

Funded Early Education – FAQs

Two Year Old Funding - for families on certain benefits or additional government support

How do I find the most up to date information on available funding for childcare?

The Department for Education has developed a range of funding streams which enables children to access high quality childcare provisions. The most up to date information can be found via the [Best Start in Life](https://www.beststartinlife.gov.uk) Parent Hub. This includes the expanded childcare programmes for the Working Parents Entitlement. Parents apply via Best Start in Life (formerly Childcare Choices) – <https://www.beststartinlife.gov.uk>

How do I find out if my child is eligible for the funding for two-year-olds?

Low income / other government support families – parents can apply online via the [Citizen Portal](#), or alternatively, you can take your child's birth certificate to your chosen childcare provider, or nearest Start Well Family Hub and they can do the check on your behalf using the Provider Portal. If the provider does not have access to the Provider Portal, they can call Bolton Families Information Service on 01204 332170 who will carry out the check.

Checks can also be carried out by professionals working with your family i.e. Public Health Nurse, Family Worker, Start Well Family Hub Practitioner.

Please note that eligibility checks cannot be done for parents over the phone.

When can I make the application for two-year-old funding, and when can my child start their funded place

If eligible, your child can access the funded place the term after their second birthday.

If your child's turns two between	Checks can be done from	They will be eligible for their free place from
1 st September and 31 st December	1 st September	1 st January following their second birthday (spring term)
1 st January and 31 st March	1 st January	1 st April following their second birthday (summer term)
1 st April and 31 st August	1 st April	1 st September following their second birthday (Autumn term)

How long will it be before I find out the outcome of my application?

You will be notified immediately if your application is successful. If evidence is needed to carry out a manual assessment, then you will be contacted by Bolton Families Information Service.

I have a Two Year Funding (TYF) application reference - can this be used as evidence of eligibility?

No – your TYF reference is confirmation of your application and does not mean that you are eligible. You will receive an email to confirm if you are eligible or not.

What do I need to do once the funding has been confirmed?

If you have already chosen a childcare provider, you will need to show them your email confirmation of eligibility, along with your child's birth certificate.

Details of childcare providers in Bolton can be found using our online childcare directory – www.mylifeinbolton.org.uk/childcare.

How many hours is my child entitled to?

The funding is based on 15 hours per week, for 38 weeks of the year. Some childcare providers will allow you to use the hours for a longer period of weeks, but fewer hours per week i.e. 11.4 hours per week for 50 weeks of the year.

Are there any restrictions in place as to how the hours can be used?

No sessions should be:

- longer than 10 hours
- delivered before 6am or after 8pm

Can I take my hours when I want/need them?

Providers are free to set their own criteria for the admission of funded children, as long as they comply with legislation. Providers should publish the number of 15 and 30 hours places they offer and ensure that they are completely clear and transparent about which hours / sessions can be taken as free provision.

Do I have to use all the 15 hours each week?

No, you do not need to use the full 15 hours.

Will I be charged in the holiday periods?

If you have been accessing 15 hours per week term time, and your child needs childcare throughout the holiday period, you will need to pay for these hours.

Any hours accessed in addition to the funded hours are chargeable.

If you are in receipt of benefits, you may be able to claim the childcare element of Universal Credit for the additional hours that your child is accessing.

Details about additional support with childcare costs can be found at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk, and also www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/universal-credit.

Is lunch time included in the free hours?

Your child's free place can be taken over lunch time if this is part of the agreement with your childcare provider. Your childcare provider may offer a meal at an additional cost, but providers must offer alternative options for parents. This could include, for example, allowing a parent to bring in their own consumables or a packed lunch, where the meal offered is not suitable for children with specific dietary needs or the parent prefers a lower cost option.

Will I have to pay any additional costs?

Government funding is to deliver your 15 hours of childcare support. It does not cover additional hours, activities, or extra costs, such as meals. Your provider should provide invoices and receipts that are clear, transparent, and itemised to see you have received your child's free entitlements and understand any fees for additional hours or services.

You may have to pay for, or provide your own:

- meals
- other consumables, like nappies, suncream
- additional hours
- additional services or activities, like trips

However, charges for consumables or additional hours should not be made a condition of accessing a free place.

You should not be charged:

- a top-up fee (any difference between a provider's normal charge to parents and the funding they receive from the local authority to deliver free places)
- a non-refundable registration fee (unless place not taken up)

If my child is ill, will they be able to access the missed hours at another time?

No, this will not be possible. The hours will be used to keep your child's place open ready for their return to the setting.

I work outside of Bolton – can my child access the free hours in another local authority?

Yes. It is advisable that you apply for the funding in the borough that you would like to access the funding in.

What happens if my child is accessing the free hours, but my circumstances change i.e. start employment, salary increase, set up home with a partner?

The funding will remain with your child until they start the universal hours for three-year-olds.

Do I have to pay a deposit?

Providers can charge a refundable deposit to parents accessing the free entitlements for two-year-olds, the universal and extended entitlement for three- and four-year-olds. If a parent fails to take up their place, the provider is not obliged to refund the deposit.

If you have a question that is not answered above, please contact Families Information Service on 01204 332170, or email families@bolton.gov.uk.

Working Parents Entitlement

If you and your partner (if you have one) are working, you may also be eligible for an additional 15 hours under the [Working Parents Entitlement](#).

If your child is two years old and you receive additional government support, you should always apply for the funding for families receiving additional support as advised above, in the first instance, as this funding stream is not reliant on you remaining in employment. Once your child has started accessing this funding, it will not be removed, even if your circumstances change and there are no reconfirmations needed to keep your funding.