's DOB and parent's NI number) only, and tick the consent to check box. If you enter any more details, then you will receive the error message 'Submission failed'.

Please do not use this 'standalone' checker to validate codes on the Actuals. The standalone Eligibility Checker is not linked to the Actuals and does not update a child's code details on the Actuals.

Please note the following on the Eligibility Checker -

CHECK THE CODE START DATE is valid for the period that the child is taking up their place at your setting. Codes with invalid start dates cannot be funded.

A valid code Start Date MUST be as follows:

Summer term - Before 1st April

Autumn term - Before 1st September

Spring term - Before 1st January

CHECK THE CODE END DATE has not expired. Only children who have been accessing a Working Parents Entitlement place at your setting in the previous term are covered by a valid Grace Period for the next term.

A 'Not Found' result more than likely means that the information entered has been mistyped or is incorrect. Please check the details (code, child's DOB and parent's NI number) are correct. For a two-parent household, check both NI numbers if necessary.

Also, when you check a code on the Eligibility Checker now, you will probably notice the change in colour to yellow and an exclamation mark when you get a positive result. This is to alert you to think about the code dates which have come up, and for you to determine whether a code is valid for a specific term or not.

Useful Links

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare--2/early-education-and-childcare-effective-from-1-april-2025>

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/01/22/how-to-claim-15-hours-free-childcare-code/>

<https://rbwm.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/community-information/information-and-advice/early-education-funding-for-2-3-and-4-year-olds>

<https://www.leadershipupdate-rbwm.co.uk/early-education-funding-useful-information-for-pro/>