



HM Revenue  
& Customs

# Working Tax Credit - help with the costs of childcare

If you receive tax credits you could claim extra help with childcare costs, if all of the following apply:

- you're responsible for a child
- you work at least 16 hours a week (see page 3)
- your childcare provider is registered or approved

Read this leaflet for more information and help to work out what you can claim.

If you start paying for registered or approved childcare and want to claim help with your costs, you can:

- phone the Tax Credit Helpline on 0345 300 3900
- use Relay UK by dialling 18001 and then 0345 300 3900 (if you cannot hear or speak on the phone)

📞 For our opening hours, go to [www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc](http://www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc)

---

## Contents

<b>Who can claim</b>	3
<b>Responsibility for a child</b>	3
<b>Working hours</b>	3
If you're temporarily absent from work	4
If you're off sick	4
If you're on maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave	4
If you're on strike leave or suspended from work	5
<b>Registered or approved childcare providers</b>	5
Your responsibility when claiming childcare costs	5
Registered or approved childcare: England	5
Registered or approved childcare: Scotland	7
Registered or approved childcare: Wales	7
Registered or approved childcare: Northern Ireland and Crown servants	8
<b>Changing your childcare provider</b>	9
<b>Childcare costs paid by someone else</b>	9
Childcare provided by a relative	9
<b>What childcare costs you can claim</b>	10
<b>How much help you can get</b>	10
If we need more information	10
<b>When to claim</b>	10
What information we'll need from you	11
<b>How to work out your average weekly childcare costs</b>	12
If you've been using childcare for less than a year	12
If you've arranged childcare that's due to start	12
If you've been using childcare for a year or more and always pay the same amount	12
If you've been using childcare for a year or more and pay different amounts	12
If you only use childcare for short periods once in a while	13
<b>Changes you must tell us about straightaway</b>	13
<b>How to work out if your average weekly childcare costs have changed</b>	14
If you always pay the same amount	14
If you do not always pay the same amount	14
If you pay childcare for more than one child or to more than one provider	14
How changes to childcare costs affect your payments	14
If your childcare costs go down by £10 per week or more	14
Your average weekly childcare costs go up by £10 or more	15
If the change in your childcare costs is less than £10 a week on average	16
<b>Other changes you should tell us about</b>	16
Changing your childcare provider	16
<b>Claiming Universal Credit or Tax-Free Childcare</b>	17
<b>Help for you</b>	17


We have a range of services for disabled people. These include guidance in Braille, audio and large print. Most of our forms are also available in large print. Contact our helplines for more information.

## Yr Iaith Gymraeg

Ffoniwch 0300 200 1900 I dderbyn fersiynau Cymraeg o ffurflenni a chanllawiau.

## Your rights and obligations

'HMRC Charter' explains what you can expect from us and what we expect from you.

 For more information, go to [www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-charter](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-charter)

---

## Who can claim

You can claim for help with childcare costs if:

- you're responsible for a child
- you work at least 16 hours a week
- your childcare provider is registered or approved

You can only claim help with childcare costs for a child up to the Saturday following:

- 1 September after their 15th birthday
- 1 September after their 16th birthday if
  - they're certified as severely sight impaired or blind by a consultant ophthalmologist
  - you receive Disability Living Allowance/Child Disability Payment or Personal Independence Payment/Adult Disability Payment for that child

If you claim childcare costs for more than one child, and the oldest child reaches the cut-off age, work out your new childcare costs for any younger children staying in childcare. If your average weekly costs stop or go down by £10 or more you must tell us straightaway and within one month from the date of the change.

---

## Responsibility for a child

You're responsible for a child if they usually live with you. If you share responsibility for a child with someone who is not your partner, decide who has the main responsibility. That person should then claim Child Tax Credit for the child.

To find out if you're treated or not treated as being responsible for a child, go to GOV.UK and search for WTC2.

---


## Working hours

If you're part of a couple and responsible for a child you can claim if:

- you both usually work at least 16 hours a week each
- one of you usually works at least 16 hours a week and the other is
  - incapacitated and getting a benefit for disability or illness
  - an inpatient in hospital
  - in prison (whether serving a custodial sentence or remanded in custody awaiting trial or sentence)
  - entitled to Carer's Allowance or Carer Support Payment

### Since 6 April 2017

You can no longer get the child element of Child Tax Credit for a third or later child born after 6 April 2017, unless one of the exceptions applies.

 For more information, go to [www.gov.uk/hmrc/ctc-exceptions](http://www.gov.uk/hmrc/ctc-exceptions)

The disability element of Child Tax Credit and the childcare element of Working Tax Credit will be paid for all eligible children, even if we do not pay the individual child element for that child.

Always report the birth of a child and any changes involving your children or young people as you may be able to get more money.

## What we mean by incapacitated

You're incapacitated if you get:

- Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment/Adult Disability Payment or Armed Forces Independence Payment
- Attendance Allowance
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit at the short-term higher rate or long-term rate
- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (with Constant Attendance Allowance for you)
- War Disablement Pension (with Constant Attendance Allowance or Mobility Supplement for you)
- Council Tax Benefit or Housing Benefit with a Disability Premium or Higher Pensioner Premium for you
- contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if you've had
  - this allowance for 28 weeks or more
  - Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) followed by contribution-based ESA for a combined period of 28 weeks or more

The 28 weeks does not need to be a single continuous period. You can add together any periods that you were paid:

- contribution-based ESA, as long as they were no more than 12 weeks apart
- SSP, as long as they were no more than 8 weeks apart
- SSP, with periods that you got contribution-based ESA, as long as they were no more than 12 weeks apart and you met the contribution conditions for contribution-based ESA on the days that you got SSP

## If you're temporarily absent from work

You may still get help with childcare costs when you're on:

- sick leave
- maternity leave
- paternity leave
- adoption leave
- shared parental leave
- parental bereavement leave
- strike leave
- suspension from work

But usually you'll still need to have worked a certain number of hours immediately before you went on leave.

## If you're off sick

If all of the following apply, we'll treat you as working if you're:

- in receipt of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) or short term Incapacity Benefit at the lower rate
- off work for up to 28 weeks because of illness, and are getting either
  - Employment and Support Allowance
  - Income Support paid on the grounds of incapacity for work
  - National Insurance credits on the grounds of incapacity for work or limited capability for work

This is providing you and your partner worked the required number of hours that apply to your circumstances immediately before you started getting any of these benefits.

## If you're on maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave

We treat you as working if, immediately before you went on leave, you were working the required number of hours that apply to your circumstances and you're:

- getting Maternity Allowance
- on ordinary maternity or adoption leave
- in the first 13 weeks of additional maternity or adoption leave
- on your 2 weeks ordinary paternity leave
- on shared parental leave

If you do not return to work after 39 weeks you may not qualify anymore. Phone our helpline if this happens.

## **If you're on strike leave or suspended from work**

We'll also treat you as working if you were on the first 10 days of strike leave or suspended from work. These conditions apply as long as you were working the required number of hours for your circumstances, immediately before taking strike leave or being suspended.

---

## **Registered or approved childcare providers**

### **Your responsibility when claiming childcare costs**

You can only claim help with your childcare costs if your childcare provider is registered or approved. You're responsible for making sure that the childcare provider you use is registered or approved. You should:

- check your childcare provider's documents to confirm that they're registered or approved
- keep a record of the date their registration or approval is due to expire and
  - close to the expiry date check to make sure that your provider is renewing their registration or approval
  - ask to see their new evidence of registration or approval

### **What is registered or approved childcare**

England - read pages 5 and 6.

Scotland - read page 7.

Wales - read pages 7 and 8.

Northern Ireland - read page 8.

Crown servants working outside the UK - read page 8.

### **Registered or approved childcare: England**

To get help with childcare costs in England, your childcare provider must be registered or approved.

#### **If you use a childminder, playscheme, childcare club or nursery**

Your childcare provider needs to be registered on one of the following:

- Early Years Register (EYR) with either Ofsted or an Ofsted registered childminder agency if your child is under 5 years of age
- compulsory part of the General Childcare Register (GCR) with either Ofsted or an Ofsted registered childminder agency if your child is aged 5 to 7
- voluntary part of the GCR with either Ofsted or an Ofsted registered childminder agency if your child is aged 8 or over

Before claiming help with your childcare costs, check with your provider that they're on the correct register. Some providers, such as nannies who provide care in the child's own home, do not need to register on the EYR or the compulsory part of the GCR. If you use this type of provider and you want to get help with your childcare costs, your provider must register on the voluntary part of the GCR.

#### **If an approved foster carer looks after your child**

You can claim help with your childcare costs if you use an approved foster carer, but they must be registered with Ofsted on the Early Years Register or General Childcare Register. You cannot claim for childcare costs for looking after your own foster child.

#### **If a care worker or nurse looks after your child**

You can claim help with your childcare costs if you use a domiciliary care worker or nurse to look after your child at home.


However, they must be from an agency that's registered under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014.

## Early education for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds

Some eligible 2-year-olds (including some from families receiving Working Tax Credit) and all 3 and 4-year-olds are entitled to 570 hours a year of free early education with a registered provider. This is normally taken as 15 hours per week during term time, but can be taken as fewer hours per week over more weeks if available.

Working families in England with children aged 3 and 4 years old, may be able to get up to 30 hours free childcare a week (1,140 hours a year).

There's no obligation to take the full number of hours and you may be able to take fewer hours to begin with and increase them later as your child settles in. You do not need to pay for a child's free early education place and do not have to take up additional services to access their free place. However, you can claim for any additional childcare you pay for outside of the free entitlement.

 For more information about free early education, go to [www.gov.uk/freechildcare](http://www.gov.uk/freechildcare)

### If you use childcare provided by a school

If your child is 3 or 4 years old, both the following must apply for this type of care to count as approved for tax credits. The childcare must be provided:

- under the direction of the school's governing body or the person responsible for managing the school
- on school premises or on other premises that may be inspected as part of an inspection of the whole school by Ofsted or an equivalent inspection body appointed to inspect certain independent schools, for example, the Independent Schools Inspectorate, Bridge Schools Inspectorate or the Schools Inspection Service


If your child is between 5 and 15 years old (or 16 years old if your child is disabled), all of the following must apply for this type of care to count as approved for tax credits. The childcare must be provided:

- out of school hours, for example after school clubs or breakfast clubs
- under the direction of the school's governing body or under the direction of the person responsible for managing the school
- on school premises, or on other premises that may be inspected by Ofsted or by an equivalent inspection body appointed to inspect certain independent schools, for example, the Independent Schools Inspectorate, Bridge Schools Inspectorate or the School Inspection Service - an example of other premises could be a village hall used by the school for its out of school hours childcare activities

#### **How to check if your childcare provider is registered or approved in England**

All childcare providers who are registered by Ofsted or an Ofsted registered childminder agency in England are given a letter or certificate as evidence of their registration or approval.

Some childcare providers must regularly (for example, each year) reapply for registration or approval. If this applies to your childcare provider, the letter or certificate issued to them will clearly show when their registration or approval expires. To check if their registration is still valid you can contact Ofsted:

 go to [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

- phone 0300 123 1231

Where a provider is registered with a childminder agency, you'll need to check with the relevant agency to see if the provider's registration is valid. The provider will be able to give you contact details for the childminder agency and these will also be available on the Ofsted website.

## Registered or approved childcare: Scotland

To get help with your childcare costs in Scotland, your childcare provider must be one of the following:

- registered with the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) - also known as the Care Inspectorate
- a childcare club that is registered with SCSWIS to provide childcare out of school hours
- a person from a registered childcare agency, sitter service or nanny agency providing childcare in the child's home

You can also claim help with your childcare costs if you use:

- an approved foster carer
- a kinship carer

A kinship carer is like a foster carer but they already know the child they're looking after because they're either related or a family friend.

If you use a foster carer or kinship carer for your childcare they must be registered with SCSWIS as a childminder or a daycare provider.


You cannot claim for childcare costs for looking after:


- your own foster child
- a child as part of a kinship care arrangement

### How to check if your childcare provider is registered or approved in Scotland

All childcare providers who are registered by SCSWIS are given a letter or certificate as evidence of their registration or approval.

Some childcare providers must regularly (for example, each year) reapply for registration or approval. If this applies to your childcare provider, the letter or certificate issued to them will clearly show when their registration or approval expires.

 For more information on childcare, go to [www.mygov.scot/childcare-costs-help](http://www.mygov.scot/childcare-costs-help)

 For more information on registered childcare, go to [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com) and select 'Find care'.

## Registered or approved childcare: Wales

To get help with your childcare costs in Wales your childcare provider must be one of the following:

- registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
- a school that provides childcare out of school hours and on school premises
- a local authority that provides childcare out of school hours
- a person who is employed or engaged under a contract for services to provide care and support by the provider of domiciliary care support service within the meaning of Part 1 of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016
- someone approved by the Approval of Child Care Providers (Wales) Scheme 2021 providing childcare in the child's home, or if several children are being looked after, in one of the children's homes

### If a foster carer cares for your child

You can claim help with your childcare costs if you use a foster carer for your childcare and your child is under:


- 8 years old - the foster carer must be registered with the CIW
- 16 years old, and the care is in your child's home - the foster carer must be approved by the Childcare at Home Approval Scheme

You cannot claim for childcare costs for looking after your own foster child.

### **i** How to check if your childcare provider is registered or approved in Wales

Childcare providers are given a letter or certificate as evidence of their registration or approval if they're:

- registered by the CIW
- approved under a home childcare providers scheme

 For more information on childcare, go to [www.gov.wales/childcare](http://www.gov.wales/childcare)

## **Registered or approved childcare: Northern Ireland and Crown servants**

### **Northern Ireland**

To get help with your childcare costs in Northern Ireland, your childcare provider must be one of the following:

- registered with a Health and Social Services Trust
- a school that provides out of school hours childcare on the school premises
- an Education and Library Board that provides out of school hours childcare
- a person approved by the Approval of Home Child Care Providers (Northern Ireland) 2006 Scheme, providing childcare in the child's home

### **If a foster carer cares for your child**

You can claim help with your childcare costs in Northern Ireland if you use a foster carer for the childcare. If your child is under:

- 12 years old - the foster carer must be registered with a Health and Social Services Trust
- 16 years old, and the care is in your child's home - the foster carer must be approved under the Home Childcare Approval Scheme

You cannot claim for childcare costs for looking after your own foster child.

### **i** How to check if your childcare provider is registered or approved in Northern Ireland

Childcare providers are given a letter or certificate as evidence of their registration if they're:

- registered by a Health and Social Services Trust
- approved under the Home Child Care Providers Scheme

To check their registration is still valid contact the Early Years Team in your local Health and Social Care Trust.

 Go to [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk) and search for Early Years Teams.

### **Crown servants working abroad**

If you're a civil servant or a member of the Armed Forces posted overseas and your child has gone with you, you can get help with your childcare costs if your childcare provider is approved under a Ministry of Defence (MOD) accreditation scheme abroad.

### **Working outside the UK**

Childcare provided outside the UK but within the European Economic Area (EEA) must either be:

- provided for MOD personnel under arrangements between MOD and OFSTED or similar bodies
- a childcare provider registered with, or approved by, an accredited organisation in that EEA country

Please note that childcare provided outside the UK and outside the EEA must be provided for MOD personnel under arrangements between the MOD and OFSTED or similar bodies outside the UK.

---

## Changing your childcare provider

If your provider stops being registered or approved, and you want to carry on getting help with your childcare costs, you'll need to make alternative arrangements for registered or approved childcare.

Tell us straightaway, and within one month, if you stop using registered or approved childcare. The help with childcare costs will stop the day after the registration or approval ends. If you do not tell us on time, we might pay you too much tax credits which you'll have to pay back. You might also have to pay a penalty of up to £300.

You should tell us if you change your childcare provider, even if you're still paying the same amount to the new provider, giving:

- their name
- their address with postcode
- the name of the registration or approval body and registration number, if one was given to them as part of the registration process
- the date of the change
- the amount you're paying to them for childcare

---

## Childcare costs paid by someone else

You cannot claim for:

- any childcare costs you pay using childcare vouchers - this is an amount you get from your employer towards your childcare costs (either in cash or in vouchers) and includes vouchers in return for a reduction in your pay (known as a 'salary sacrifice')
- childcare costs met by your local authority (or your local education authority) for early learning or nursery education for your child - for example, where your local authority in England meets the cost of 15 hours a week free early years education for children aged 3 and 4
- payments you get from the government towards your childcare costs because you're a student or you're starting work

You can only claim for the actual amounts you pay for any childcare you use. If your costs include an amount paid as a retainer, phone our helpline for more information.

### Childcare vouchers

If your employer offers you childcare vouchers, including vouchers in return for a reduction in your pay through salary sacrifice, it will affect how much tax credits you can get.



If you want to know if you'd be better off taking the childcare vouchers, go to [www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator](http://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator)

## Childcare provided by a relative

You cannot usually claim help with childcare provided by relatives, even if they're registered or approved.

You can claim if the relative is a:

- registered childminder who cares for your child outside of your child's own home
- childcare provider approved under a Home Child Care Providers Scheme in Wales or Northern Ireland, who cares for your child outside of your child's own home - but they must also care for at least one other child that is not related to them

### What we mean by relative

A relative could be:

- your child's parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, sister or step-parent
- a person with a strong relationship to the child, for example, someone in a parental position with their partner's children

---

## What childcare costs you can claim

You can only claim for the actual amounts you pay for childcare provided in person.

---

## How much help you can get

You can get help with up to 70% of your childcare costs - subject to a maximum weekly limit. If you pay childcare for:

- one child, the maximum childcare costs you can claim is £175 a week
- 2 or more children, the maximum childcare costs you can claim is £300 a week

This means that the maximum help you can get for your childcare through tax credits is:

- £122.50 a week for one child
- £210 a week for 2 or more children

Number of children	Weekly limit on costs	Percentage of costs you can get help with	Maximum tax credits for childcare
One child	£175	70%	$£175 \times 70\% = £122.50$
2 or more children	£300	70%	$£300 \times 70\% = £210$

The actual amount you get will also depend on your income.

If you employ someone as a registered or approved home childcare provider, for example a nanny, you can get help for up to 70% of the gross costs of employing them - within the limits above. You can include the costs of any:

- employer's National Insurance contributions you pay
- benefits in kind you give
- other costs linked with employing that person

### If we need more information

We may write to you and ask for information to make sure you're getting the right help with your childcare costs.

We may ask you to:

- tell us how you worked out your average weekly childcare costs
- tell us if your childcare costs have changed
- send us evidence to show how much you pay for childcare costs, such as invoices, bank statements or receipts

It's important to:

- keep these documents safe so you can send them to us if we ask for them
- give us the information we need, or tell us about any difficulties you have providing it

If you do not send us this information we may reduce or stop your tax credits.

---

## When to claim

You can claim help with your childcare costs:

- as soon as you start paying for childcare
- even if you need the childcare for only a short time - read page 13

You need to claim help with childcare costs within one month of when you start to pay them - we cannot pay you for any costs you've paid before then.

## **What information we'll need from you**

When you phone our helpline to claim, we'll need you to give us:

- details about your childcare provider, including
  - name
  - address with postcode
  - name of registering or approving body
  - registration or approval number
- your average weekly childcare costs - read pages 12 to 13

We may check information with your provider, so we need the correct details for them.

If you use more than one childcare provider, or you use a different provider at different times of the year (for example, in school holidays), you need to give us the details of all your providers. Tell us straightaway if:

- you change your provider
- you stop using the childcare - to avoid building up too much tax credits which you'll have to pay back
- your child stops going to childcare for 4 weeks or more when they would normally have gone

Withdrawn 18/05/2026

## How to work out your average weekly childcare costs

### If you've been using childcare for less than a year

Use this table or the online calculator to help you work out your average weekly childcare costs.

 Go to [www.gov.uk/childcare-costs-for-tax-credits](http://www.gov.uk/childcare-costs-for-tax-credits)

<b>You always pay the same weekly amount</b>	Use the total amount you pay each week - these are your average weekly childcare costs.
<b>You pay different weekly amounts</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Work out what you expect to spend in total on childcare over the next 52 weeks - start from the date you're working out your costs.</li><li>2. Divide the total by 52 - these are your average weekly childcare costs.</li></ol>
<b>You always pay the same monthly amount</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Take the total amount you pay each month.</li><li>2. Multiply that amount by 12.</li><li>3. Divide the total by 52 - these are your average weekly childcare costs.</li></ol>
<b>You pay different monthly amounts, or you pay by any other frequency</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Work out the total amount you expect to spend on childcare over the next 12 months.</li><li>2. Divide the total by 52 - these are your average weekly childcare costs.</li></ol>

### If you've arranged childcare that's due to start

Ask your childcare provider for a written estimate of how much they will charge you and use that amount to work out your average weekly costs.

### If you've been using childcare for a year or more and always pay the same amount

Use this table to help you work out your average weekly childcare costs.

<b>You pay weekly</b>	Use the total amount you pay each week - these are your average weekly childcare costs.
<b>You pay monthly</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Take the total amount you pay each month.</li><li>2. Multiply that amount by 12.</li><li>3. Divide the total by 52 - these are your average weekly childcare costs.</li></ol>
<b>You pay fortnightly (every 2 weeks)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Take the total amount you pay each fortnight.</li><li>2. Divide that amount by 2 - these are your average weekly childcare costs.</li></ol>
<b>You pay every 4 weeks</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Take the total amount you pay every 4 weeks.</li><li>2. Divide that amount by 4 - these are your average weekly childcare costs.</li></ol>
<b>You pay yearly</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Take the total amount you pay every year.</li><li>2. Divide that amount by 52 - these are your average weekly childcare costs.</li></ol>
<b>You pay each term</b>	Phone the Tax Credit Helpline on 0345 300 3900 for help in working out your average weekly childcare costs.

### If you've been using childcare for a year or more and pay different amounts

Sometimes you may pay, or expect to pay, different amounts for childcare. For example, you regularly use childcare, but may pay more, or less, during school holidays than you do in term-time.

Work out your average costs as follows:

1. Work out the total amount you've paid for childcare in the last 52 weeks (or 12 months if you pay monthly or any other frequency) - start backwards from the date you're working out your costs.
2. Divide the total by 52 - these are your average weekly childcare costs.

### Example 1 – You pay monthly but different amounts

Irene pays for childcare monthly but the amount she pays changes from month to month. In the last 12 months Irene's costs were:

1 month at £240	$1 \times £240 = £240$
3 months at £200	$3 \times £200 = £600$
2 months at £320	$2 \times £320 = £640$
6 months at £160	$6 \times £160 = £960$
Total for year	£2,440

To work out the average, the total amount is divided by 52 (because there are 52 weeks in a year). So Irene's average weekly costs are  $£2,440 \div 52 = £46.92$ . Round this up to £47.

### Example 2 – You pay weekly but different amounts

Ahmed normally pays £60 a week for registered childcare during term-time. In the school holidays he pays for 10 weeks at £100 a week. His total costs for 52 weeks are:

39 weeks at £60	$39 \times £60 = £2,340$
10 weeks at £100	$10 \times £100 = £1,000$
Total for year	£3,340

To work out the average, the total amount is divided by 52 (because there are 52 weeks in a year). So Ahmed's average weekly costs are  $£3,340 \div 52 = £64.23$ . Round this up to £65.

**Note** that Ahmed has correctly only included costs for the weeks that he has actually paid for.

## If you only use childcare for short periods once in a while

Even if you do not normally use childcare, you might need it once in a while for short fixed periods. For example, during school holidays, or to cover an emergency. You may be able to claim help with your costs just for the short time you need the childcare. This means the help for your childcare is worked out and paid over the short time you use the care.

For this to happen:

- you must only use childcare once in a while, for example, only during the summer holidays or in an emergency
- your childcare must be for a fixed period - this means you know when it will start and end

Otherwise, the help for your childcare will be worked out and paid over 52 weeks.

If you'd prefer to claim help averaged and paid over the year, work out your average weekly costs by following the guidance - read pages 12 and 13.

Phone our helpline to claim help for a short period of childcare. Do this as soon as your childcare starts. You'll need to tell us:

- the start and end dates of the childcare
- your actual childcare costs for the short period
- your childcare provider's details - their name, address with postcode, phone number and childcare registration or approval number

## Changes you must tell us about straightaway

You must tell us the last day your child was cared for by a registered provider if:

- your childcare provider stops being registered or approved
- you stop using a registered or approved childcare provider
- your childcare costs fall to zero
- your child stops going to childcare for 4 weeks or more when they would normally have gone

You must tell us the date the change happened if:

- you start getting other help towards your childcare costs
- your average weekly childcare costs go up or down by £10 or more

**i You must tell us straightaway and within one month if you have any of these changes.**

If you delay telling us and we pay you too much tax credits, you'll have to pay it back. You may also have to pay a penalty of up to £300 if you do not report the change to us within one month.

**If you give wrong information about your childcare costs, you may have to pay a penalty of up to £3,000 or be prosecuted.**

## How to work out if your average weekly childcare costs have changed

How you work out changes in your average weekly childcare costs will depend on how you worked out your average weekly childcare costs in the first place.

### If you always pay the same amount

#### You pay weekly

Work out your new average weekly costs - read page 12 for help on how to do this.

Compare your new average weekly costs with the old average you gave us.

If it's different by £10 or more in each week for 4 weeks in a row and your new average weekly costs are at least £10 lower or higher than your old average weekly costs, you need to tell us about it.

#### You pay monthly or any other frequency

Work out your new average weekly costs - read page 12 for help on how to do this.

Compare your new average weekly costs with the old average you gave us.

If it's different by £10 a week or more, you need to tell us about it.

### If you do not always pay the same amount

To work out your new average weekly costs:

1. Add up what you expect to pay in total over the next 52 weeks (or 12 months if you pay monthly or any other frequency).
2. Divide the total by 52 - this is your new average weekly childcare costs.
3. Compare your new average weekly costs with the old average you gave us. If it's different by £10 a week or more, you need to tell us about it.

### If you pay childcare for more than one child or to more than one provider

It's the change in the total you pay each week that we're interested in:

1. Add together all the average weekly costs you pay for your children - this is your new average weekly childcare costs.
2. Compare your new weekly average costs with the old average you gave us. If it's different by £10 a week or more, you need to tell us about it.

### How changes to childcare costs affect your payments

If your new average weekly childcare costs are at least £10:

- lower than the old average you gave us - the help for your childcare will not go down in the week the change happened or for the following 3 weeks
- higher than the old average you gave us - we'll increase the help for your childcare from the first week of the change

### If your childcare costs go down by £10 per week or more

If you pay the same amount every week, this means in each week, for 4 weeks in a row, your new average weekly costs are at least £10 lower than your old average weekly costs.

If you do not pay weekly, or you pay different amounts, this means your new average weekly childcare costs are at least £10 lower than your old average weekly costs.

### Example - Childcare costs go down by £10 a week or more

Ahmed's childcare costs vary, because he pays more in the school holidays. His average weekly costs are £65. On 2 October, Ahmed starts working shorter hours and needs his childminder to look after his children for fewer hours each week.

He now pays £40 a week in term-time (totalling 39 weeks) and £80 a week for 10 weeks of the school holidays. He does not have any childcare costs for 3 weeks in the summer holidays, as the children stay with their grandparents. In the next 52 weeks Ahmed will spend:

10 school holiday weeks at £80 a week	$10 \times £80 = £800$
39 term-time weeks at £40 a week	$39 \times £40 = £1,560$
3 weeks summer holidays with grandparents	= £0
Total for 52 weeks	£2,360

To work out the new weekly average, the total amount is divided by 52 (because there are 52 weeks in a year). So Ahmed's new average weekly costs are  $£2,360 \div 52 = £45.38$  (round up to £46). This is more than £10 lower than his old average of £65 a week. Ahmed must tell us about this change within one month.

**Note** that Ahmed has only included costs for weeks that he has actually paid for.

### Your average weekly childcare costs go up by £10 or more

If you pay the same amount every week, this means in each week, for 4 weeks in a row, your new average weekly costs are at least £10 higher than your old average weekly costs.

If you do not pay weekly, or you pay different amounts, this means your new average weekly childcare costs are at least £10 higher than your old average weekly costs.

The help for your childcare will increase from the first week of the change.

If you do not tell us about your childcare costs going up on time you may not get as much tax credits as you should. To get any increase backdated to the week in which your costs first increased you must tell us within one month of that first week.

### Examples - Childcare costs go up £10 a week or more

#### Example 1

Pat's average weekly childcare costs are £50. Then his costs drop for 6 weeks to £45 a week. He can ignore this, as the change is less than £10 a week on average.

After those 6 weeks, he starts paying £70 a week and expects this to be his payment from now on. That's an increase of £10 or more a week on average. He should tell us straightaway, as he is entitled to more help with his childcare.

#### Example 2

Shahida usually pays £300 a month for approved childcare. Her average weekly childcare costs are £70 a week, worked out like this:

Multiply the monthly amount by 12	$£300 \times 12 = £3,600$
Divide by 52	$£3,600 \div 52 = £69.23$
Round up to	£70

On 2 July Shahida's children start to go to a new childminder who charges £350 a month. She needs to work out her new average weekly costs like this:

Multiply the monthly amount by 12	$£350 \times 12 = £4,200$
Divide by 52	$£4,200 \div 52 = £80.77$
Round up to	£81

That's an increase of £10 or more a week on average. Shahida should tell us straightaway and within one month, to make sure she does not lose out on tax credits.

## If the change in your childcare costs is less than £10 a week on average

This is not a relevant change and you do not have to tell us.

### Example – Change in your childcare costs if less than £10 a week on average

Jane's average weekly childcare costs were £50 because she always paid that fixed weekly amount. For 2 weeks, she needed her childminder to look after her child for more hours and paid her an extra £20 a week. Things got back to normal, and Jane was again paying her childminder £50 a week.

There was no need for Jane to report this to us as this is not a relevant change.

The increase in the actual childcare charges by £10 or more a week did not last for 4 weeks in a row, it only applied to 2 of the weeks.

## Other changes you should tell us about

### Changing your childcare provider

If you change your childcare provider, tell us even if you're still paying the same amount to the new provider, and give us:

- their name
- the date of the change
- their address with postcode
- the name of the registration or approval body and registration number, if one was given to them as part of the registration process

We check with childcare providers from time to time, to confirm if the details of childcare claims are correct. If you do not give us up-to-date details, we might contact the wrong provider. If this happens, and we cannot check the details of your claim, we may stop paying you tax credits for your childcare.

Give us accurate information about:

- your childcare provider
- when you change your childcare provider
- the childcare costs you pay

### Remember

We'll stop paying you for your childcare costs if you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit, so it's important to keep us up to date with any changes in your circumstances.

You must tell us within one month if:

- you or your partner stop working
- your normal working hours, or your partner's, go below 16 hours a week
- you or your partner are no longer
  - an inpatient in hospital
  - in prison serving a custodial sentence or remanded in custody awaiting trial or sentence
  - getting disability benefit – see page 4
  - entitled to Carer's Allowance or Carer Support Payment

**If you delay telling us and we pay you too much tax credits, you'll have to pay it back. You may also have to pay a penalty of up to £300 if you do not report the change to us within the time limit.**

---

## Claiming Universal Credit or Tax-Free Childcare

Your tax credits and any help you get with your childcare costs, will stop if you or your partner:

- make a claim for Universal Credit (even if your claim is not approved)
- successfully apply for Tax-Free Childcare

---

## Help for you

If you need any help:

- 🌐 go to [www.gov.uk/taxcredits](http://www.gov.uk/taxcredits)
- ☎ phone the Tax Credit Helpline on 0345 300 3900
  - use Relay UK by dialling 18001 and then 0345 300 3900  
(if you cannot hear or speak on the phone)
- 🌐 For our opening hours, go to [www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc](http://www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc)

Withdrawn 18/05/2026

These notes are for guidance only and reflect the position at the time of writing. They do not affect any right of appeal.

HMRC Customer Services Group

April 2023 © Crown copyright 2023

HMRC 04/23