

## What is the free entitlement under the Early Years Foundation Stage?

With effect from September 2010 the free entitlement for all 3 and 4 year olds increases to a maximum of 15 hours per week of free entitlement for your child. You are entitled to claim the grant for 38 weeks per year during term time.

The maximum entitlement if taken on 1 day is 10 hours and over 2 days is 15 hours per week.

If you choose for your child to attend for the 15 hours free entitlement only, you will not receive any charge. If your child attends more than the 15 hours per week you will be charged for the additional hours.

You can access the free entitlement at:

- Maintained Nursery Unit operated by a Cheshire West and Chester School or a Maintained Nursery School.
- Childminder
- Pre-School/Playgroup
- Private Day Nursery
- Independent School

You can split your entitlement between a maximum of 2 providers.

To find out if a childcare provider is registered for the grant; to get a list of providers in your area; to get information about what each type of childcare offers, call Cheshire West and Chester's Family Information Service on **0800 0852 863**.

## When can my child receive the grant?

All children can access their early years free entitlement shortly after their third birthday.

The start date depends on their date of birth.

- Children born between 1st January and 31st March can start in April (Summer Term)
- Children born between 1st April and 31st August can start in September (Autumn Term)
- Children born between 1st September and 31st December can start in January (Spring Term).

For example, if your child is three on the 3rd January they can start in the summer term.

Once you start claiming the grant your child can continue until they start full time Education.

## What are the benefits for my child?

The free entitlement is part of the Early Years Foundation Stage for children aged 0 to 5 years. Your child will learn through active, play-based opportunities in a caring environment. Learning will focus on: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; problem solving, reasoning and numeracy; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative developments.

It has been proven that a rich and stimulating start to early education is a lifelong benefit that helps children to fulfil their potential.

## How do I get a place for my child?

As a parent/carer you can decide where you would like your child to go (subject to availability). For more information about what is available in your area, or help to find a place call Cheshire West and Chester's Family Information Service on 0800 0852 863.

You should contact the provider of your choice as soon as possible in case they have a waiting list for places.



## Do I have to apply for funding?

No, your childcare provider will do this for you. Each term you will be asked to sign a parent contract stating how many hours you would like to claim at that setting and to confirm that you are not claiming more than 15 hours per week in total. You will also be asked to show evidence of your child's date of birth, e.g. birth certificate.

## How does the funding work?

The Council will pay for the free entitlement directly to your childcare provider. The funded places are free and you will not be required to pay towards this. You will be charged for any additional childcare your child has over the 15 hours free entitlement.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Does my child have to attend 15 hours to receive the grant?

No. Your child will receive the grant for the hours attended. e.g. if your child attends 12 hours per week we will pay 4/5ths of the grant.

### Can I include the 15 hours Early Years Foundation Stage entitlement in my claim for the Childcare element of the Working Family Tax Credit?

No. The 15 hours of Early Years Entitlement is free and can not therefore be included in the assessment. However, any additional hours that you pay for over and above the free entitlement can be included. Important: If you have previously been claiming for a child that is now eligible for the free entitlement, you must inform HMRC on **0845 300 3900** so your tax credits can be adjusted accordingly.

### If I want to move my child to a different provider, what do I do?

Speak to your existing childcare provider. Check your next provider has a place. The free entitlement is calculated on a termly basis, therefore, it is best to move your child at the end of term break so as to ensure you receive the maximum grant.

### If my child lives in the Cheshire West and Chester local authority area but I want them to attend a childcare setting outside the area, can I still access the free entitlement?

This will depend on the location of your childcare provider. If the provider is in another English local

authority area then that local authority is obliged to provide your child with a free place as cross border arrangements are in place. However, Welsh local authorities do not have similar arrangements with Cheshire West and Chester Council. Therefore if you choose to send your child to a setting in Wales, Cheshire West and Chester Council will not provide the free entitlement, and we have been advised that Welsh local authorities will not provide your child's free entitlement unless your child is resident in Wales. This means that you cannot access your child's free entitlement at a childcare setting in Wales if your child lives in the Cheshire West and Chester local authority area.

## Where can I get further information?

Call **Cheshire West and Chester's Family Information Service** for a list of childcare providers who offer the free entitlement on **0800 0852 863**. Other factsheets in this series include: Factsheet 1 Childcare Vouchers, Factsheet 2 Tax Credits, Factsheet 4 Maternity and Paternity Pay.

For information relating to starting school call the School Admissions and Transfers Team on 0300 123 7039.

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### Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services.

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille and Large Print formats. If you would like a copy in any of these formats or in another language, please email us at [equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk) We are also able to provide a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter to support customers with accessing Council services.

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