**Help with childcare costs**

**The extended free entitlement for three and four year olds (EFE)**

The extended free entitlement for three and four year olds which comes into force from September 2017 means that eligible children will be entitled to 1,140 hours of free early education per year. (There are a small number of early implementers who will be trialling the entitlement from September 2016).

Eligible children are:

Children aged three and four years in families where:

* both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family)

and

* each parent (or the sole parent in a lone parent family), earns on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW), and less than £100,000 per year.

Working will include employed and self-employed persons.

Parents (mothers/fathers/other carers) **will not necessarily need to actually work 16 hours a week**, but rather their earnings must reflect **at least 16 hours of work** at NMW or NLW. This means that, when the new entitlement goes live, a working parent who is over 25 will need to earn a weekly minimum equivalent of £115.20 whereas a working parent who is 21 will need to earn weekly minimum equivalent of around £107 (at this year’s rates). Parents on zero contract hours who meet the criteria are included in the entitlement criteria.

There are some **exceptions** from two parent rules and children will also be entitled if:

* both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on parental, maternity or paternity leave
* both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on adoption leave
* both parents are employed but one or both parents is temporarily away from the workplace on statutory sick pay
* one parent is employed and one parent has substantial caring responsibilities based on specific benefits received for caring; or
* one parent is employed and one parent is disabled or incapacitated based on receipt of specific benefits.

Children aged three and four years whose families do not meet the eligibility criteria will still be entitled to 570 hours of free childcare per year.

All families will be able to buy additional hours.

**Help to pay for childcare costs**

The Family and Childcare Trust has a web page dedicated to helping parents find and pay for childcare <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/childcare> and runs a support programme for nurseries to increase staff’s knowledge of early education and childcare entitlements <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/help-childcare-costs-0>