



Early Years



Northumberland
County Council

Working Families Funded Childcare - Eligibility

Guidance – July 26

Eligible working parents of children under the age of 5 will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare a week.

These hours can be used over 38 weeks of the year (during school term time), or up to 52 weeks if you use fewer than your total hours per week.

Parents will not need to apply via HMRC if they only want to claim the universal 15 hours entitlement for three- and four-year-olds (no income check required) or 15 hours Early Learning for Twos this eligibility check remains completed via the original ELF2 module in Wizard.

How will parents know what to do?

Parents can check whether they could be eligible for a range of government childcare offers, including 30 hours, via Childcare Choices at: <https://beststartinlife.gov.uk/> or the Childcare Calculator at: <https://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator>. Those who could be eligible for working families funded childcare and/or Tax-Free Childcare will be directed to the digital childcare service to apply. HMRC will check parents' eligibility for both schemes at the same time.

Parents cannot claim funded childcare if their child is in full-time reception or if they have reached compulsory school age.

How will parents access working families funded childcare?

Step 1 - Eligible parents will provide you with their eligibility code, this is the child's unique 11-digit number. You must also check eligibility by age via the child's birth certificate.

Step 2 - Written consent is required from the parent to be able to receive confirmation and future notifications from the Authority of the validity of the parent's eligibility code. You should use the [parental declaration form](#) which asks the parent for the necessary information and consents.

Step 3 - Log into your Wizard [account](#) to confirm the validity of working families eligibility codes to allow you to offer places for eligible children under 5.

Step 4 – Check ELF2 eligibility for 2 year olds with a Working Families code. If eligible, where parents fall out of eligibility, they can access 15 hours through the ELF2 funding.

What providers will need to verify a parents eligibility code:

- An eligibility code
- The parent's National Insurance number

- The child's date of birth
- The written consent of the parent (parent declaration)

How will providers confirm validity of codes with the Authority:

The Authority offers an eligibility checking service through a secure portal [The Wizard](#).

The Wizard offers instant responses to accurately input information, including start and end dates when funding is available.

The Wizard will complete regular automated audit checks to review the validity of eligibility codes for children who qualify for working families funded childcare. You can view the validity of codes in your summary of checks within the Wizard this will allow you to manage the eligibility to funded childcare including when children enter grace periods and eligibility ends.

Reconfirmation of Eligibility

Parents will be prompted every three months by HMRC to re-confirm the details they entered on their application are still accurate. This is to check that they are still eligible. They will be prompted, via text message and/or email, four weeks before their re-confirmation deadline and again two weeks before the deadline if they still haven't reconfirmed. If their circumstances have changed, they will log into their childcare service account, amend their details and then re-submit their details. If their circumstances have not changed, they only need to reconfirm their details. You can check re-confirmation dates via the summary of checks within the Wizard this is the code end date.

If parents miss the re-confirmation deadline, they will receive a message telling them that their eligibility has lapsed. Although they are no longer eligible, they may be able to retain their childcare place for a short period; this is known as a grace period. Parents are directed to speak to their childcare provider about this.

What can providers do to help?

- Ensure parents complete parent declarations fully including their eligibility code, National Insurance Number and child's date of birth, otherwise you won't be able to verify their code and offer a place.
- Remind parents that they need to reconfirm when prompted by HMRC. You can view reconfirmation dates (end dates) within your summary of checks in the Wizard.

When a parent loses eligibility and grace period.

The grace period enables parents to retain their childcare place for a short period if they become ineligible for funded childcare.

Parents reconfirm their eligibility around every three months depending on when they first applied for funded childcare. There will be three dates attached to each code (only the local



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authority and provider sees these dates).

The '**validity start date**' is the date which the parent has applied and been issued a code.

The '**validity end date**' is the parent's 'deadline' for re-confirming.

Their '**grace period**' date is the last date on which they should receive their 30 hours place.

A grace period will not continue beyond the age that a child has achieved compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday).

Example:

- *Child turns three on 3rd March; parent successfully applies for funded childcare on 15th March (can take up a place from 1st April). Parent is issued a code with a validity start date of 15th March and end date of 15th June.*
- *Parent is able to reconfirm their eligibility for funded childcare up to four weeks before their validity end date (i.e. from 15th May). The parent reconfirms on this date but their circumstances have changed (e.g. job loss) and they are no longer eligible. Therefore, the parent's eligibility ends on 15th June. The grace period will apply from 16th June until 31st December.*

Please note - regardless of start and end dates shown, a parent can only access their entitlement to the additional hours the term after their child's birthday and the term after their eligibility has been established i.e. a parent who is confirmed eligible in October cannot access their additional hours until the following January. Children of Reception age are not entitled unless they have officially deferred entry.

Children born in the period/eligibility established (30 hours)	Eligible from the start of the term on or following
1 st April – 31 st August	1 st September
1 st Sept – 31 st December	1 st January
1 st Jan – 31 st March	1 st April

The Grace Period

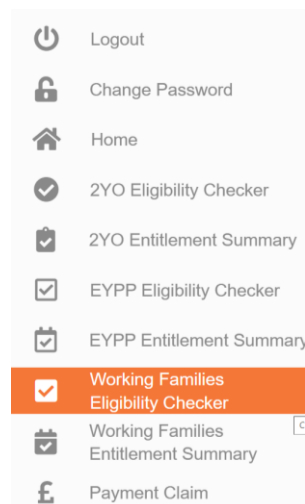
A child will enter the grace period when the child's parents cease to meet the eligibility criteria. The Authority will continue to fund a place for a child who enters the grace period until the grace period end date.

Providers **MUST** check their summary of eligibility codes regularly to ensure children remain

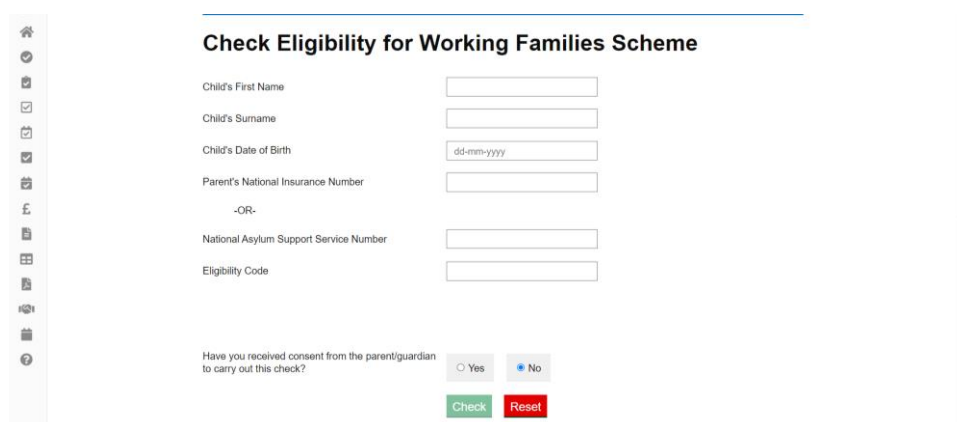
eligible. If a child enters a grace period (when eligibility ends). You will need to take action and inform parents that their eligibility will end.

The Wizard Working Families Eligibility Checker Instruction

Log into [The Wizard](#) using the credential given by the LA. Navigate to the working families eligibility checker on the left-hand pop out menu.



Reminder - you must have consent from parents to check validity of codes, you must use the parent declaration form.



Summary of checks

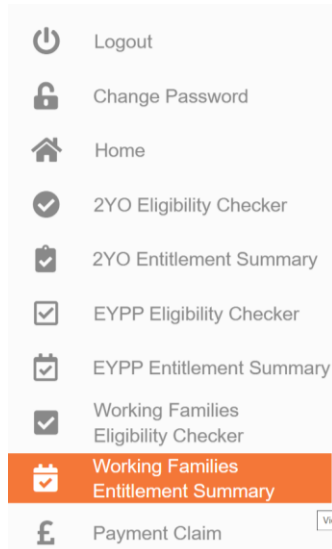
Once you have checked a code the system stores it in your summary and updates it's eligibility automatically every 48 hours.



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It is essential that codes are checked for eligibility each term before you offer a child a place or confirm continuation of provision from a previous term.

Navigate to the working families summary of eligibility checks on the left-hand pop out menu.



A summary of checks is provided so you can keep track of eligible children and their codes to claim funding. You can filter on age range and term using the functions displayed in the top red box. Please note when you select a term, the first column 'Term', will clarify which term that is. The second red box displays the 3 new functions which help you know the child's age and the validity of the code. **Please note validity displays if the code is eligible to be used for the selected term.**

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Entitlement Summary for Working Families Scheme

These records are the Working Families checks you have made and the entitlement expiry dates. For security reasons, we will only show the initials of the child.

NOTE Please ensure that you use the remove button to remove any records where children have now left.

Choose an Age Range of children to display Show All Children

☐ Previous Term☒ Current Term☐ Next Term

Term	Eligibility Code	Child Firstname	Child Surname	Start Date*	End Date	Grace Period End Date	Age	Age Range	Validity	
2023-24 Summer	512345678910	AB*****	CD*****	16/08/2023	18/11/2023	31/03/2024	3	3-4 Year Old	Invalid	Remove
2023-24 Summer	512345678910	AB*****	CD*****	21/04/2022	18/05/2024	31/08/2024	4	3-4 Year Old	Valid	Remove
2023-24 Summer	512345678910	AB*****	CD*****	15/05/2024	18/07/2024	31/08/2024	4	3-4 Year Old	Invalid	Remove