



Department
for Education

30 hours free childcare: spring term 2019

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 (ECS). A parent must have generated a 30 hours eligibility code and this code must be validated to enable a child to access a 30 hours place.

Figures published in January for 30 hours eligibility codes issued and codes validated for the spring term 2019 are available here: [30 hours free childcare: eligibility codes issued and validated](#).

This publication provides updated and final figures of 30 hours eligibility codes issued and validated for the spring term 2019. It also includes estimates of the number children in a 30 hours place for the spring term 2019 based on voluntary local authority returns. While headcount data, where supplied by LAs, is based on the same census date as both the January 2019 early years census and schools census, we do not expect the figure to align exactly. We are aware many LAs were still in the process of finalising and refining their figures and the headcount data in this publication should therefore be treated as indicative. In June 2019, the 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2019' national statistics publication will be released, which will give a definitive picture of the number of children in a 30 hours place in January 2019.

The data sources for the "Education provision: children under 5 years of age" 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.

Unless otherwise stated the spring term referred to in this publication is the spring term 2019.

2. Data Sources

The data sources for this publication are:

- Children in a 30 hours place – voluntary data returns made by local authorities in February and March 2019.
- 30 hours eligibility codes issued and validated – the Department for Education's Eligibility Checking System.

3. Children in a 30 hours place

During February and the beginning of March 2019 all local authorities in England were asked by the Department for Education to submit a figure for the number of 3 and 4-year-olds in their local authority in a funded early education place for more than 15 hours for the spring term (i.e. a 30 hours place). They were also asked to note whether the figure provided was an actual or

estimate. Returns were received from 151 local authorities with 69% returning actual figures, 31% estimates.

An estimate was calculated for the one local authority where no information was supplied. In this instance the headcount had been estimated based on a percentage derived from the total headcount from local authorities where supplied divided by the total validated codes.

$$\text{estimate headcount} = \frac{\text{Total headcount all LAs submitted}}{\text{Total validated codes all LAs submitted}} * \text{validated codes for LA unsubmitted}$$

The national total has been rounded to the nearest 1,000 to reflect the uncertainty of the estimate and the totals for the one affected region have been rounded to the nearest 100.

4. 30 hours eligibility 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 30 hours eligibility code is generated, for any child in the appropriate age range, as part of the application process regardless of whether they intend to take up 30 hours, therefore some parents will receive a 30 hours eligibility 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 ECS to confirm the validity of the 30 hours eligibility code. Once the 30 hours eligibility code has been validated, the child will be able to take up their 30 hours place. The local authority in which the check is made and the date of the check are recorded in the ECS.

The department has previously released figures on the number of 30 hours eligibility codes issued to parents and validated by providers in the spring term in a management information release¹ which was published on 31 January 2019. The cut off date for spring term 30 hours eligibility codes was the 31 December 2018.

4.1. Methodology

30 hours eligibility codes issued

A 30 hours eligibility code is assumed to relate to the spring term under the following conditions:

The child had turned 3 on or before the 31 December 2018; and

- a. The 30 hours eligibility code was issued on or before the 31 December 2018 or the code validity start date was on or before the 31 December 2018; and
 - i) The code validity end date is within or after the spring term; and

¹ [30 hours free childcare: eligibility codes issued and validated](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/30-hours-free-childcare-eligibility-codes-issued-and-validated>

- ii) The code validity end date is in the second half of the autumn term meaning the child could be in their grace period during the spring term if they were in a place in autumn. This excludes codes where the child was too young to be in a 30 hours place during the autumn term as they are not eligible, since you cannot start a 30 hours place in a grace period; or
- b. The parent applied to the Childcare Service on or before the 31 December for spring term, but did not receive their 30 hours eligibility code until up to 14 January. 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 31 December and did not receive their 30 hours eligibility code until shortly after this.

Where identifiable, duplicates - when multiple 30 hours eligibility codes were issued to the same child - are removed from the data. For example, where a temporary 30 hours eligibility code was initially provided and the parent later received a digital 30 hours eligibility 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.

Only children who were aged 3 at 31 August 2018 and additionally those who turned 3 by 31 December are included in the codes issued and validated figures for the spring 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. This is because most children who had turned 4 by 31 August 2018 will have been in a reception place in the spring term 2019. 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 until the term following their fifth birthday.

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

30 hours eligibility codes validated

30 hours eligibility codes validated are the subset of codes issued for the spring term that have been checked by a provider or local authority since the 22 October 2018 and by 19 March, inclusive. The suggested local authority mid-term audit window is between 22 October and 29 October inclusive, therefore checks made before this date are less likely to relate to the spring term.

Figures are broken down by local authority based on the local authority who completed the most recent check; this may be a different local authority to where the child is resident. Where a 30 hours eligibility code has been checked by more than one local authority, it is recorded against the local authority that most recently checked that code.

5. Summer 30 hours eligibility codes issued and validated

Initial figures for the number of 30 hours eligibility codes issued and validated for the summer term are also included in this publication. A 30 hours eligibility code is assumed to relate to the summer term under the following conditions;

- a. The child will turn 3 on or before the 31 March 2019.

- b. The 30 hours eligibility code was issued on or before the extract date 19 March 2019 (30 hours eligibility codes issued up to 31 March 2019 will be eligible for the summer term and therefore these numbers are expected to increase).
- c. The 30 hours eligibility code validity end date is after 31 March 2019 or the 30 hours eligibility code validity end date is in the second half of the spring term, meaning the child could be in their grace period in the summer term if they were in a place in the spring. This excluded 30 hours eligibility codes where the child was too young to be in a 30 hours place during the spring term as they are not eligible, since you cannot start a 30 hours place in a grace period.

Codes validated are the subset of 30 hours eligibility codes issued for the spring term that have been checked by a provider or local authority since the 14 January 2019 and by 19 March 2019, inclusive. Local authorities began carrying out their early years census and schools census on the week commencing the 14 January, therefore checks made before this data are less likely to relate to the summer term.

These figures will be updated through the termly management information releases available here: [30 hours free childcare: eligibility codes issued and validated](#). An update is due to be published in April 2019.



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