

GUIDE FOR THE UNDER 5'S WORKFORCE



FREE Childcare for 2 Year Olds



This guide is intended to support professionals who work with children and families who may be eligible for a free childcare place for 2 year olds



Nottingham
City Council



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What is FREE Childcare for 2 Year Olds?

Free childcare for 2 Year Olds aims to support early education and life chances of young children by enabling access to high quality early learning experiences to those who may not normally benefit. This programme is also part of the Governments commitment to make childcare more accessible and affordable for parents and carers particularly those from less advantaged backgrounds.

Through this programme, eligible 2 year olds can access **up to** 15 hours a week of FREE quality early learning experiences at Ofsted registered early years settings including day nurseries, childminders, playgroups and schools. Children can access a FREE place at the start of the school term following their second birthday.

How many children are eligible in Nottingham?

In Nottingham City there are **on average** 2,400 2 year olds entitled to a funded place. Those working directly with families find it helpful for this figure to be broken down into Children’s Centre areas to support workforce planning. It is important to note - each term the number of potentially eligible children varies across the city therefore the figures in the chart below are approximate.

WARD	ESTIMATED NO. OF CHILDREN	WARD	ESTIMATED NO. OF CHILDREN
Aspley	188	Meadows	72
Basford	104	North West	185
Bestwood	133	Radford	160
Bilborough	83	Sherwood	105
Bulwell	198	Sneinton	206
Bulwell Forest	81	St Ann’s North	106
Clifton	172	St Ann’s South	182
Dunkirk	67	Top Valley	72
Hyson Green	229	Wollaton	43

How can you help?

Promoting the offer to parents

If you are working with families who you think may be eligible for a free childcare place, please provide them with all the necessary information and encourage them to apply. Leaflets are available to distribute to families, copies of which have been placed across the city in libraries, Children's Centres, Job Centres, Health Centres, Doctors Surgeries and Schools. If you require more copies, please contact the Families Information Service.



Supporting parents to apply

Some families, for various reasons may require additional support in order to make an application. If you are working with families in this position please provide assistance by either:

- ➔ **With consent – complete the application with the parent if you have access to the internet**
- ➔ **Encourage the parent to ring the Families Information Service Tel: 0800 458 4114 who will be happy to complete an application over the telephone with them**

Keep in touch with families

There are a number of families each term who check their eligibility but ultimately do not take up their free place. There could be legitimate reasons for this or it could be that the family may need a little extra support or encouragement to make the next step. If you have supported a family to check their eligibility, giving them a quick follow up call may be all that is needed to identify and unblock any barriers from them accessing a free childcare place.

Eligibility Criteria

Child's qualifying criteria:

Child turns two between:	Child will qualify for a free place from: (following their second birthday)
January to March	1 April
April to August	1 September
September to December	1 January

Families qualify if they are in receipt of one or more of the following criteria:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit and have a household annual income not over £16,190
- Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Child is looked after by the Local Authority (e.g. foster care)
- Working Tax Credits and earn no more than £16,190 a year
- The child has a current statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education, health and care plan
- The child attracts Disability Living Allowance
- The child has left care through special guardianship or an adoption or residence order

How can I help parents check their eligibility?

Parents can access an eligibility checking service on-line via the Families Information Service (FIS) page of the Nottingham City Council website. From November 2015 this service will be automated allowing parents to receive an immediate response to their eligibility check. As the system is accessible online, parents can complete a check at a venue of their choice with internet connection (for example, at home, libraries, Children's Centres, childcare provision).

1

Visit the Families Information Service page of the Nottingham City Council website:
www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/fis

2

Click on the 'FREE Childcare for 2 year olds' button on the right hand side of the page.

3

Complete the online application form and submit. Parents will receive an immediate YES or NO response to their eligibility check.

4

If eligible, parents can then download their confirmation letter. If the response is 'not eligible' the Families Information Service will make contact with the parent to offer further support.

Children Looked After, children who have left care through special guardianship or an adoption or residence order

Applicants to contact the Families Information Service directly on their Freephone number **0800 458 4114**. Proof of eligibility will be obtained via the Social Worker and proof of eligibility will be sent to the applicant by post.

How do eligible families access their free childcare place?

Parents can search for childcare providers via the Families Information Service webpage.



Parents make contact with the childcare provider to check if they have available funded sessions.



Parents will arrange a visit with their child to view the provision, complete the required paperwork.

PLEASE NOTE: parents must take a copy of their confirmation of eligibility letter from the Families Information Service on their first visit.



The childcare provider will aim to accommodate the parents' choice of sessions (up to 15 hours per week) where possible and arrange a settling-in period for the child.



If a childcare provider is unable to offer a place to an eligible child due to capacity, the parent should be referred back to the Families Information Service or to alternative funded childcare provision in their area.



Frequently asked questions

Can parents use less than 15 free hours per week?

Yes, parents can use less than 15 hours a week. Parents will need to agree this with the provider who will claim for these hours from the Local Authority.

How are the 15 hours of free early education spread across a week?

Providers usually offer places over 38 weeks of the year and choose one of three ways to offer the free hours:

- ➔ 3 hours a day over 5 days, or
- ➔ 5 hours a day over 3 days, or
- ➔ Flexibly - anytime between 7.00am and 7.00pm providing a total of 15 hours a week.

Providers should tell parents which of the above options they use to deliver the free hours. If this is not suitable for the parent they can try another provider. Please be aware that parents will have to pay for any extra hours or services their child receives.

PLEASE NOTE: No session can be longer than 10 hours and no session can be shorter than 2.5 hours and a session cannot begin before 7.00am or end after 7.00pm

A parent I am supporting has completed an application and were 'not found'. They now need to supply evidence that they are in receipt of the correct benefits, what does this mean?

The details parents supply on their application form are put through a Government database called the Eligibility Checking Service to see if they are on the correct benefits and therefore eligible for funding. They may not be found on this database. This doesn't necessarily mean they are not entitled and therefore we require to see additional evidence in order to make an informed decision on their eligibility.

What if the parent cannot find a copy of any evidence to prove they are in receipt of the correct benefits?

The parent can contact HMRC and request a copy of their eligibility evidence.

Can conditions be placed on children accessing the entitlement, for example the purchasing of additional hours?

No. A funded place is free with no conditions.



Can parents continue to claim tax credits once they take up a funded place?

Families cannot claim the childcare element of the child tax credits for the childcare hours they are receiving through the 2 year old funding. Parents should contact HMRC for advice.

If a family's circumstances change does the child keep his/her free place?

Once a child has taken up a place they will be able to continue to access the place even if their family's circumstances change.

Can parents choose to purchase additional hours?

Yes. This will be an agreement between the parent and the childcare provider. Any paid for hours should be clearly identified on the parents bill/invoice.

Can a child access a childcare provider in another Local Authority?

Yes, as long as they are on the associated Local Authorities Directory of Funded Providers. The parent will need to produce evidence of their eligibility and the childcare provider will claim funding for the child's place through their Local Authority.

Will children lose their entitlement if they move between Local Authorities?

No. Once a child has taken up a place, whether or not their family circumstances change, they continue to be entitled.

Do children have to take the full 15 hours per week?

No. Parents can access hours that best suit the child and parents needs (at a minimum of 2.5 hours per week).

Parent wants to move nurseries within the city; do they have to reapply to the Families Information Service?

No. Parents will be asked for a copy of their eligibility letter by the new nursery. If the parent has misplaced their letter a replacement can be requested by ringing the

**Families Information Service
on Tel: 0800 458 4114**

What happens to the early years funding if a child moves provision?

Nursery Education Funding moves with the child; therefore if a child moves to an alternative provision, it is the responsibility of the childcare provider to make contact with the Local Authority Early Years team to arrange a funding transfer.

Useful

contacts

Families Information Service

Tel: 0800 458 4114

Email: fis@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Website: www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/fis

Children's Centres

Children's Centres bring together a range of free services for children from birth to five, and their families. Services vary at each centre according to local community needs but all centres provide links to childcare, family support and a range of parent and toddler activities. Anyone who cares for, or is expecting a child can register to use the centres.

Aspley	0115 876 3777
Basford	0115 876 1890
Bilborough	0115 915 7777
Broxtowe	0115 876 3888
Bulwell	0115 876 2220
Bulwell Forest	0115 876 5470
Clifton	0115 876 2625
Dunkirk	0115 876 1601
Hyson Green	0115 883 8202
The Meadows	0115 876 1320
Radford	0115 876 1099
Sherwood	0115 876 4888
Southglade	0115 876 1890
Sneinton	0115 876 1700
St Anns South	0115 876 4280
Top Valley	0115 876 1890
Wollaton	0115 876 2185

**For more
information**

Families Information Service

Tel: 0800 458 4114

Email: fis@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Website: www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/fis