



Funded Childcare Guide 2025 - 2026



A parents guide to available nursery
funding and eligibility.



Contents



Funded Childcare Guide



15 Hours of Funded Childcare for All 3 and 4 Year Olds



30 Hours of Funded Childcare for 9 Months Old to 4 Years Old



Extra Charges



6 Steps to Claim your Funded Childcare



Tax-Free Childcare (TFC)



Frequently Asked Questions

Funded Childcare Guide

We understand that choosing a nursery for your child is an important decision and one that can bring a mixture of excitement and emotions.

Understanding nursery fees and the government-funded childcare entitlements can sometimes feel overwhelming. Our aim is to make the process as simple and straightforward as possible. This guide has been created to provide you with all the key information you need about our fees, funding options, and how funded childcare works at Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries.

At Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries, we are committed to providing every child with the same exceptional standard of education, care, and opportunities, regardless of how their place is funded. All children benefit from our enriching curriculum, nurturing environment, and high-quality learning experiences.

We are proud to offer fully funded places, subject to availability. As demand for funded places can be high, we encourage families to speak with their Nursery Manager as early as possible to discuss the options available. Our team is always happy to guide you through the eligibility criteria, application process, and how funded hours can be used within our nurseries.



Government Funding Options

Who	9 Months to 2 Years	2 to 3 Years	3 to 4 Years
All Parents	-	-	15 Hours
Working Families	30 Hours	30 Hours	30 Hours
Families recieving additional support	-	15 Hours	-



15 Hours of Funded Childcare for All 3 and 4 Year Olds

Universal funding has been available as a benefit to families for several years. All children are eligible and it starts the term after a child turns 3. This is welcome reduction in childcare fees for parents.

To find out more about government funded hours visit <http://beststartinlife.gov.uk/>



How the funding works at our nursery

- 15 hours of funding is stretched over 51 weeks.
- Your child will access 570 hours per year which equates to 11.11 hours per week.
- Full funding entitlement is accessed over 2 full days (8am-6pm)
- Daily there are 5.26 hours fully funded and 4.46 hrs paid by parents.
- Parents can add additional sessions to their booking, charged at our standard fee rates.
- 15hrs funding options may also be available for two-year-olds in receipt of additional support

Government funding covers care and basic provision of the EYFS. Hot meals, lunch, tea, personal hygiene items and any additional activities / chargeable extras during funded hours are charged additionally.

15hrs Funding Daily Schedule

8.00 - 8.30am
8.30 - 9.00am
9.00 - 9.30am
9.30 - 10.00am
10.00 - 10.30am
10.30 - 11.00am
11.00 - 11.30am
11.30 - 12.00pm
12.00 - 12.30pm
12.30 - 13.00pm
13.00 - 13.30pm
13.30 - 14.00pm
14.00 - 14.30pm
14.30 - 15.00pm
15.00 - 15.30pm
15.30 - 16.00pm
16.00 - 16.30pm
16.30 - 17.00pm
17.00 - 17.30pm
17.30 - 18.00pm

Funded Hours (11am to 4pm)



The Benefits to Stretched Funding

Spreading funded hours over 51 weeks provides your child with consistency throughout the year, helping them settle into the nursery routine and fully benefit from everything on offer.

This approach also enables us to support more families by balancing sessions fairly across the year and making places available to as many children as possible.

30 Hours of Funded Childcare for 9 Months Old to 4 Years Old

Working Family Funding offers up to 30 hours of funded early years education and childcare for eligible working families with children aged from 9 months up to 4 years old.

This is fantastic news for families, helping children access more hours of high-quality early years education while significantly reducing childcare costs. For many parents, it also makes returning to work, increasing working hours, or balancing family life that little bit easier — which, let's be honest, is no small thing.

Check if your child is eligible and apply for your code <http://beststartinlife.gov.uk/>



How the funding works at our nursery

- 30 hours of funding is stretched over 51 weeks.
- Your child will access 1140 hours per year which equates to 22.21 hours per week.
- Full funding entitlement is accessed over 3 full days (8am-6pm)
- Daily there are 5.26 hours fully funded and 4.46 hrs paid by parents.
- Parents can add additional sessions to their booking, charged at our standard fee rates.

Government funding covers care and basic provision of the EYFS. Hot meals, lunch, tea, personal hygiene items and any additional activities / chargeable extras during funded hours are charged additionally.

30hrs Funding Daily Schedule

8.00 - 8.30am
8.30 - 9.00am
9.00 - 9.30am
9.30 - 10.00am
10.00 - 10.30am
10.30 - 11.00am
11.00 - 11.30am
11.30 - 12.00pm
12.00 - 12.30pm
12.30 - 13.00pm
13.00 - 13.30pm
13.30 - 14.00pm
14.00 - 14.30pm
14.30 - 15.00pm
15.00 - 15.30pm
15.30 - 16.00pm
16.00 - 16.30pm
16.30 - 17.00pm
17.00 - 17.30pm
17.30 - 18.00pm

Funded Hours (10.20am to 6pm)



The Benefits to Stretched Funding

Spreading funded hours over 51 weeks provides your child with consistency throughout the year, helping them settle into the nursery routine and fully benefit from everything on offer.

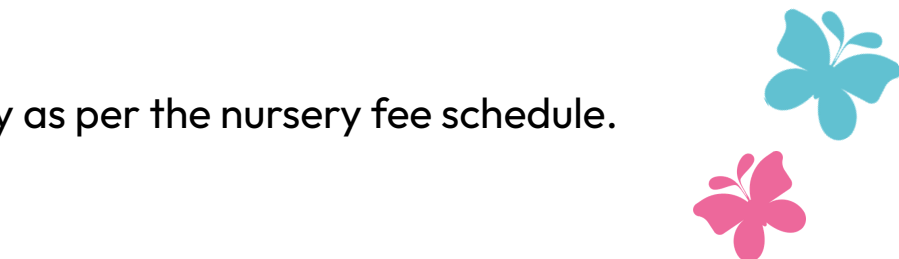
This approach also enables us to support more families by balancing sessions fairly across the year and making places available to as many children as possible.



Extra Charges

Government funding covers a limited number of hours and does not include meals, nappies, wipes, creams and all enriching activities that children at Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries love!

All extra curricular activities and additional hours that are not covered by the funding will be charged accordingly as per the nursery fee schedule.



Breakfast	Lunch & Snack	Tea & Snack	Essentials	Enhanced Provisions
£1.00	£3.95	£3.75	£1.00	£2.00

This also includes:

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
|  Superstar Sports |  Hartbeeps |  Plant & Grow |  Parent Events |  Graduation Party |
|  Tiny Mites |  Confident Communication |  Nature Projects |  Children's Gifts |  Enhanced Resources |
|  Language Class |  Makaton |  Science Projects |  Lending Library |  Bucket Time |
|  ICT Club |  Cooking & Baking |  School Readiness |  Boogie Mites |  Festival Celebrations |

6 Steps to Claim your Funded Childcare

Step 1
Find your nearest nursery

Browse our nursery locations to find your nearest setting offering funded childcare and book a tour today.

Step 2
Check your eligibility & claim your code

Visit beststartinlife.gov.uk to find out more about childcare support and check your eligibility.

Step 3
Submit your funding code to us

Once your child is registered at one of our nurseries, you will need to submit your government funding code.

Step 4
Confirmation of you submitted code

You will receive a notification acknowledging the receipt of your code (we will contact you if it isn't valid)

Step 5
Complete your parent declaration

At the start of the funded term you will receive an email with a link to complete the declaration. This will allow us to claim your funding.

Step 6
Renew your code every 3 months

Your code will expire every 3 months. You must renew this to receive your funding each term.



Visit beststartinlife.gov.uk to find out more about government funded childcare support and to check your eligibility.

Tax-Free Childcare (TFC)

Can I get Tax-Free Childcare?

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 Hungry Caterpillars accept Tax-Free Childcare?

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

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.

How does it work?

You open an online account through the government website which you use to pay for your childcare. For every £8 you pay in, the government will top up an extra £2.

- 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.
- 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)





Frequently Asked Questions about Funding for Parents



Answers to common questions
about funding options and financial
support.



The Main Things you Need to Know

When can I use the funded entitlement from?

You can start using your entitlements the term after your child turns the relevant age to use it. The relevant age for the working parent entitlement is 9 months old.



When your child turns the relevant age

1st January to 31st March

1st April to 1st August

1st September to 31st December

When your child can receive their entitled hours

Term starting on or after the 1st of April

Term starting on or after the 1st of September

Term starting on or after the 1st of January

If you do not apply by the deadline, you will not be able to take up your entitlements during that term.



What do the funded entitlements cover?

Government funding delivers you 15 hours or 30 hours of high quality, flexible childcare. It does not cover additional hours, activities or extra costs, such as meals. You will receive an invoice monthly, which will provide clear, transparent costs to show allocation of funded hours so you can see your child's entitlement and any charges for additional services and hours.



What will I be charged additionally for?

Government funding only covers a limited number of hours and does not include meals, essentials and all the amazing, enhanced activities that Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries children love.



Universal 15 Hours for all 3 and 4 Year Olds



Who can receive universal entitlement?

All 3 and 4 year olds who live in England are entitled to this offer irrespective of your income levels, benefit status or family circumstances. It is worth noting that these hours are only able to be used at one provider.

What can I receive in the universal entitlement?

All those aged 3 to starting school in England can receive 570 hours per year through this entitlement.

When can I use this entitlement?

You can access your funded entitlement from the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September after your child's 3rd birthday.



Extended Entitlement for 30 Hour Funding for 9 month to 4 Year Olds

How do I check my entitlement and apply for the 9 months extended 30 hours entitlement?

You'll need to make sure you have the following information to hand before starting the application:

- Your national insurance number (or unique taxpayer reference if you are self-employed)
- The date you started or due to start work
- Details of any government support or benefits you receive
- The UK birth certificate reference number (if you have one) for your child



Once codes have been applied for, you will be required to re-verify your code prior to funding, starting every three months

When do I need to apply?

We recommend you contact your nursery as early as possible to secure your place. You will be able to take up your hours from the term after you meet all the eligibility criteria for the entitlement you are applying for. These terms begin on 1st January, 1st April and 1st September.

When would you like to use your entitled hours?	The deadline to submit your code
1st of January	30 th of November
1 st of April	28 th of February
1 st of September	31 st of July

If you do not apply by the deadline, you will not be able to take up your entitlements during that term.

Deadline date for your nursery to receive your code

All codes are required to be sent to your nursery prior to the deadlines outlined on the previous page. Failure to submit your code by this date may result in your child's funding not being allocated for the next term. You must also complete and return the Local Authorities Parent Declaration.

When will I find out if I am eligible?

On receiving your initial code, we will check your eligibility with the Local Authority. We will inform you if your code is not valid for your funded placement.

I have received two codes, one from the letter and one from the website. Which one am I supposed to use?

If you have two codes, one from your letter beginning with 11 and one from the website beginning with 50, please send the nursery the code from the website beginning with 50, as this is your permanent digital code for your child. If you only have one code (beginning with 11) then you can use this temporary code to start using your entitlements. Please remember that if you used a temporary code beginning with 11, once your reconfirmation window opens, you will still need to reconfirm your eligibility through your Childcare Account and share the digital code (beginning with 50) that you will receive at that time with your nursery.





How often do I need to log into my childcare account?

You need to log into your childcare account every 3 months to reconfirm that your details are up to date and that you remain eligible for the childcare entitlements for working parents and/or Tax-Free Childcare. It is the parents' responsibility to make sure that codes are reconfirmed every three months. Failure to renew codes may result in additional funding being removed (Standard Fees Apply).



Will I be reminded to reconfirm my details?

Yes, you will receive a reminder from HMRC when your reconfirmation window opens, also a week before your reconfirmation deadline and on your reconfirmation deadline. Please remember to make sure that your details are up to date with HMRC. It is not the nursery's responsibility to send reminders. Codes renewed after this date will not be valid for the term.



How do I log into my account to reconfirm?

You need to log into your childcare account using your Government Gateway ID to reconfirm. The date between which you should reconfirm will be displayed when you log in.

What happens if I miss my reconfirmation window?

If you miss your reconfirmation window, your eligibility for Tax-Free Childcare and/or childcare entitlements will lapse. However, if your child is already in place at the nursery and receives funding, a grace period for your free childcare will apply. This means your child can continue in their place for a short time, but you need to submit another application before the start of the next term to keep getting the childcare entitlements and/or Tax-Free Childcare. If you do not reconfirm within the grace period, you will not be able to access the 30 hour funding, and standard fees may apply.



When can I submit a new application if I missed my reconfirmation window or fell out of eligibility?

You can submit a new application any time you meet the eligibility criteria for childcare entitlements or Tax-Free Childcare. You must then present your code to your provider to confirm your place can continue. Please be advised that depending on the start date of the code, you may not be eligible for the current term.



What days can I access my funding?

Fully funded spaces can be accessed on certain days, please liaise with your nursery manager. Please note that funded hours are offered accordingly to availability at individual sites.





What if I am unable or unwilling to pay for my Enhanced Provision?

If parents are unable or unwilling to pay for enhanced provision, please speak with a Nursery Manager. To ensure that the care for all children is not disrupted. Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries offer a limited number of fully funded childcare places in which parents do not pay the additional charges. Many factors will be taken into consideration when reviewing the request for a fully funded place, which includes whether a child receives 2 year old funding, EYPP or any other locally available funding streams to reduce costs. Where parents do not pay for consumables, they may be asked by the nursery to provide for use during funded hours, wipes, nappies, creams, sun-cream and other consumables or additional enhancements. (Please note, these will need to be brought in daily and not stored onsite).

Can I bring a packed lunch for my child?

Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries has a strict policy that does not allow families to bring their own food such as packed lunches to the nursery. This is to avoid allergen risks and storage/handling issues.

Do you offer 2 year old additional support funding?

We also offer additional funding for 2 year olds who are in receipt of government support and receive the following benefits:

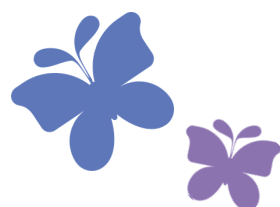
• Child has Special Educational Needs (SEND) or receives a Disability Living Allowance

- Child is looked after by the Local Authority
- Child has a guardianship or kinship order
- Child has a guardianship or kinship order



Can my child access funding across two provisions?

Where a child attends more than one funded setting, parents will need to discuss with providers how their funding is applied to prevent overclaims and the risk of funding being withdrawn. If you receive 30 hours funding this must be specified on your parent declaration as 15 hours can be split across two providers only.



Why can't I access my requested hours?

Entitlement to funded childcare does not guarantee a place at any one childcare provider or a particular pattern of provision. Childcare providers can choose how to offer funded childcare in their settings, as long as the following the parameters are met:

- Funded childcare does not exceed 570 hours per year for Universal funded childcare and 1140 hours per year for extended funded childcare.
- Limited term time only placements equate to 38 funded weeks per year. These term dates are set by the group and communicated to families an academic year at a time and are based on the number of funded weeks within a term that we receive from the Local Authority.
- Funded childcare is available at a maximum of two childcare sites in a single day.



What do I need to do to access my funding each term?

Parents who attend a funded place at Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries are required to complete a 'parent declaration form' each term to comply with the funding regulations. These forms must clearly identify the universal hours for all children and the extended for qualifying children. All codes must be provided on the parent declaration form and the relevant identification supplied. Funding codes must be sent to the nursery managers to ensure that relevant checks can be completed and codes applied to children's accounts. If this form is not received termly, funding may be withdrawn.

What happens if my child is absent?

Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries will record all children's absence and ensure we follow up and support parents whose child fails to attend regularly. Continued periods of absence may be reported to the Local Authority who may recall/stop funding for a child.

How will my funding be claimed?

Funding will be claimed based on a child's booking permanent booking pattern. The parent declaration must reflect the permanent booking pattern. Any extra/ad hoc sessions that are booked will not be covered by funding and will be charged in full.





How much notice do I need to provide to change my sessions?

1 months' written notice is required for any changes made to the current pattern of funded hours. Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries reserves all rights regarding the changing of sessions and is not obliged to allow alterations to session patterns. Where a child is on a fully funded offering, we reserve the right to amend sessions, days of attendance and timing, which is reviewed termly.

If I have separated from a partner, who applies for the code?

Only one code is available per child – parents must decide who the claimant will be for the duration of the claim.



Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries enters into an agreement with the Local Authority and must abide by the regulations set by the Government / Local Authority. Due to possible changes, Hungry Caterpillar Day Nurseries reserves the right to amend the Early Years Funding Policy/funding contract at any time. Parents will be informed of any changes with notice.

