



Summary of the Childcare Offer for Wales

30 hours a week of early education and childcare for eligible working parents of 3 and 4 year olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year. The 30 hours will consist of a combination of the existing Foundation Phase Nursery (FPN) provision open to all 3 and 4 year olds and the additional funded childcare for eligible families.

How many hours of childcare?

The offer is a maximum of 30 hours of combined education and childcare. The number of hours of childcare funded is calculated by using the current FPN provision within your local authority as a basis, so that no combined total exceeds 30 hours.

Parents are not required to access their early education entitlement as a prerequisite to them accessing the childcare element of the offer, however, their entitlement will include these hours whether they access them or not.

Who will deliver the Offer?

All registered childcare settings are able to deliver the offer. The offer cannot be taken in any setting or with any person that is not registered with CIW (or Ofsted in England). Eligible parents will be allowed to take up their childcare in any registered childcare setting that suits their personal and family circumstance, whether inside or outside of county (including England), so long as the setting is a registered provider and has agreed to take part in the offer.

When can families access the Offer?

The offer will begin from the term after a child's third birthday (please see table below) until the September following their fourth birthday when they are offered a full time education place – aligning with the FPN provision.

| Date of Birth | Eligible for the Offer from/to: | Applications open: |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 01/09/2017 – 31/12/2018 | 10/01/2022 | Open |
| 01/01/2019 – 31/03/2019 | 25/04/2022 | Open |
| 01/04/2019 – 31/08/2019 | 05/09/2022 | 20/06/2022 |

Parents can take up the childcare offer at any point during this time period, so long as they are eligible to do so. Parents should be able to access the offer from whichever point they wish during that term, providing their child was eligible from the beginning of that term, or earlier. This includes parents who move into the area or gain employment.

All parents assessed as eligible to receive the funded childcare will receive a confirmation letter. The funded childcare will begin after parents receive this letter. Funding cannot be backdated.

Children will no longer be eligible to take-up the childcare offer from the point at which they are offered a full time education place by their local authority.

Who can access the offer?

To access the childcare element of the offer parents and guardians must:

- Live in Gwynedd, Anglesey or Conwy
- Be employed or self-employed and permanently reside in Wales. **Both parents must be** working in a two parent family, or the sole parent in a lone parent family;
- Earn a weekly minimum equivalent of 16 hours at the national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW)

Parents will need to prove they are earning the equivalent of 16 hours a week at the national minimum wage through their earnings. Please see below table which shows minimum wage rates and weekly/monthly annual income based on working 16 hours;

| AGE | Hourly | Weekly | Monthly | Yearly |
|------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| 23 + | 9.50 | 152.00 | 658.66 | 7904.00 |
| 21 -22 | 9.18 | 146.88 | 636.48 | 7637.76 |
| 18-20 | 6.83 | 109.28 | 473.55 | 5682.56 |
| Under 18 | 4.81 | 76.96 | 333.49 | 4001.92 |
| Apprentice | 4.81 | 76.96 | 333.49 | 4001.92 |

Parents will not to be eligible if they earn more than £100,000 per annum – this is a per parent limit.

Where parents have separated but do not share equal custody of the child, the parent with primary custody will be eligible to take up the offer (if they meet the eligibility criteria). Where parents share equal custody **one** parent will need to be nominated as the lead parent for the offer.

Parents, guardians, step-parents and live-in partners will all need to meet the eligibility criteria in order for a child living within that household to be able to take up the Offer.

Income Eligibility Criteria and Covid-19

Parents applying for the Offer who may have fallen out of eligibility due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, can access the Offer for as long as there are UK Government support schemes for employees and the self-employed (in the form of a furlough or self-employed support scheme or similar) if they can demonstrate that their income before the Covid-19 outbreak would have been sufficient for them to reach the Offer earnings threshold. The Gwynedd Childcare unit will re-check the eligibility of parents who have fallen out of eligibility on a termly basis. And if and when the UK Government Schemes end and the parent still does not meet the income criteria, they will enter an 8 week Temporary Exemption Period (TEP).

Paternal Leave

Parents on parental leave can apply for the childcare offer if they meet the eligibility criteria prior to statutory parental leave. However, eligibility for the childcare offer is only during the period of statutory parental leave.

Temporary Exemption Period

Should a parent fall out of eligibility, a temporary exemption period of 8 weeks will be granted during which they will be able to continue to access the offer.

Exceptions to Eligibility

There are some circumstances in which parents will be able to access the offer when they don't meet the eligibility criteria, these are:

- where one or both parents are temporarily away from the workplace on statutory sick pay or are in receipt of statutory maternity/paternity pay;
- In two parent families where one parent is employed and one parent is disabled or incapacitated based on receipt of specific benefits or has substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits received for caring; Please see list below of eligible benefits for parent 2;
 - Incapacity benefit;
 - Carers allowance;
 - Severe disablement allowance;
 - Long term incapacity benefit;
 - Employment and support allowance; or National insurance credits on the grounds of incapacity for work or limited capability for work.

Impact on benefits

Depending on your individual circumstances claiming the Childcare Offer may affect some benefits you currently receive. For example;

- Childcare element of Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit
- Tax Free childcare / Childcare Vouchers
- Housing Benefit

Is there a limit to the number of settings the offer can be accessed in, in any given day?

The offer will allow children to access a maximum of two registered childcare setting in addition to their FPN setting in any given day.

During the holiday period a child may therefore access a maximum of two registered settings under the offer.

Are there limits to the days, the times of day and the amount of hours the offer can be accessed?

Parent can access the childcare element of the offer at any point they wish, however, it is the responsibility of the parent to find childcare providers who can accommodate their requirements.

Can parents accrue their hours?

No, an accruals/banking system will not be put in place. Parents will be provided with a total of 30 hours a week of combined FPN provision and childcare with parents choosing how much of the 30 hours to take up. Any hours not used in a week will be lost.

What is the rate of pay for providers under the offer?

All providers will receive a rate of £5.00 per hour for children receiving the offer. This rate excludes food. Provider can therefore charge additional fees to parents for food. However, this cannot exceed more than £9.00 per day.

The Welsh Government guidelines in respect of setting additional fees under the offer for a full day care session (approximately 10 hours) are that parents should not be charged more than £9.00 per day (this would include three meals at £2.50 per meal and 2 snacks at a charge of 75p per snack). For a half-day session (approximately 5.5 hours) parents should not be charged more than £5.75 (two meals at £2.50 per meal plus a snack at a charge of 75p per snack). For sessional care where a meal is not provided but children receive a snack, guidelines are that parents should not be charged more than 75p per day for snack provision.

Providers can also charge for activities and transport such as trips off site that incur an additional cost or pick up's/drop offs.

Providers cannot charge hourly top-up rates if they would normally charge more than £5.00 per hour.

How will the offer work outside of term time?

The childcare offer will cover up to 48 weeks per year. Foundation Phase Nursery Provision is available for 39 weeks per year, therefore eligible parents will be able to access 30 hours of childcare for the remaining 9 weeks of the year.

During the up to 9 weeks of holiday provision, eligible children will receive 30 hours of childcare only. The Welsh Government will not be specifying which of the 13 weeks non-term time are designated as the 9 weeks of holiday provision in order to allow flexibility for parents.

It is the parent's responsibility to find a provider that offers the provision that best suits their needs. For the purpose of the scheme parents will need to access their provision in week long blocks. Hours of childcare cannot be accrued across weeks.