

FACTSHEET

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS RECEIVING FREE CHILDCARE

Every three and four-year-old is entitled to receive 570 hours of free childcare a year, and now, some two-year-olds are also eligible to receive free childcare.

We know that the rules around this free entitlement can be confusing for parents and childcare providers and parents understandably have lots of questions about how the funding works.

It is important that you know what you can expect from your childcare provider – whether that's a nursery, playgroup, or childminder.

This factsheet will provide you with more information about how and when you can access your free childcare and your rights when accessing your free place.

FREE CHILDCARE FOR TWO YEAR OLD

This funding is not open to every child. If you meet the criteria and have been awarded the funding, you will receive a letter from Herefordshire Council. This letter will tell you when the funding starts. The funding will last until your child receives the three and four-year-old funding.

Birthday falls between	Term funding starts
1 st April – 31 st August	September
1 st September – 31 st December	January
1 st January – 31 st March	April

FREE CHILDCARE FOR THREE AND FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

Every child is entitled to receive this funding from the term after their third birthday and this will remain in place until the start of their reception year at school.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FREE CHILDCARE

- Each child accessing free childcare is entitled to a total of 570 hours funded education during a year

- You can take your FREE hours either termly (over 38 weeks) or spread over the full year (51 weeks), if available at your chosen childcare provider.
- Sessions cannot be less than 2.5 hours or more than 10 hours in any one day, but will vary depending on the sessions available from your childcare provider.
- You have the choice to only take the FREE entitlement of hours if that is all you want, and this is completely FREE to you.
- Your child can take a packed lunch if you do not wish to purchase a meal from your childcare provider.
- If you attend two childcare settings e.g. a nursery and a playgroup, you can choose to use your FREE hours at one setting or split the hours between the two.

PAYMENT AND YOUR BILLS

- If you buy extra childcare hours, any bill/invoice you receive should be clear and should **NOT** show the FREE funded hours deducted from the total bill.
- Herefordshire Council pays your chosen childcare provider directly for the FREE hours you receive.
- You **DO NOT** have to buy any additional hours or services such as lunches or uniform to receive the funded hours. However, if you have decided to purchase additional services, these will be charged for by the childcare provider and shown clearly on your invoice/bill.
- You **DO NOT** have to pay towards any FREE funded hours. Childcare Providers are not allowed to invoice you for any difference between their own charges and the payments they receive from Herefordshire Council.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM YOUR CHILDCARE PROVIDER

- Childcare Providers **CAN** set which sessions or days are available for free childcare places.
- Childcare Providers **CAN** charge a different rate for extra hours in addition to the FREE funded hours if you want them, but they must ensure parents are made aware of this before accepting.
- Childcare Providers **CANNOT** attach any special conditions on children accessing their free place, e.g. make you take all your funded entitlement with them or insist that you pay for extra sessions or lunches to access your free place.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is more information available about free Childcare (Nursery Education Funding) at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/early-years-and-childcare/childcare-services • Enquiries for 2 year old free childcare please email educationandbusiness@herefordshire.gov.uk • Enquiries For 3 and 4 year old free childcare please email jstephens@herefordshire.gov.uk |
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