



Department
for Education

30 hours free childcare: Autumn term 2017

Technical note

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1. Background

All 3 and 4-year-olds in England are entitled to 15 hours a week of free early education. From September 2017 this entitlement was extended to 30 hours free childcare for 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.

Parents apply and have their eligibility checked for 30 hours free childcare via the Childcare Service. If a parent is found to be eligible, they will be given a 30 hours eligibility code which they take to their chosen childcare provider. Childcare providers or local authorities will then validate these codes via the Eligibility Checking System. A parent must have generated a code and this code must be validated to enable a child to access a 30 hours place.

Earlier figures for 30 hours codes issued and codes validated for the Autumn term 2017 are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated>

This publication also includes estimates of the number children in a 30 hours place for the first time.

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. The data sources for this publication are the early years census, the school census and the school level annual school census. All schools, and all private, voluntary, and independent (PVI) providers receiving government funding, are required to make (through their local authority) a child-level return. These data collections are on a statutory basis through legislation, which helps ensure complete and accurate information being returned.

2. Data Sources

The data sources for this publication are:

- Children in a 30 hours place – voluntary data returns made by local authorities in November 2017.
- Eligibility codes issued and validated – the Department for Education's Eligibility Checking System.

3. Children in a 30 hours place

During November 2017 all local authorities in England were requested to provide the number of three and four year olds in their local authority in a funded early education place for more than 15 hours for the autumn term i.e. a 30 hours place and were asked to note whether the figure provided was an actual or estimate. Returns were received from all 152 local authorities with 59% returning actual figures and 41% estimates.

4. 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. A code is generated as part of the application process regardless of whether they intend to take up 30 hours, therefore some parents will receive a code even if they only want Tax-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. The local authority the check is made in and the date of the check are recorded by in the ECS

The department has previously released figures on the number of eligibility codes issued to parents and validated by providers, initially in the September 2017 ad-hoc notice '30 hours free childcare: eligibility codes issued and validated' and subsequently updated through monthly management information releases. These figures used a cut-off date of the 31 August 2017 to identify codes relating to the autumn term. This methodology has now been updated to include a wider range of eligibility codes that are assumed to relate to the autumn term. Additionally data cleansing has been applied to identify and remove duplicate codes relating to the same child.

Methodology

Codes issued

An eligibility code is assumed to relate to the autumn term under the following conditions;

The child was aged 3 on 31st August 2017; and

- a. The code was issued on or before the 31st August 2017 or the code validity start date was on or before the 31st August 2017; or
- b. The code was generated manually by the Childcare Service. Manual codes were issued to parents who encountered problems when trying to register for 30 hours child care using the Childcare Service and then contacted the Childcare Service Helpline. If a parent met the eligibility criteria, then they were issued a manual code (also referred to as a temporary code) which they could take to their provider. Or
- c. The parent applied to the Childcare Service on or before the 31st August, but did not receive their code until September or October. This is because the Department for Education encouraged local authorities to exercise their discretion and fund 30 hours places for the autumn term for parents who applied by the 31st August deadline but did not receive their code until after this.

Information on the code issued start, the code validity start date and whether the code was manual is available from the ECS. Only codes issued before the 26th October were included. Information on the application date was taken from HMRC's Childcare Service data.

Duplicates are removed from the data when multiple codes were issued to the same child. For example, where a manual code was initially provided and the parent later received a permanent code via the Childcare Service application. Codes are identified as relating to the same child if they share the same national insurance number of the parent making the application and the same first name of the child.

Most children who had turned 4 by 31st August will be in a reception place in the autumn term, however, a small number of parents of 4-year-olds may choose to defer their child's entry into reception and in these circumstances, they would still be able to claim 30 hours free childcare. Only children aged 3 on the 31st August 2017 are included in the codes issued and validated figures for the autumn term because it is not possible to identify whether a code was issued to a

parent of a 4-year-old applying for Tax-Free Childcare only. Figures for 4-year-olds are included in footnotes.

Figures are broken down by local authority based on the local authority in which the child is resident.

Codes validated

Codes validated are the subset of codes issued for the autumn term that have been checked by a provider or local authority by 10th December 2017.

Figures are broken down by local authority based on the local authority who completed the check. Where a code has been checked by more than one local authority, it is recorded against the local authority who most recently checked that code.

5. Spring codes issued and validated

Initial estimates are also provided of the number of codes issued and validated for the spring term as of 13th December 2017. An eligibility code is assumed to relate to the spring term under the following conditions;

- a. The child was aged 3 on 31st August 2017 or the child will be 3 on 31st December 2017; and
- b. The code was issued on or before 13th December 2017 (codes issued up to 31st December 2017 will be eligible for the spring term therefore these numbers are expected to increase)
- c. The code validity end date is after 31st December 2017 or the code is within the grace period. (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.)

Codes validated are the subset of codes issued for the spring term that have been checked by a provider or local authority since the 21st October and by the 13th December 2017. Local authorities carried out mid-term audits between 22nd and 29th October, therefore checks made before this data are less likely to relate to the spring term.

These figures will be updated through monthly management information releases available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated>. The January update is due to be published on 11th January 2018.



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Reference: SFR78/2017



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