

Early Years Funded Entitlement

A guide for parents and carers
by the Family Information Service



What is Early Years Funded Entitlement?

Early Years Funded Entitlement (EYFE) is Government funding allowing all eligible children to access funded early years education and childcare. It is available regardless of their individual needs. EYFE is up to 570 hours per year of flexible free childcare. This is available to:

- some 2 year olds (2 year old LA Issued EYFE – find out more and apply at [westsussex.gov.uk/FundedChildcare](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/FundedChildcare));
- all 3 and 4 year olds (Universal EYFE); and
- children from as early as 9 months old who meet the eligibility criteria for EYFE for Working Families.

Some 3 and 4 year olds are eligible for an extra 570 hours per year, which we call Extended EYFE for Working Families. This can provide up to 1,140 hours per year in total. There are several types of EYFE funding (see the table opposite). From September 2025, all children eligible for EYFE for Working Families can access up to 1,140 hours per year.

EYFE places are available at eligible childminders, pre-schools and day nurseries (along with some out of school clubs and holiday playschemes that meet extra criteria).



EYFE type	Eligibility criteria?*	How do I apply?	EYFE hours per week**	EYFE hours per year**
9 month old EYFE for Working Families (from September 2024)	Yes, families must meet eligibility criteria	Apply online at childcarechoices.gov.uk around two months*** before the term you wish your child to start. You will need to re-confirm your eligibility every 12 weeks.	Up to 15 (increasing to 30 from September 2025)	Maximum of 570 (increasing to 1,140 from September 2025)
2 year old EYFE for Working Families (from April 2024)	Yes, families must meet eligibility criteria	Apply online at childcarechoices.gov.uk around two months*** before the term you wish your child to start. You will need to re-confirm your eligibility every 12 weeks.	Up to 15 (increasing to 30 from September 2025)	Maximum of 570 (increasing to 1,140 from September 2025)
2 year old Local Authority (LA) Issued EYFE	Yes, families must meet eligibility criteria	Apply online at westsussex.gov.uk / FundedChildcare Once 2 year old EYFE funding has been awarded, it will not be removed, even if your circumstances change.	Up to 15	Maximum of 570
3 and 4 year old Universal EYFE	Available to all 3 and 4 year olds	Once you have chosen a provider, they apply on your behalf.	Up to 15	Maximum of 570
3 and 4 year old Extended EYFE for Working Families	Yes, families must meet eligibility criteria	Apply online at childcarechoices.gov.uk around two months*** before the term you wish your child to start. You will need to re-confirm your eligibility every 12 weeks.	Up to an additional 15 hours (totalling up to 30 when combined with Universal EYFE)	Maximum of 570 (totalling 1,140 when combined with Universal EYFE)

* for eligibility criteria visit [westsussex.gov.uk/FundedChildcare](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/FundedChildcare)

** when accessing EYFE over the standard 38 weeks per year

*** applying too early may lead to your code expiring before your child can access.

What are the benefits?

Children naturally learn by playing, exploring their world, being creative and finding things out. As a parent, you have the biggest impact on your child's education. The activities you do at home with your child are key to helping them learn and develop.

Research* has shown that children who also attend a high-quality childcare provider improve their all-round development and are predicted better grades as they progress through school. Parents often say their children benefit by:

- having fun, improving social skills and making new friends;
- experiencing new activities and learning new things;
- building their confidence and independence;
- encouraging their imagination and creativity;
- developing skills that help them with writing later on;
- learning to share, take turns and listen; and
- being ready for school.

EYFE hours also enable parents to:

- start, go back to, or increase their hours at work;
- undertake training and gain qualifications;
- volunteer;
- spend time with younger siblings;
- continue with caring responsibilities; and
- know that they are giving their child a good start to their education.

A high-quality provider offers a wide range of opportunities for your child to learn as they play.

*Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education [EPPSE] and OECD (2017), Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care.

Most families will be better off claiming EYFE than paying for childcare using Universal Credit. If you are eligible for Universal Credit, you should contact HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on **0345 300 3900** or online at **gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/universal-credit** to check if your claim is affected. You can also check what help you may get with childcare costs at **gov.uk/childcare-calculator**.

How do I find a place?

Once you know your child is eligible and funding has been awarded for either 2 year old LA issued EYFE or EYFE for Working Families, visit **westsussex.gov.uk/fis** to search for local providers that offer EYFE places. If you need any help, please contact us using the contact details on the back page of this booklet. Providers must be eligible and registered with the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) scheme (refer to West Sussex County Council's Provider Declaration at **westsussex.gov.uk/ProvidingEYFE**).

Please visit **westsussex.gov.uk/childcare** for suggestions to help you find the best type of childcare for your child.

Make sure you understand and agree to any terms and conditions before you accept a place. Not all providers will be able to deliver your preferred days/hours. The flexibility you need may be achieved by using more than one provider. Please note that your child cannot access EYFE on more than two sites in one day.

In order for your chosen provider to claim the funding for your child's place, you will be asked to provide the following as part of your EYFE application.

- Parent Declaration form, completed and signed
- Proof of date of birth for your child
- Eligibility codes (if applicable) and National Insurance number

The provider may also ask for permission to use this information to assess if your child is eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). You can find out more about EYPP at [westsussex.gov.uk/eypp](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/eypp).

You must let the provider know if you intend to split the EYFE across more than one provider.

Is it free?

EYFE is funding to allow children to access education and care at a provider which is delivered free of charge. Providers must make sure that there are no conditions of accessing EYFE, including:

- no registration/administration/sustainability fees, payment up front or non-refundable deposits for children accessing EYFE hours only;
- no requirement for a child to access additional hours on top of the EYFE hours;
- no requirement for the child to access additional weeks on top of the funded weeks; and
- no requirement to pay fees for any additional services. These include food, trips and consumables.

If your child accesses hours or weeks outside of EYFE, providers may charge for these. You may also need to pay registration/administration fees or non-refundable deposits. Please see the provider's fees policy for further information.

It must not be compulsory for parents/carers to pay for food and consumables such as nappies or sun cream and for services such as trips and yoga in order to access EYFE hours. These charges must be optional. Providers who choose to offer the funded entitlements are responsible for setting their own policy on providing parents with options for alternatives to additional charges, including allowing parents to supply their own meals or nappies, or waiving or reducing the cost of meals and snacks.

The EYFE does not have a monetary value and is not a voucher or parental subsidy. Providers must not deduct the amount of funding they receive from your invoice.

Childcare providers can set their own rates for additional hours or services. However, they must let you know in advance if you will be expected to pay for anything extra. Details should be included within the provider's admissions/pricing policy. For example, if you are accessing more than just the funded hours, you may be charged a registration fee. Any voluntary contributions asked for do not have to be paid.



What else do I need to know?

- Your child can access up to 570 hours per year.
- This increases to 1,140 hours per year for 3 and 4 year olds eligible for Extended EYFE for Working Families.
- From September 2025, any child eligible for EYFE for Working Families will also be able to access up to 1,140 hours per year.
- These hours can be stretched across the whole year at some providers. This will depend on your chosen provider's availability and pattern of delivery. Not all providers will be able to stretch the EYFE over more than 38 weeks if they are open in line with school terms.
- Note that a limited number of providers may be open for less than 38 weeks. This may mean you would be unable to access the full 570 hours (or 1,140 hours if applicable).

Weeks per year	Hours per week (9 month old/ 2 year old/ Universal EYFE)	Total hours across the year (9 month old/ 2 year old/ Universal EYFE)	Hours per week (3 and 4 year old Universal + Extended EYFE)**	Total hours across the year (Universal + Extended EYFE)**
38	15	570	30	1,140
45	12.5	562.5*	25	1,125*
51	11	561*	22	1,122*

* Potential loss in free hours as EYFE is claimed in half-hourly increments.

** From September 2025, children accessing EYFE for Working Families for 9 month olds and 2 year olds will be able to access up to 30 hours per week and 1,140 hours per year based on 38 weeks attendance.

- It is important to discuss the pattern of delivery with your chosen provider(s).
- You should be aware how your chosen provider claims EYFE if they are open for more than 38 weeks of the year. They should make you aware of any potential loss of EYFE hours.
- A provider may close for Bank Holidays or Inset Days. If they do, any EYFE hours should be offered at another time if possible.
- The amount of EYFE hours that can be taken in a day will depend on the admissions policy of your chosen provider. However, the provider is required to work within the following national guidelines.
 - No minimum session length or quantity.
 - No more than 10 hours in one day.
 - Not before 6am and after 8pm.
 - A maximum of two sites in a single day.
 - Where possible, providers should make sure children are able to take up their EYFE in continuous blocks of time and avoid artificial breaks in the day.
- As a parent, you know your child best. You should discuss your child's needs with the provider to help you decide how often your child should attend. A regular pattern of attendance is important to ensure your child's continued development. It will allow practitioners who work with your child to judge when they are ready to progress their learning.
- It can be hard to balance your own needs, especially for working parents, with those of your child. However, you should aim to use your chosen provider for as long as possible. If you can, avoid moving your child every few months or term.
- Legally all children must start full-time education (usually in school) no later than the term after they turn 5 years old. Whenever your child starts in a school Reception Class, whether on a full or part-time basis, they can no longer receive EYFE. For further information about applying for a school place please visit **[westsussex.gov.uk/admissions](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/admissions)**.

I have an EYFE for Working Families code. How does it work?

Once you get your EYFE for Working Families eligibility code, you need to give it to your childcare provider. They have access to a checker that allows them to see if your code is valid and when your child can start using it. The code shows:

- **when your code starts** – this is usually when HMRC approves your application. It needs to start before the end of March, August, or December for your child to use it in the following term.
- **when your code ends** – which is when you need to renew it. You usually need to renew it every three months.
- **the grace period end date** – which is the last day you can use your code even if you are no longer eligible. This allows your child to continue accessing childcare until the end of a term. You can only use your code during this period if you are already accessing a funded place. You cannot access funding at a new provider.

To find out when you can start using your code, ask your chosen provider to check it for you. They can tell you the relevant dates and how long you can use it for.

What happens if the provider I use receives an Ofsted outcome of Inadequate or Requires Improvement?

If a childcare provider receives an 'Inadequate' or 'Not Met' rating from Ofsted, they cannot apply for funding for new children claiming EYFE. However, they can still get funding for children they are already claiming for. If they get a 'Requires Improvement' rating, they cannot apply for funding for new children awarded 2 year old LA Issued EYFE. These restrictions are due to statutory guidance from the

government. Parents can still pay for childcare, and the restrictions will be removed if the provider's Ofsted rating improves to 'Requires Improvement' or above for Universal EYFE and EYFE for Working Families. Restrictions on 2 year old LA Issued EYFE will be lifted once the provider is rated as 'Met', 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. These restrictions are removed only once the improved outcomes are published by Ofsted.

What questions should I ask about EYFE when visiting settings?

What and when is Headcount Day?

It is important to know when Headcount Day is, as your child may need to be in attendance by this date to access the funded hours that term. Headcount days are usually in January, April and September and are when the provider confirms to us how many EYFE children are attending. Children awarded 2 year old LA Issued EYFE are able to start at any point during a term. All other children claiming EYFE during that term should be in attendance at the provider by the Headcount Day. If your child starts after this date, EYFE cannot be claimed until the following term (unless in exceptional circumstances).

Providers can work in partnership to share funding over a term, including school holidays, and should have a formal agreement in place. For example, if you want to access stretched funding during term-time and also access a separate holiday provision, the provider where your child is in attendance during Headcount Day will claim the funding and be responsible for forwarding funds directly to the holiday provider through an agreement between themselves. This must not exceed the overall number of hours you are claiming (for example, 15 hours for Universal EYFE or 30 hours including Extended EYFE) over the standard 38 weeks.

How long is the notice period if I want to move my child?

These should be explained in the provider's Admissions Policy. It is important you adhere to their notice periods to avoid any additional or unexpected charges. Following the notice period, the provider will forward any unused funding to your new provider within West Sussex. Note that the maximum notice period for West Sussex providers for EYFE funding is four weeks, but additional hours that you pay for may have a longer notice period which you may need to observe or pay for.

Can I see your setting's policies?

(Including admissions, behaviour management/social development, equal opportunities, safeguarding, sickness, insurance cover, registration certificate, etc.)

The admissions policy is particularly important as it should show clearly how they offer the EYFE and any potential obligations, financial or otherwise, over and above the EYFE. It is important that you understand all the policies of a provider before agreeing to the terms and conditions and signing a contract. If you have any queries regarding the policies, discuss this with the provider before signing a contract. You can contact us for further help and support.

Can I see a sample invoice so that I can understand your charges?

Providers should be able to show you a sample invoice and explain how charges are calculated and displayed. However, the invoice should never show your free hours as having a monetary value. If, having discussed your query with the provider, you are still unclear, please contact us for further assistance.

Can I increase EYFE hours part way through a term once my child has settled?

Talk to the provider about the best approach to settling in your child. If you choose not to take the full entitlement each week, then you will only be able to increase this at the beginning of the following term. Providers should offer a settling in period at the beginning of your child's attendance.

Do the EYFE hours include lunch time?

If the EYFE hours do include lunch time, then the provider can charge you for the actual meal, not the time. However, if you are only accessing funded hours, you must be given an alternative option to paying for lunch. You can discuss with your provider any specific food policies that they have in place.

What days and times do you offer EYFE?

It is important you know exactly when funded hours are available so you can decide if this meets your needs. Please note accessing optional additional services outside of these free hours may incur additional costs.

Is there support for children with special educational needs and disabilities to access EYFE?

All providers have a legal duty to meet the needs of children, including those with SEND. You should talk to your provider about how they will work with you and how they plan to meet your child's individual needs. Your provider may enquire if your child is eligible for Disability Living Allowance (DLA). If your child receives DLA, your provider can claim for the Disability Access Fund (DAF), which is additional funding to aid them in making their provision accessible. Your provider must discuss with you how they plan to use DAF if approved. Note that each child eligible for DAF can only be claimed for by one provider once per year. Find out more at [westsussex.gov.uk/daf](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/daf).

In addition, providers in West Sussex can request support and guidance from WSCC to aid them in meeting the needs of all their children. Extra funding may be available to providers to aid a child's inclusion and ability to access EYFE. Providers should discuss the needs of all children with parents both before and after the child starts and continue to review this and seek support from WSCC where applicable.

Are you registered for Tax-Free Childcare?

If you are accessing more than just the EYFE hours and not accessing Universal Credit (or childcare vouchers or tax credit if you still receive these), you may be eligible for Tax-Free Childcare. You can set up an online childcare account to pay your provider directly. For every £8 you pay in, the Government will add £2 up to a maximum of £2,000 per child, per year (£4,000 per year for a child with a disability). To use Tax-Free Childcare, your provider will need to be signed up to receive payments this way.

To qualify, parents must be in work and each earning at least £120 (on average) a week and not more than £100,000 per year, including self-employed and people on zero hours contracts.

For more information on how to apply and the full eligibility go to westsussex.gov.uk/ChildcareCosts.

Where can I go for extra help and support?

For further information and frequently asked questions please visit westsussex.gov.uk/FundedChildcare. Please see the back page of this booklet for the range of ways you can contact us.

Contact us

Website: westsussex.gov.uk/FundedChildcare

Email: family.info.service@westsussex.gov.uk

Phone: **01243 777807**

Write to: **Early Years Funding Team
Children, Young People and Learning
County Hall
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1RQ**

Facebook: [@FISWestSussex](https://www.facebook.com/FISWestSussex)

Opening hours are Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm

If you have any difficulties or feedback regarding this leaflet please call the Family Information Service on 01243 777807.

We are able to supply you with a copy of this leaflet in a version most appropriate to your needs, for example audio, braille, large print or in another language.

