

Acorn Childcare Centre's Funding FAQ

You're Funding Team

Donna



Martha



1. What types of funding do we offer?

Age	Type of Funding	Funded Hours	Availability
9 months - 2 yrs	Working Entitlement	24 hours	All Year Round (AYR)
2 - 3 yrs	Working Entitlement	24 hours	All Year Round (AYR)
2 - 3 yrs	Disadvantaged 2-Year-Old	12 or 15 hours	AYR or Term Time Only (TTO)
3 - 5 yrs	Universal Entitlement	15 hours	AYR or TTO
3 - 5 yrs	Working Entitlement	Up to 30 hours	AYR or TTO

2. When is my child eligible for funding and when should I apply?

Child's Birthday	Funding Starts	Recommended Time to Apply
1st September – 31st December	Term starting on or after 1st January	1st – 30th November
1st January – 31st March	Term starting on or after 1st April	1st – 28th February
1st April – 31st August	Term starting on or after 1st September	1st – 31st July

3. How do I check what funding I'm eligible for?

You can check your eligibility by visiting the official [Childcare Choices](#) website. This includes:

- 15-hour universal funding for 3-5-year-olds (available to all families)
- Up to 30 hours working entitlement funding for 9m-5-year-olds
- Disadvantaged 2-year-old funding (means-tested)



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4. Who qualifies for the 9m-2 years working entitlement?

You may be entitled to the working family's entitlement if you:

- Are working and earning the equivalent of at least 16 hours per week at National Minimum Wage
- Earn less than £100,000 each per year

5. Who qualifies for 2-year-old disadvantaged funding?

You may be eligible if you receive one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit (household income £15,400 a year or less after tax, not including benefits)
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit

Or if your child:

- Is looked after by the local authority
- Has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Receives Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Has left care under an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order

6. Who is responsible for obtaining a valid eligibility code?

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure they have a valid code by the deadline each term: 31st August 31st December and 31st March. The recommended time to apply (or renew an eligibility code is February, July and November each year).

Parents and providers should be mindful that if a code is obtained too early, it may expire before it can be used.

** Codes issued in April & May normally expire in July & August, meaning they cannot be used in the Autumn term. Please check the end date of the code when validating the code on the hub***



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7. How do I apply for funding?

For 2-year-old funding (disadvantaged or working entitlement):

Apply through the Best Start In Life website. You will receive a code that you'll need to give to us to secure your funding.

For 3-4-year-old funding (universal or extended):

Apply for the 30 hours code via the Best Start In Life website. You must renew your code every 3 months. Universal 15 hours are automatically applied - no code required.

8. What is the difference between term time only (TTO) and all year round (AYR)?

- Term Time Only (TTO): Funding is spread over 38 weeks per year (e.g. 15 or 30 hours per week).
- All Year Round (AYR): Funding is 'stretched' across 51 weeks, so you'll receive fewer funded hours per week (e.g. 12 or 24 hours), but for more weeks.

9. Do I need to renew my funding code?

- Yes. If you're using the 30 hours working entitlement or 2-year-old working funding, you must renew your code every 3 months via your Childcare Choices account.
- You'll get reminders by email or text from HMRC.

10. What happens if I miss my reconfirmation window?

The working entitlement will not be able to be claimed in the following term if the code was not obtained or renewed before the deadline. Children cannot start to access funded childcare in the grace period.

There are no universally funded hours available to children under the age of 3. The 'grace period end date' is the last date on which a child should receive their place after falling out of eligibility.

The grace period only applies to children already on your claim, accessing their working family entitlements. Children cannot start to access funded childcare in the grace period



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11. Can I split my funding between two childcare providers?

Yes, you can split your funded hours between two approved providers (e.g. nursery and childminder), but:

- You must not exceed your total entitlement (e.g. 30 hours per week).
- Some restrictions may apply depending on provider availability and type of funding.

12. What do nursery need to claim our funding?

To claim your child's funding, we will need a completed funding form which you can get from the office. You will also need to supply your child's funding code via the form.

You will need to complete a funding form for the following reasons:

- To claim initial funding
- Moving funding groups (e.g. 9month to 2 years)
- Every September we will need a new form as per the funding team's request

We will not be able to claim the funding without a completed funding form - This is a legal requirement from the Funding team.

13. Gaps in funding

Why Are There Gaps in Stretched Funding?

We offer stretched funding to help parents spread their funded childcare hours across more weeks of the year - typically over 47 weeks instead of just term time (38 weeks). This can make it easier to manage childcare during holidays.

However, stretched funding does not give you extra hours - it simply spreads the same annual amount of funded hours more thinly across the year. That means you get fewer funded hours per week.

Example:

- Term time only - 15/30 hours
- All year round - 12/24 hours

Even though funding is "stretched," it doesn't cover every single week. So while stretched funding helps spread support more evenly across the year, it doesn't cover all weeks fully, which can result in funding gaps. With gaps in funding, you will have two options:

- 1)Your child will automatically be contracted to attend during gaps - if they attend you will be charged for sessions that fall within those gaps
- 2)If you wish for your child NOT to attend during the gaps so you are not charged you need to give us a months' notice to cancel these sessions.