

A Guide to Government Offered Childcare Support for Parents in England



We've heard from you that it can be difficult to know what support is available. That's why we've created a simple guide in the hope of making support easier to access.

This guide is for information only. Which scheme you're better off with depends on your situation. Please check the details and eligibility of any schemes directly.

A list of all support and benefits available to families can be found on the [Government website](#). You can also use the [Government's childcare calculator](#).

Healthy Start

www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Support available

Help to buy milk, fresh or plain frozen fruits and vegetables or infant formula, plus free vitamins for mothers and babies:

- £4.25 each week of your pregnancy from the 10th week.
- £8.50 each week for children from birth to 1 year old.
- £4.25 each week for children between 1 and 4 years old.

Eligibility criteria

You may be eligible if you are:

- Pregnant under the age of 18 you will qualify automatically, regardless of whether you get other benefits.
- At least 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4.
- Receiving a qualifying benefit.

Find out more [HERE](#).

Good to know

The payment is loaded onto a card every four weeks and you can use the card directly in some UK shops.

Sure Start Maternity Grant

www.gov.uk/sure-start-maternity-grant

Support available

One-off payment of £500 to help towards the costs of having a child.

Eligibility criteria

You usually qualify for the grant if both of the following apply:

- You are pregnant expecting your first child, or expecting a multiple birth (such as twins) and have children already.
- You or your partner already get certain benefits.

Find out more [HERE](#).

Good to know

You must claim the grant within 11 weeks of your baby's due date or within 6 months after birth.

Universal Credit

www.gov.uk/universal-credit

Support available

Up to 85% of childcare costs are covered up to a maximum of £646/month for one child in childcare or up to £1,108 with two or more children. The amount depends on family circumstances.

Eligibility criteria

You may be eligible if you are:

- A single parent in work.
- In a couple with both parents in work, or one parent is unable to work because they are ill, a carer for someone else, or absent from the household.

Find out more [HERE](#).

Good to know

You must use approved childcare.

Working Tax Credit

www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit

Support available

Up to 70% of childcare costs are covered up to a maximum of £122.50/week for one child in childcare, or £210 for two or more children. The amount given depends on family circumstances.

Eligibility criteria

You may be eligible if you are:

- A single parent in work for at least 16 hours per week.
- In a couple with both parents in work for at least 16 hours/week.

Find out more [HERE](#).

Good to know

Working Tax Credit is gradually being replaced by Universal Credit. You can't get both at the same time.

You must use approved childcare.

Tax Free Childcare

www.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare

Support available

You will set up an online childcare account for your child. For every £8 you pay into this account, the government will pay in £2 to use to pay your childcare provider:

- Up to £500 every 3 months (maximum 2,000 per year) for each child.
- If your child is disabled, this goes up to £1,000 every 3 months (maximum of £4,000 per year).

Eligibility criteria

You may be eligible if you:

- Have children 11-year-olds or under, or up to 17-years-old if your child is disabled.
- Are a single parent earning the equivalent of at least 16 hours per week at the minimum wage (if under 25) or the Living Wage (if over 25).
- Are part of a couple, both earning this amount or one of you is earning and the other is unable to work due to illness, disability, or caring responsibilities.
- Are self-employed and started your business in the past 12 months.
- Neither parents must earn more than £100,000 per year.

Find out more [HERE](#).

Good to know

- You must use approved childcare.
- Your childcare provider must be signed up to the scheme before you can pay them and benefit from Tax-Free Childcare. Check whether they're signed up.
- You can't receive Tax Free Childcare and Universal Credit or Working Tax Credit at the same time.

Childcare Grant

www.gov.uk/childcare-grant

Support available

Help with childcare cost while you study. Up to 85% of your childcare costs paid for a fixed maximum amount for the academic year.

The maximum you can get is:

- Up to £183.75 a week for 1 child.
- Up to £315.03 a week for 2 or more children.

Eligibility criteria

You may be eligible if you:

- Have children under 15, or under 17 if they have special educational needs.
- Are a full-time student.

Find out more [HERE](#).

Good to know

You must be eligible for student finance to apply for this grant.

Child Benefit

www.gov.uk/child-benefit

Support available

£21.80/week for your first child and £14.45 for any children after that. Paid every 4 weeks – or paid weekly if you are a single parent or getting certain other benefits, such as Universal Credit.

Eligibility criteria

You may be eligible if you:

- Have children under 16, or under 20 if they are still in education or training.
- It doesn't matter if you work, have savings and investments.

Find out more [HERE](#).

Good to know

If either your or your partner's 'adjusted net income' is over £50,000 a year, you may have to pay High Income Child Benefit Charge or decide to opt out of getting Child Benefit payments.

Free childcare and education for 2-year-olds

www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds

Support available

15 hours of free childcare a week for 38 weeks a year (570 hours in total).

Eligibility criteria

You may be eligible if you:

- Have a 2-year-old child.
- Are receiving some form of support such as Universal Credit or Income Support (full list available on GOV.UK).

Find out more [HERE](#).

Good to know

You must use approved childcare (e.g. childminder, nursery, club, registered home carer).

Free childcare and education for 3 and 4-year-olds

www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-and-education-for-2-to-4-year-olds

Support available

- 15 hours of free childcare a week for 38 weeks a year (570 hours in total) until your child starts reception year at school.
- Some 3 to 4-year-olds are eligible for 30 hours free childcare a week.

Eligibility criteria

All couples or single parents are eligible:

- Couples or single parents in work.
- Parents who earn at least 16 hours per week at the minimum wage (if under 25) or the Living Wage (if over 25).
- Self-employed and started your business in the past 12 months.
- Neither parents must earn more than £100,000/year.

Find out more [HERE](#).

Care to learn

www.gov.uk/care-to-learn

Support available

Help with childcare cost while you study.

You can get up to:

- £160 per child per week if you live outside London.
- £175 per child per week if you live in London.

Eligibility criteria

You may be eligible if you are:

- Under 20 at the start of your course.
- The main carer for your child.

The scheme is available for publicly-funded courses in England.

Find out more [HERE](#).

Parents learning allowance

www.gov.uk/parents-learning-allowance

Support available

Help with childcare cost while you study.

Depending on your household income, in the 2022 to 2023 academic year you could get between £50 and £1,863 a year.

Eligibility criteria

You may be eligible if you are:

- A student from England with dependent children.
- Enrolled in a full-time undergraduate course OR an Initial Teacher Training course.

Find out more [HERE](#).

Good to know

How much you receive depends on your household income.