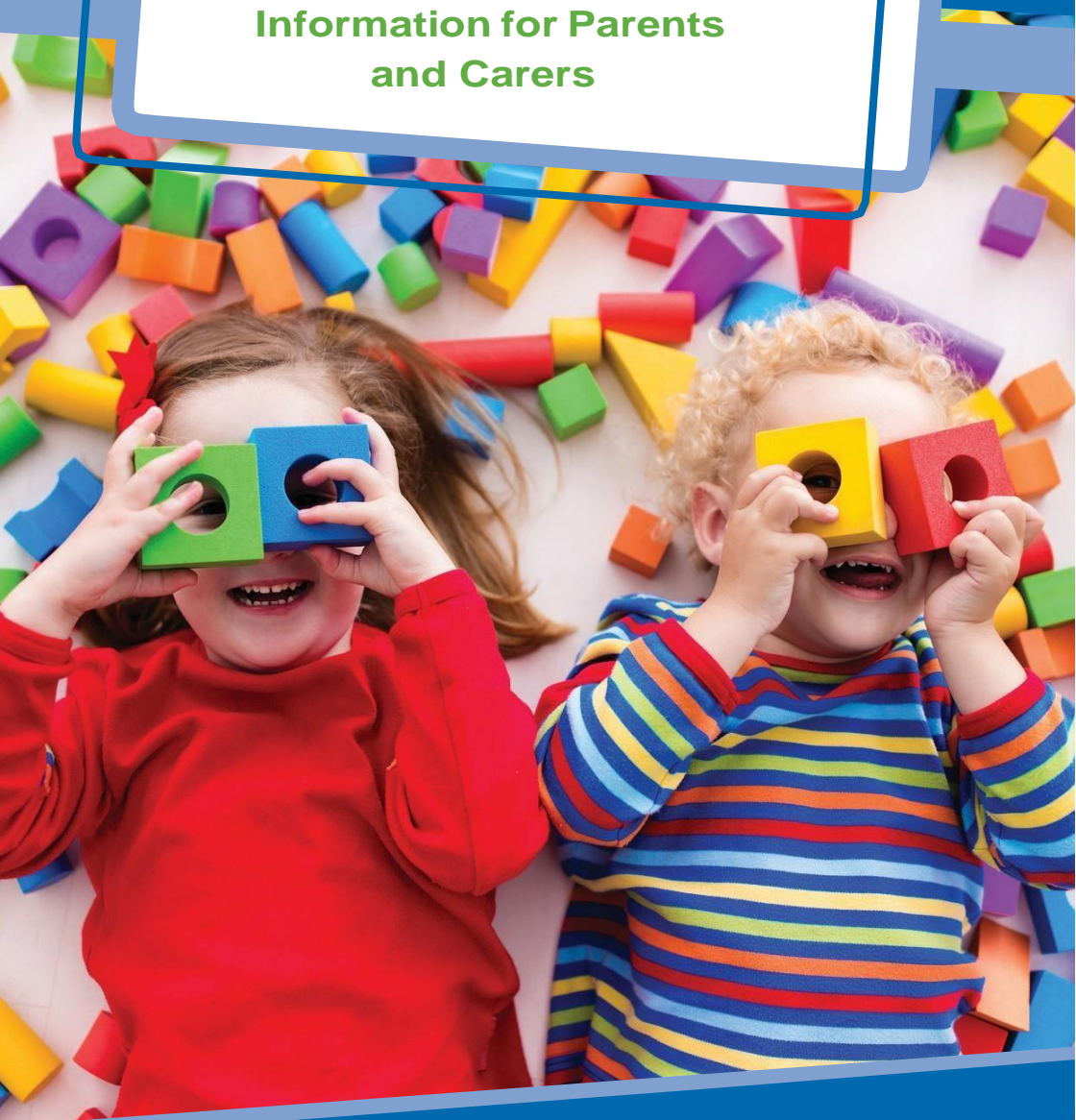


# Early Education Entitlement Funding Handbook

## Information for Parents and Carers



Coventry City Council

[coventry.gov.uk/nurseriesandchildcare](https://coventry.gov.uk/nurseriesandchildcare)

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## Introduction

Research shows that when children access high quality early years provision, this significantly improves their learning and prepares them for school.

Early education funding is provided by the Government and enables children to access a funded place when they meet certain criteria.

In Coventry we have high aspirations for every young child to make good progress in their development and learning, from birth, so that they have the best opportunities in life.

## Targeted Funding for 2-year-olds

Some 2-year-olds will be eligible to receive 15 hours of funded early education and childcare per week, up to a maximum of 570 hours per academic year. Children must meet the date of birth criteria and parents must meet the eligibility criteria at either route 1 or 2

### Eligibility Route 1

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)
- Income-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit – and your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, not including benefit payments
- Guarantee element of Pension Credit



## Eligibility route 2: for Targeted 2-year-old Funding

Parent / Carers with legal responsibility who do not meet route 1 criteria, may be eligible if they meet one or more of the conditions described in route 2

### Eligibility Route 2

#### The child you are applying for:

- Is looked after by a local authority (for example you are a Foster Carer)

**Evidence** – you will need a letter from a relevant professional which includes the child's name and date of birth

- Has a current Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP)

**Evidence** – a letter from a relevant professional with the child's name and date of birth regarding the EHCP awarded

- Attracts Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

**Evidence** – you will need to show a copy of your child's DLA award letter

- Has left care under an Adoption Order, Special Guardianship or a Child arrangements order

**Evidence** – you will need a letter from a relevant professional with the child's name and date of birth or Special guardianship, Adoption or Residence order from the court

#### If you are a non-EEA Citizen who cannot claim benefits:

If your immigration status says you have 'no recourse to public funds', you may still be entitled to receive free childcare for your 2-year-old.

**You must live in England and your household income must be no more than:** £26,500 for families with one child or £30,600 for families with two or more children. You cannot have more than £16,000 in savings or investments. Proof of evidence will be required.

## Eligibility Route 2 – Coventry's Local criteria

Coventry has developed a local criterion to help ensure that every child who needs a Targeted 2-year-old place is able to access one. To be eligible for a place, the child you are applying for must meet one of the criteria set out below:

### Child Protection

Your child is supported through a child protection plan or child in need plan. *A letter from the lead Social Worker would be required as evidence.*

### Coventry SEND

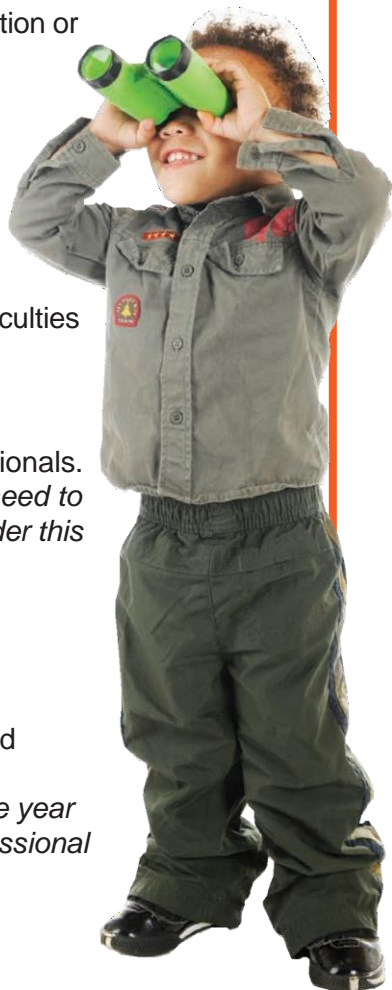
Your child has a diagnosed syndrome, condition or disability that significantly affects the ability to access learning or has 12 months developmental delay in 2 or more out of the 4 areas of need. These are:

- Communication and Interaction
- Cognition and Learning
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties
- Sensory and/or physical needs

Your child is accessing additional services provided by health or local authority professionals. *A letter from the relevant professional will need to be submitted as part of your application under this route.*

### Early Help Support

Your child is accessing additional services provided by health or local authority professionals and you have a total household income of £20,000 or less a year, after tax. *Proof of your total household income for the year after tax, and a letter from the relevant professional will need to be submitted when applying.*



**If a child's 2nd birthday is between**

**You can access a place from**

**1 January and 31 March**

**1 April**

**1 April and 31 August**

**1 September**

**1 September and 31 December**

**1 January**



If you have legal responsibility for a 2-year-old or a child that is nearly 2, you can apply for a Targeted 2-year-old funding code at:

[www.coventry.gov.uk/2yearoldfunding](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/2yearoldfunding)

Or you can visit your local Family Hub or ask a childcare provider to assist with an online check.

Once eligibility is confirmed you need to take the code to your chosen childcare provider and agree how the funding will be used.

Once a child has started a Targeted 2-year-old funded place, they will not lose this eligibility, even if your financial circumstances change. The child will continue to be able to access this funding until they seamlessly transition to universal funding, which is an entitlement for all 3- & 4- year-olds.





## Funding for Eligible Working Parents: for children aged 9 to 25 months (EXPANDED HOURS FUNDING)

From September 2025 working parents, may be eligible to receive up to 30 hours per week of funded childcare, up to a maximum of 1140 hours per academic year, for children aged 9 to 25 months

Eligible parents can access expanded hours funding from the term after the child turns 9-months.

Parents must apply for expanded hours funding through the government website and must complete an online application form to determine eligibility. [Get free childcare if you're working: Apply for free childcare - GOV.UK](#)

If you are eligible, you will receive a unique code which must be shared with your childcare provider.

Eligibility must then be re-confirmed every 3 months, as prompted by HMRC or the childcare provider.

Assuming other eligibility is met you will be able to take up a place for your child in line with the dates below, assuming your chosen childcare provider has availability

A children born between;	Can take up a funded place from the start of the <b>academic</b> term following the child turning
<b>1 January and 31 March</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 months</li> <li>• 2 years</li> <li>• 3 years</li> </ul>
<b>1 April and 31 August</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 months</li> <li>• 2 years</li> <li>• 3 years</li> </ul>
<b>1 September and 31 December</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 months</li> <li>• 2 years</li> <li>• 3 years</li> </ul>

We recommend you contact your chosen childcare provider as early as possible to secure a place

## **Funding for all 3- & 4 Year Olds: UNIVERSAL ENTITLEMENT FUNDING**

All 3- & 4-year-olds in England are entitled to access Universal funding, the term after the child's 3rd birthday.

This funding entitlement continues until the child starts Reception Class in a maintained, free school or academy.

Where the child remains in a PVI nursery or attends an independent school, they may continue to access this funding until they reach compulsory school age, which is the term after their 5th birthday

**You do not need to apply for a unique code from HMRC or the local authority in order for your child to access universal hours because this is a universal entitlement for all 3- & 4-year-olds.**

**To access a place, please seek advice from your chosen childcare provider**





## Universal Funding Entitlement

Every child in England is entitled to a maximum of 570 hours of funding per year, to be taken over no fewer than 38 weeks in any year. Children become eligible for universal funding from the start of the term after their 3rd birthday.



<b>If your child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday is between</b>	<b>They can start a funded place from</b>
<b>1 January and 31 March</b>	<b>1 April</b>
<b>1 April and 31 August</b>	<b>1 September</b>
<b>1 September and 31 December</b>	<b>1 January</b>

## Funding for Eligible Working Parents: For children aged 3 & 4 Years (EXTENDED 30 HOURS FUNDING)

- In addition to the 15 hours per week that all 3- & 4-year-olds are entitled to, some parents will also be eligible to receive an additional 15 hours per week, bringing the total to a maximum of **30 hours** per week over 38 weeks. This combined with universal funding provides a maximum of 1140 hours per academic year for eligible children.
- Parents will need to meet certain criteria for these additional hours and must complete an online application form to determine eligibility. The application can only be completed by the parent. <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-childcare-if-youre-working>
- Parents must re-confirm their eligibility every 3 months as prompted by HMRC or their childcare provider
- Once a child has started a Reception Class place in a maintained, free school or academy, they are no longer entitled to receive Early Education Funding. In some circumstances where the child remains in a PVI nursery or attends an independent school they may continue to access this funding until they reach compulsory school age, which is the term after their 5th birthday.



## Eligibility criteria for Working Parents

for children aged 9 to 35 months

### EXPANDED AND EXTENDED HOURS FUNDING

To be eligible to receive, expanded or extended hours funding, you (or your partner) must have a National Insurance number and at least one of the following:

- British or Irish citizenship - settled or pre-settled status or you have applied, and you are waiting for a decision, or you have permission to access public funds - your UK residence card will highlight this.

#### Your Income

Over the next 3 months you and your partner (if you have one) must each expect to earn at least:

- £2,539 before tax if you're aged 21 or over  
(This is equivalent to £195 per week)
- £2,080 before tax if you're aged 18 to 20  
(This is equivalent to £160 per week)
- £1,570 before tax if you're under 18 or an apprentice  
(equivalent to £120 per week)

These figures represent the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage for 16 hours a week, on average.

You can use an average of how much you expect to earn over the current tax year if:

- you work throughout the year but do not get paid regularly
- you're self-employed and do not expect to earn enough in the next 3 months



**You will not be eligible for expanded or extended hours funding if:**

- Your child does not usually live with you
- You or your partner have an expected 'adjusted net income' of over £100,000 in the current tax year. This includes any bonuses you expect to get

Your adjusted net income is your total taxable income before any personal allowances and deductions such as Gift Aid

To determine eligibility for these additional hours, a parent will need to apply and receive a unique code from HMRC via the Government's Online Childcare Service at [www.gov.uk/sign-in-childcare-account](https://www.gov.uk/sign-in-childcare-account)



# Applying for an eligibility code:

**For Children aged 9 to 35 months  
(EXPANDED and EXTENDED HOURS FUNDING)**

## Applying for an eligibility code

You must check your eligibility and apply for your unique code in line with the deadlines below. If you are approved, your code will start from the beginning of the next term.

The deadline is the day before each new term begins, but we encourage you to apply earlier and recommend applying at least 6 weeks before the deadline. If you do not apply before the deadline, you will not be able to access your child's funding entitlement until the start of the next term

Some childcare providers may ask for your code before the deadline, so we recommend you speak to them to find out if this is the case.

<b>If you would like your child's funded place to start on or after....</b>	<b>You must apply for your code no later than...</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> January - Spring term	31 <sup>st</sup> December
1 <sup>st</sup> April - Summer term	31 <sup>st</sup> March
1 <sup>st</sup> September - Autumn term	31 <sup>st</sup> August

To see if you are eligible go to

<https://www.gov.uk/check-eligible-free-childcare-if-youre-working>

# Reconfirming your child's eligibility code

## (EXPANDED AND EXTENDED HOURS FUNDING)

Once you have been issued a valid code, this must be re-confirmed every 3 months to ensure your child continues to remain eligible.

Failure to reconfirm your code could mean that your child's access to expanded or extended hours funding will cease. This means that although your family may continue to meet the eligibility criteria, the details held by HMRC are no longer "in date."

If your circumstances have changed when you re-confirm your child's code, meaning that you are no longer eligible, your child may continue to access funding for a short time if ~~you~~ they are already in attendance with a childcare provider. This is known as the 'grace period'

Once the 'grace period' has ended, your child will no longer be able to access the expanded or extended funding, until the term after you have successfully re-confirmed your eligibility. If this is the case, you will need to meet the costs of your childcare until eligibility is resumed.

**Please note:** a child cannot start with a new childcare provider in their grace period.





## Where can my child access a funded place?

Funded places can be offered by any childcare provider (subject to availability) who holds an early years' registration with Ofsted or a Childminder Agency, and has been registered by the local authority to deliver early education funded places

Approved childcare providers must comply with the terms and conditions of the Coventry Provider Funding Agreement at all times.

### Approved childcare providers include:

- Day nurseries, pre-schools or playgroups
- Ofsted or Childminder Agency registered Childminders
- School nursery classes or early years provision



## Flexibility of funded places

Providers may offer flexible packages for early education funded places, subject to the following standards:

- No session to be longer than 10 hours
- No minimum session length
- Not before 6am or after 8pm
- Sessions can be offered on any day of the week, including Saturdays and Sundays
- The child may access a maximum of two sites in a single day (separate provision on a school site is counted as one site)
- Meet the quality requirement as set out in regulations and in the statutory guidance
- No artificial breaks

The childcare provider will share information about the times and periods they are able to offer early education funded places.



## Getting the best out of your child's funded hours: TERM TIME VERSES STRETCH WEEKS

- Families can access up to 15 or 30 hours of early education funding per week, this means that a child is entitled to a maximum of 570 or 1140 hours per academic year, subject to eligibility. Funded hours can be taken over no fewer than 38 weeks and up to a maximum of 51 weeks per year, however not all providers are able to accommodate this flexibility.
- Although funded provision must be available over at least 38 weeks of the year; the regulations do not prevent it being stretched over more than 38 weeks of the year, to enable the place to be delivered more flexibly i.e. taking fewer hours per week over more weeks of the year.
- You must agree a set pattern of attendance with your Childcare providers, and this must be recorded on the Early Years Parent Funding Agreement.



## Should I expect to pay additional charges to the childcare Provider?

Early education funding is intended to deliver up to 15 or 30 hours a week of high quality, flexible childcare. It is not intended to cover the costs of meals, snacks or other consumables, such as nappies, suncream, nappy creams, additional hours or optional extra curriculum activities and trips. Childcare providers can charge for meals, snacks, consumables and optional extra curriculum activities as part of the funded place, although parents must be able to opt out of these charges. Where a parent is unable or unwilling to pay these optional charges, they should speak to their childcare provider directly. The provider should have a policy in place to describe alternative arrangements for parents who opt out of additional charges. These arrangements might include providing your own meals, snacks, nappies and suncream from home. The provider must not require parents to pay these charges as a condition of taking up a child's funded place. Where parents choose to purchase additional private hours, meals, snacks, consumables or optional extra curriculum activities, this is a private matter between the childcare provider and the parent.

A childcare provider may ask you to pay a **refundable deposit** but should not request a **registration fee** for children who take up 'funded' hours only.

Childcare providers **must not**:

- Charge top up fees in respect of the funded hours (*this is the difference between what a provider normally charges, and the funding rate they receive from the local authority*)
- Impose conditions that require payment for the funded hours up front
- Require the purchase of lunch as a condition of accessing funded hours over a lunch period.
- Impose artificial breaks for children who access funded hours before or after lunch. Funded provision should be delivered in continuous blocks

Childcare providers must ensure that invoices are set out clearly. You should be able to easily recognise and understand what hours your child has accessed in relation to the funded hours and be able to see how the fees relate to any additional services or hours that are being charged for.

## Moving a child from one childcare provider to another?

Headcount / census day occurs each term, children taking up a funded place should normally be enrolled and attending the setting, by this date. All childcare providers must submit details of all children claiming funding to Coventry City Council, by this deadline.

If you move your child to a different childcare provider between the start of a new funding period, but before the termly headcount / census date, you **will have to pay** the exiting childcare provider for the hours the child has attended, up until the day they leave.

Childcare providers cannot claim funding from Coventry City Council for **any** hours attended between the start of the funding period and the headcount / census date, if the child leaves the setting before headcount/census. You may also lose any deposit you have paid to the provider to secure the funded place.

If you move your child to a different childcare provider **after** the termly headcount / census date, the funding for that term **will not automatically transfer** with your child. It is up to individual childcare providers to decide whether or not they will transfer the funding. There is no requirement for them to do so.

A claim may be made at the new childcare provider from the start of the next funding period/term. If you move your child to a new setting, mid-term, and your childcare provider does not agree to pass on the remaining weeks funding, you will be liable to pay the new provider for any hours attended until the start of the next funding period.



## What if I have missed the termly headcount / census day, but I want my child to access a place?

If your child is not enrolled and attending a childcare setting by headcount / census day, Coventry City Council may provide permission to the provider, to fund your child's place if they meet the exceptional circumstances criteria. If your child does not meet this criterion they will have to wait until the start of the next term to begin their funded place. The Council may grant permission for a child to take up a place after headcount / census if:

- The child is newly arrived in the country
- The child is newly arrived in Coventry, from somewhere else in the UK and has not claimed a funded place elsewhere, during the same funding period
- The child is a child in care (CIC)
- Other exceptional circumstances (agreed at Coventry City Council's discretion) For example, the family has been relocated due to domestic abuse.

Childcare providers must seek approval for children wishing to take up a place after the termly headcount / census date has passed, by contacting Coventry City Council. These places are subject to conditions and must be agreed by the Council **before** the provider offers and agrees to deliver a funded place.

## How are the early education funded places offered?

Early education funded hours are delivered over 3 funding periods. Each funding period has a designated maximum number of funded hours/weeks that can be accessed by a child. These hours / weeks are set by the local authority. Childcare providers must deliver funded places in line with the termly designated hours/weeks. Hours/weeks from the previous term cannot be taken once that term has passed.

The 3 funding periods closely align with but are not exactly the same as the school term dates.

- Autumn funding period is between **1 September and 31 December**
- Spring funding period is between **1 January and 31 March**
- Summer funding period is between **1 April and 31 August**



## Help finding a childcare place



The Coventry Family Information website holds up to date information on all early year's providers in Coventry. You can access this information by visiting the website <https://cid.coventry.gov.uk>

Alternatively, if you require further support, please contact Coventry Early Years Business, Sufficiency & Funding Team on: **024 7697 5451** or email [EYProviderfunding@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:EYProviderfunding@coventry.gov.uk)

## What is Early Years Pupil Premium? (EYPP)

The Early Years Pupil Premium is an additional amount of money paid directly to childcare providers for funded children whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits, or who were formerly in local authority care but left this care because they were adopted, were subject to a Special guardianship or Child arrangements order.

This funding can be claimed by your childcare provider to enhance the quality of your child's experience. This will help improve the teaching and learning facilities and resources, with the aim of positively impacting on your child's progress and development. To claim this funding, the main benefit holder (parent/carer) needs to complete the EYPP section on the Early Years Parent Funding Agreement. Please note this will not have an impact on your benefits.

## What is Disability Access Funding? (DAF)

This is funding, which is paid to childcare providers to help them to support children with special educational needs and disabilities.

It is intended to provide essential funding that helps childcare providers to break down barriers to attendance, for example making reasonable adjustments to the environment.

Children who are in receipt of child Disability Living Allowance (DLA) **and** accessing some or all of their funded hours are eligible for DAF. DAF is paid directly to your child's nominated childcare provider at a fixed annual rate.

To enable your childcare provider to claim DAF, you will need to show them evidence that your child is in receipt of DLA.

This evidence must be a copy of the award letter issued to them by the Department for Work and Pensions.



## Special Educational and Disabilities (SEND)



All childcare providers must be aware of their duties in relation to the SEND Code of Practice and the Equality Act 2010. Providers have a responsibility to ensure all children have full access to the Early Years Foundation Stage. They must have arrangements in place to support children with SEND and should demonstrate clearly the approach to identifying and responding to the individual child's needs.

Where a childcare provider identifies a child as having SEND they must work in partnership with parents to establish and agree effective support to meet the child needs.

All childcare providers will have access to a SEND Local Offer which sets out what provision is offered to them for children with a disability or identified special educational need. This information can be obtained directly from:

[www.coventry.gov.uk/localoffer](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/localoffer)



## Data Protection

Childcare Providers must comply with UK GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018 when handling/processing personal data. Where a parent withdraws consent for the provider to share funding information with the Council, the child will no longer be eligible to access their early education funding.

### Help with childcare costs:

If your child is in attendance with a childcare provider, for more than 15 hours a week because you are at work or in training, it may be possible to get help paying for childcare costs.

[www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs](http://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs)  
[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)



### Are you concerned about how your child's funded place is being delivered?

If you are unhappy with the way the childcare provider is delivering your child's Early Education Funding Entitlement place, you should raise your concerns with the childcare provider, in the first instance.

If you have done this but are not satisfied with the outcome of your concern, please complete the online form:

[www.coventry.gov.uk/eyconcernform](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/eyconcernform)

If you are unable to access the online form, you can contact us on 024 7697 5451. Your concern will be logged and passed to a local authority officer for attention



## **At a glance: Funding terminology used by childcare providers**

### **Targeted Funding for 2-year-olds**

Up to 15 hours per week of childcare funding for 2-year-olds, whose parents receive certain government benefits or where the child or family meet other specific criteria.

Funding does not need to be re-confirmed once it has been approved.

## **FUNDING FOR ELIGIBLE WORKING PARENTS**

### **Expanded Offer For children aged 9 to 35 months**

From September 2025 eligible children whose parents work 16 hours per week or more, at the national minimum or living wage equivalent, or above, will be eligible for up to 30 hours per week.

Funding must be reconfirmed with HMRC every 3 months.

### **Extended Hours Funding for Children aged 3 & 4 years**

Children whose parents work 16 hours per week or more, at the national minimum or living wage equivalent or above, will be eligible for an additional 15 hours per week of funded childcare, bringing the total amount when combined with the universal offer to a maximum of 30 hours per week.

Funding must be reconfirmed with HMRC every 3 months.

### **Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)**

Funding paid directly to providers for children whose parents are in receipt of a low household income or because they are a child who was formerly in the care of the local authority but has left this care because they were adopted, were subject to a special guardianship or child arrangement order.

### **Disability Access Funding**

An annual amount paid to the provider for children who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance

## Useful Websites

### Childcare Choices

[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

[www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs](http://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs)

### SEND code of practice

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

### Raising a funding concern with Coventry City Council

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/eyconcernform>

### Contacting the Early Years Business, Sufficiency & Funding Team

[EYProviderfunding@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:EYProviderfunding@coventry.gov.uk)

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Coventry Early Years Business,  
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