

Free Early Education - Funding for 2 Year Olds

The Government has extending the current scheme to offer Free Early Education to 40% of 2 year olds from the funding period after their second birthday to families who meet the Government's criteria for Free School Meals. Childcare Providers offering placements for two year old children will need to have an Ofsted rating of 'good' or 'outstanding' and/or assessed by the Early Years Advisory team has as meeting the standards required.

For a child to be eligible a parent/carer must have an income below £16,190 and be claiming the one of the following state benefits.

Parents who are in receipt of one of the following (all links provided below will take you through to the GOV.Uk website):

- Income Support
- Income based Job Seekers' Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under Part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Guaranteed Element of the State Pension Credit - for more information
- Child Tax Credit, provided you have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs.
- Universal Credit
- Or if the two year old has a current statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care plan:
- A form counter-signed by the relevant professional involved with the child is required for children who meet the following criteria.
- Has left local authority care through a Special Guardianship Order, adoption or a Residence Order.
- Is currently a Looked after Child, for example in foster care.
- Is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

How to Apply for a Funded Place

If your child is three or four years of age your chosen childcare provider will claim on your behalf. If you believe you may be eligible to claim for a two year old, the easiest way to apply is to use the **Early Years Checker System (ECS)**. The parent/carer will be asked to provide certain details:

- Parents name and date of birth
- Contact details
- National Insurance Number or National Asylum Seekers Number
- Child's name and date of Birth

These details provided will be verified using the Eligibility Checking Service provided by the Department for Education (DfE). The service will provide an immediate outcome for parents/carers meeting the **economic criteria**. A reference number and further instructions on what to do next will be given to the parent on the screen.

Where a parent is 'Not found' on the Eligibility Checking Service, the parent will receive an instruction to check the information that has been submitted and resubmit if not correct and/or contact EYE funding administration. If an application is being made on the basis of tax credit or DLA you may be asked to provide proof that you receive these benefits. Applicants should send in a copy of the relevant document (this is specified on the paper based form). If you need help completing your form visit your local Early Help Hub centre or speak to your childcare provider who will be able to help you.

Where a family meets the non-economic criteria, the parent can still apply but **MUST** tick the appropriate box in section 3 of the application, to show the application is under 'Other Criteria' (then select the eligibility criteria met). At the end of the application the parent/carer will be prompted to send supporting evidence to the EYE application team.

Should a parent be unable to use the online System, he/she can download a paper based Application form. The completed application form should be sent to the address printed on the form. Check out our FAQ's for further information.

Once a two year old child has been accepted onto the scheme the funded place will remain in place even if parental circumstances change until the child reaches universal funding the term after the child's third birthday.

Payment for additional hours taken outside of the agreed funded hours are the responsibility of the parent/carer and does not form part of the funding contract. You will be expected to pay for an hours take up over and above your legal entitlement. Legal action will be taken if it is found that funding claims have been made fraudulently.

The Isle of Wight County Council is the Data Controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act. We collect information and personal data securely, please refer to our privacy notice regarding free early years education and the eligibility checking service