



SFR 16/2018, 15 March 2018

This is the second termly experimental statistics release on the use of 30 hours free childcare following the national rollout of the offer in September 2017. It follows the experimental statistical release '30 hours free childcare: autumn term'¹, published in December 2017, and the monthly management information updates². This publication includes estimates for the spring term of the number of children in a 30 hours place from local authorities, as well as final estimates of the number of eligibility codes issued and validated.

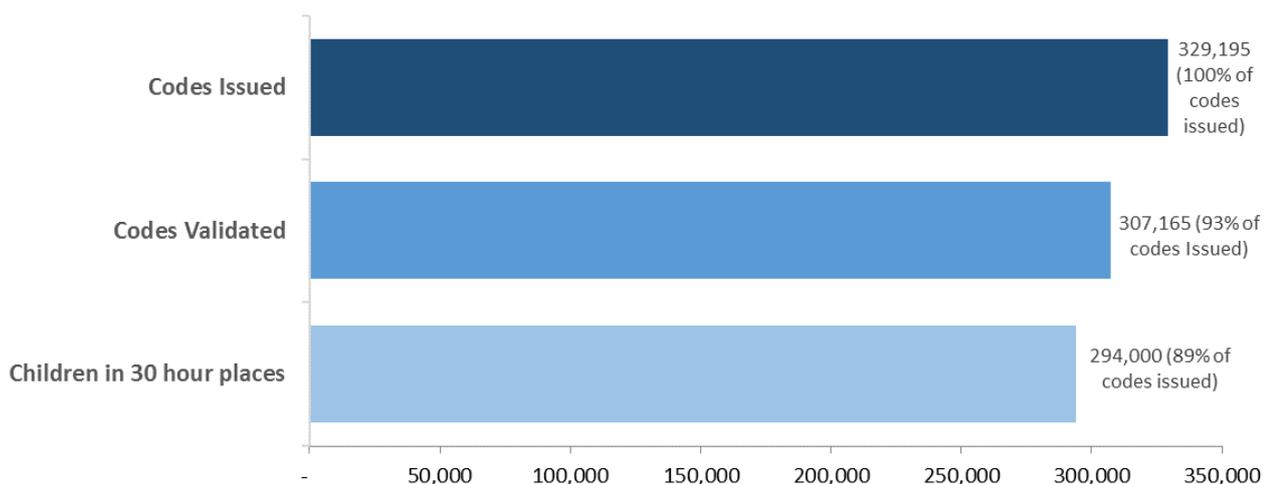
Around 294,000 children were in a 30 hours place during the spring term.

In the second term following national rollout of 30 hours free childcare, known as the spring term which runs from 1st January to 31st March 2018, an estimated 294,000 children were in a 30 hours place according to local authority data returns made during February. This compares to 202,800 who were estimated to be in a place during the 2017 autumn term.

The total number of children in a 30 hours place is equal to 89% of the eligibility codes issued to parents for the spring term.

There were 329,195 eligibility codes issued to parents for the spring term, of which 93% were validated by providers. The number of children in a 30 hours place represents 96% of validated codes and 89% of all codes issued. These figures were 96% and 90% respectively in the 2017 autumn term.

Figure A: Comparison of children in a 30 hours place with eligibility codes issued and validated



¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-autumn-term-2017>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated>

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About this release

This statistical first release provides experimental statistics on the use of 30 hours free childcare in the second term of national rollout, from 1st January – 31st March 2018. It includes:

- estimates of the number of children in a 30 hours place during the spring term based on local authority data returns,
- final estimates of number of eligibility codes issued and validated for the spring term, and
- the initial estimate for the number of eligibility codes issued and validated for the summer term

While headcount data, where supplied by local authorities, is based on the same census date as both the January 2018 early years census and schools census, we do not expect the figure to align exactly as we are aware many LAs were still in the process of finalising and refining their figures when they submitted their headcount data. The headcount data in this publication should therefore be treated as indicative. In summer 2018, the 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2018' national statistics publication will be released, which will give a definitive picture of the number of children in a 30 hours place in January 2018. We will investigate the possibility of including take-up rates within this publication.

Please see the technical note published alongside this release for further information.

30 hours free childcare

All 3 and 4-year-olds in England are entitled to 15 hours a week, or 570 hours a year of free early education. From September 2017, 3 and 4-year-olds may be entitled to 30 hours free childcare, or an extra 570 hours of free childcare a year, so 1,140 hours in total. The additional 15 hours is available to families where both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family), and each parent earns a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage or living wage, and less than £100,000 per year. This also includes self-employed parents.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the SFR:

- Main Table (Excel .xls)

The accompanying quality and methodology information document, provides information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data.

Feedback

We welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at EY.ANALYSISANDRESEARCH@education.gsi.gov.uk

1. Children in a 30 hours place

There were an estimated 294,000³ children in a 30 hours place⁴ during the spring term, 1st January to 31st March 2018. This figure is the sum of headcount data returns of the number of children in a 30 hours place for the spring term 2018 made by local authorities in England. Final data was not yet available for some local authorities and 38% of local authorities provided their own estimates. No data was returned by two local authorities and an estimation method has therefore been used to derive the national estimate⁵.

Spring term eligibility

A parent can start claiming their 30 hours place the term following their child's third birthday or the term following the date their eligibility code was issued (whichever is the later). Children are eligible for 30 hours free childcare from the term after they turn 3 until they reach compulsory school age, the term following their 5th birthday. Codes cannot be used to get 30 hours free childcare once a child has taken up a reception place in a state-funded school.

For the spring term 2018, to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare a child will have to have turned 3 on or before the 31st December 2017. Most children who had turned 4 by 31st August will be in a reception place in the spring term, however, a small number of parents of 4-year-olds may have chosen to defer their child's entry into reception and in these circumstances they would still be able to claim 30 hours free childcare.

Furthermore, to secure a 30 hours place for the spring term 2018, a parent must have received their 30 hours eligibility code by the 31st December 2017. However, local authorities may have chosen to exercise discretion and fund 30 hours places in the spring term for parents who applied by, or had had attempted to apply by, the 31st December and did not receive their code until shortly after this.

2. Codes issued and validated

The department has previously released figures on the number of eligibility codes issued to parents and validated by local authorities or providers for the spring term. Initially this was in the December 2017 statistical first release '30 hours free childcare: autumn term'⁶ and subsequently updated through monthly management information releases⁷. As per the the autumn 2017 publication, following data cleansing, these figures have been revised as set out in Table 1 below. Further details are provided in the technical note. In total, 93% of the 329,195 codes issued to parents were validated by providers during the spring term.

Table 1: Eligibility codes issues and validated

England, Spring term 2018

	Eligibility codes issued	Codes validated	Codes validated (%)
Spring term 2018	329,195	307,165	93%

Source: Eligibility Checking System, Department for Education

These figures exclude 5,852 codes issued and 2,451 codes validated for children aged 4 at 31st August, who remained aged 4 as of the 31st December, as it is likely these children will have take up a reception place therefore are ineligible for 30 hours free childcare. However, some of these children may defer their entry into reception and therefore they will continue to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare and may be in a place in the spring term.

³ See technical notes for details

⁴ Children in a 30 hours place are those who are in receipt of more than 15 hours of government-funded early education. 15 hours is the universal entitlement that is available to all 3 and 4-year-olds

⁵ More details are available in the technical note

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-autumn-term-2017>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated>

Codes issued and validated

Parents apply and have their eligibility checked for 30 hours free childcare via the childcare service, the online application for Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare.

If a parent is found to be eligible, they will be given a 30 hours eligibility code. A parent should take this code along with their national insurance number and their child's date of birth to their chosen childcare provider. The provider will either directly, or via their local authority, use the Department for Education's Eligibility Checking System (ECS) to confirm the validity of the code. Once the 30 hours code has been validated via the ECS, the parent will be able to take up their 30 hours place.

Parents will be prompted every 3 months to reconfirm their eligibility, which requires a parent to log into their childcare account and amend any details if necessary, or to confirm that their details have not changed.

On reconfirmation, if a parent is no longer eligible for 30 hours they will enter a grace period where they can continue their childcare for a short period of time, if their child is already in a 30 hours place. A child who becomes ineligible during the first half of a funding block should be funded until the end of that funding block. A child who becomes ineligible in the latter half of the funding block should be funded until the end of the following funding block.

3. Comparison of children in a 30 hours place with codes issued and validated

There were an estimated 294,000 children in a 30 hours place, representing 89% of the 329,195 codes issued to parents and 96% of the 307,165 codes validated via the ECS by a provider or local authority. There may be some parents who get a code, but choose not to take it to a provider and some parents may get their codes checked by a provider without taking up a place. 4-year-olds are included in the estimates of children in 30 hours places provided by local authorities, but are not included in the codes issued and validated figures.

4. Summer term codes issued and validated

Eligibility codes issued and validated so far for the summer term – 1st April 2018 to 31st August 2018 – are shown in Table 2 below. This provides an early indication of the number of codes issued for the summer, however parents can continue to apply for an eligibility code until the 31st March and providers will continue to check codes throughout the summer term so these figures will continue to rise.

Table 2: Eligibility codes issues and validated to date for the summer term
England, as of 7th March 2018

	Eligibility codes issued	Codes validated	Codes validated (%)
Summer term 2018	353,045	256,237	73%

Source: Eligibility Checking System, Department for Education

Summer term eligibility

For the summer term 2018, a child will have to have turned 3 on or before the 31st March 2018 to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare. To secure a 30 hours place for the summer term 2018, a parent should have also received their 30 hours eligibility code by the 31st March 2018.

5. Accompanying tables

The following table is available in Excel format on the department's statistics website:

Local authority and regional tables

1 Eligibility codes issued and validated and number of children in a 30 hours place, by region and local authority

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

- The number of children in a 30 hours place is taken from headcount data returns submitted by local authorities during February 2018. 38% of local authorities have provided estimates as final data was not yet available. No data was returned by two local authorities and an estimation method has therefore been used to derive the national and regional estimates⁸.
- Codes issued for children aged 4 at 31st August, who remained aged 4 as of the 31st December, have been excluded from the codes issued and codes validated data as it is likely these children will have take up a reception place and therefore are ineligible for 30 hours free childcare. However, some of these children may defer their entry into reception and continue to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare. There were 5,852 codes issued and 2,451 codes validated for children still aged 4 at 31st December 2017. The headcount data includes all children (both 3 and 4-year-olds) who were in a 30 hours place for the spring term.

6. Further information is available

Previous ad-hoc and management information is available on the [30 hours free childcare: eligibility codes issued and validated website](#). A statistical first release relating to the final estimates around the autumn term 2017 is also available: [30 hours free childcare: autumn term](#).

The following are available on the department's [childcare and early years statistics website](#):

- Statistical First Releases on provision for children under five years of age in England
- Childcare and early years providers survey
- Childcare and early years survey of parents

7. Official Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as Official Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as Official Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

8. Technical information

A quality and methodology information document accompanies this SFR. This provides further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

⁸ More details are available in the technical note

9. Get in touch

Media enquiries

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