



Childcare Payments Bill Amendment briefing: Maximum Age of Eligibility

Amendment

After clause 14 (2) insert—

(3) A child is a qualifying child for the purposes of the Act until the last day of the week in which falls the 1st September following the child's eleventh birthday (or eighteenth birthday in the case of a disabled child).

Purpose

The Government increase the maximum age of eligibility for disabled children in the tax-free childcare scheme (and in future the childcare element of Universal Credit) to 18 in order to align the scheme with the Childcare Act 2006 sufficiency duty. This will support families with disabled children and help foster a market for provision for this group.

The Childcare Act 2006 (section 6) places a duty on local authorities to provide childcare for working parents with disabled children aged up to 18 'as far as practicable'. The Department for Education publishes annual [statutory guidance](#) for local authorities setting out how they should meet the sufficiency duty which references the relevant ages for different groups of children.

In practice, the sufficiency duty is constrained by the limited resources local authorities have. The recent independent Parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children identified a key gap in access to childcare and activities for older children and young people. One reason for this is the limited financial support available to parents with older disabled children and, as a result, a limited market for provision.

Aligning the maximum age of eligibility for the tax-free childcare scheme and the childcare element of Universal Credit with the Childcare Act 2006 would ensure that older disabled children are able to benefit from financial support and help address the paucity of provision for this age group.

For more information, please Ross Matthewman at the Family and Childcare Trust at ross@familyandchildcaretrust.org or on 020 7940 7536.