

# Childcare Choices

Communications toolkit  
for local authorities



HM Government

[childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://childcarechoices.gov.uk)

# Childcare Choices – supporting families with childcare costs

## About these materials

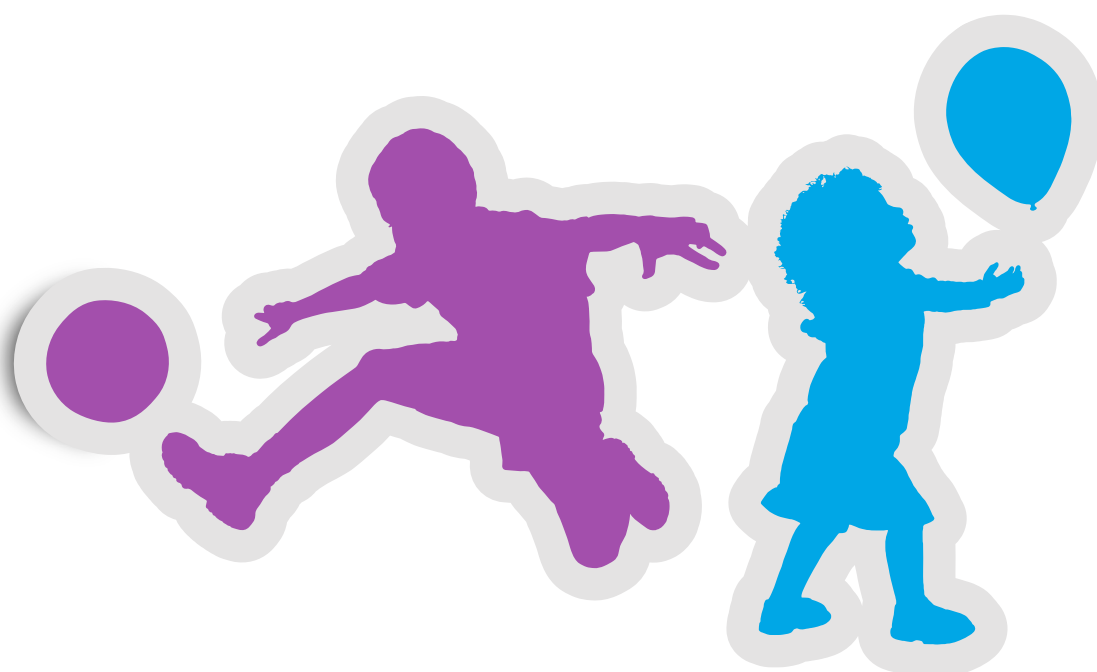
In 2017, the government introduced two new schemes to support working parents: **30 hours free childcare** for 3 and 4 year olds and **Tax-Free Childcare**.

We've produced this pack of materials to help you communicate with parents and providers in your local area about the new government childcare offers. In this pack you'll find a range of materials including:

1. Draft content for you (or providers) to share with parents
2. FAQs for parents and providers
3. Draft emails for you to share with parents or providers
4. A glossary for parents and providers to help explain key words associated with 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare
5. Customer journeys for both 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare
6. A factsheet for parents on how they can use their 30 hours entitlements

The aim of the toolkit is to enable you and providers to help parents understand what childcare support is available to them and to emphasise the importance of applying in good time, in order to secure a 30 hours childcare place for the next term. These materials are also aimed at informing parents who already have a 30 hours code, that they need to check their details are up to date through their childcare account every 3 months to retain their place.

The toolkit also provides information on Tax-Free Childcare which helps local families – including, the self-employed – with their childcare costs.



## How to use the communications toolkit

You may wish to use some of the materials in this pack on your website, or in your direct communications to parents or providers. You may also like to share information about the new schemes with your colleagues, perhaps on your intranet or via email.

We also encourage you to promote the Childcare Choices website, including the Childcare Calculator, which helps parents find out which schemes are available to them and choose what works best for their family. Alongside this, parents can register for updates via the 'Keep Me Updated' button so they know when they become eligible to apply.

If you do not have capacity within your Early Years team or Family Information Service to disseminate this information, please pass this toolkit to your central communications team.

**Note for you as an employer:** As a large local employer yourself, you might also want to share some of this pack with your own staff, to help them make the most of the new childcare support. For example, if you currently offer childcare vouchers (also known as Employer-Supported Childcare) that scheme will close to new applicants in April 2018. After this date parents already claiming childcare vouchers can continue to use the scheme as long as you as their employer continue to offer it.

## What are the new offers?

You can find out more about the full government childcare offer on [childcarechoices.gov.uk](https://childcarechoices.gov.uk), with a summary below. You can use the Childcare Calculator, and apply for Tax-Free Childcare and/or 30 hours free childcare through the Childcare Choices website.

### Tax-Free Childcare

**Up to £2,000 per child, per year for children under the age of 12 and £4,000 for disabled children under 17.**

- For working families, including the self-employed, across the UK
- With children aged under 12 (or under 17 for disabled children)
- For every £8 paid in, the government will add an extra £2, up to £2,000 per child per year toward childcare costs. This means you can get up to £500 every three months per child.

A parent, and their partner, will need to expect to earn (on average) the equivalent of working 16 hours a week at their National Minimum wage (£120 at the National Living Wage, less for people on the National Minimum Wage). And earn less than £100,000 a year each. If they are on maternity, paternity or adoption leave for another child, or unable to work because they are disabled or have caring responsibilities, they could still be eligible.

Tax-Free Childcare can be used with the 15 hours and 30 hours schemes. It can't be used at the same time as childcare vouchers, Universal Credit or tax credits. The Childcare Calculator is a great tool to help families make an informed decision on which offer to use.

Registered childcare providers have a pivotal role in Tax-Free Childcare as they need to be signed up so that parents can pay them through their childcare account. All providers should have received an invitation containing the information they need to sign up, and tens of thousands have already done so. Childcare providers can find out more and sign up here [childcarechoices.gov.uk/providers](https://childcarechoices.gov.uk/providers)

## 30 hours free childcare

### 30 hours free childcare for working parents of three and four year olds

- For working families in England
- With 3 and 4-year-old children
- 30 hours for 38 weeks of the year but the hours can be stretched across the year.

30 hours free childcare is available for 3 and 4 year olds of working parents in England. The 30 hours offer doubles the existing 15 hours currently available to all 3 and 4 year olds and could save working families up to £5,000 a year.

Parents in England can apply for 30 hours childcare at the same time as Tax-Free Childcare, via the childcare service. To qualify, a parent, and their partner, will need to expect to earn (on average) the equivalent of working 16 hours a week at their National Minimum wage (£120 at the National Living Wage, less for people on the National Minimum Wage). And earn less than £100,000 a year each. If they are on maternity, paternity or adoption leave for another child, or unable to work because they are disabled or have caring responsibilities, they could still be eligible.

Childcare providers do not need to sign up online in the same way as they do for Tax-Free Childcare. If you would like to offer 30 hours speak to the early years lead at your local authority and check the resources on [childcareworks.co.uk](https://childcareworks.co.uk) for advice and guidance.

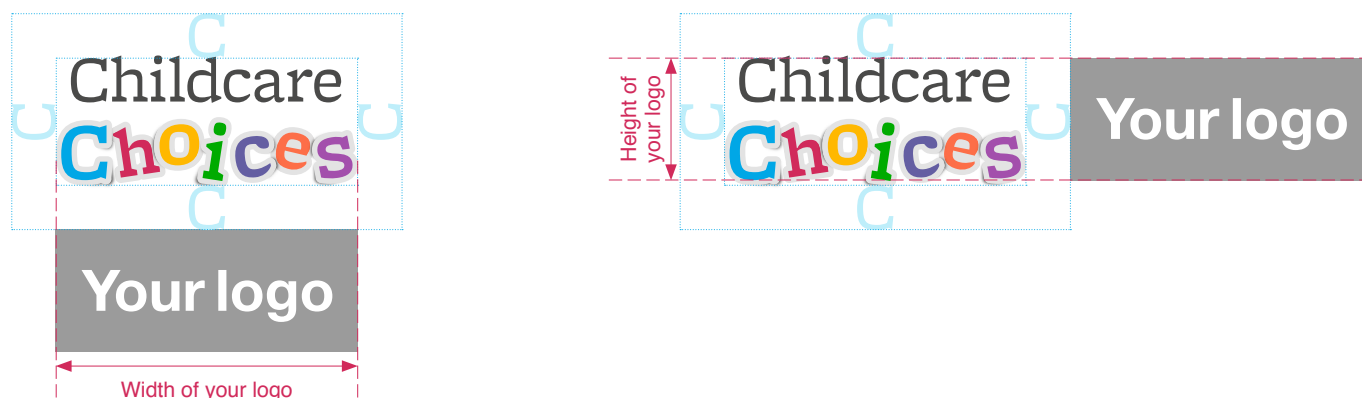


# Using the logo

You are welcome to use the Childcare Choices logo in your own communications materials. This should be used in conjunction with your own authority's logo.

When using the Childcare Choices logo, please bear in mind the following guidelines:

- The logo should be a minimum of 35mm on all materials
- Ensure that there's a clear space around the Childcare Choices logo – use the height of the 'C' as a guide. Make sure this space is clear of all other graphics, for example other logos and images
- If you're placing the Childcare Choices logo alongside other logos (for example your own), bear in mind the exclusion zone and ensure all logos are a similar height and width.



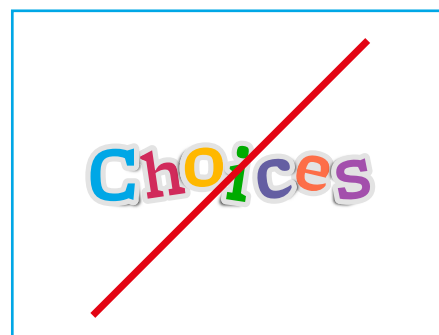
## What not to do



Never place partner logos too close



Never place other graphic elements within the logo exclusion zone



Never show the 'choices' sticker treatment alone



Never modify the logotype in any way, only use the master artwork files provided



Never modify the colour of the logo in any way, only use the master artwork files provided



Do not stretch or squash the logo

# Email/content for parents

**Subject line:** Government launches new schemes to help with childcare costs



Dear parent,

Are you looking for support with childcare costs?

Getting financial help with your childcare costs is easier than you might think. [Childcare Choices](#) brings together all the government childcare offers in one place for the first time, including two new schemes for working parents: Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare.

Use the Childcare Calculator on [Childcare Choices](#) to see what offers are available to support you and your family.

To find out more about the new and existing offers, and how they can help you, go to the [Childcare Choices](#) website today.



# Email for providers

**Subject line:** Sign up now for Tax-Free Childcare



Dear provider,

Hundreds of thousands of parents have now successfully applied for Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare through the childcare service.

Sign up to receive Tax-Free Childcare payments now at: [childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk](https://childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk)

## You'll need:

- Your user ID and the postcode held by your regulator;
- Your bank account details (to receive childcare payments); and either
  - Your business 10 digit Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR) and the postcode on your tax record (e.g. your business address, personal address, registered office). You can find these on previous tax returns or other communications from HM Revenue and Customs. The postcode used must be one on your tax record; or
  - Your National Insurance number, if you're a nanny/employed childcare provider and don't have a UTR.

**If you're a registered charity** and don't have a UTR please phone the helpline on **0300 123 4097**.

Tax-Free Childcare was introduced in April 2017 and helps working families with the cost of childcare. For every £8 a parent pays into their childcare account, the government will add an extra £2, up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year (or £4,000 for disabled children).

Once you've signed up, parents can then use their Tax-Free Childcare account to make childcare payments directly into your bank account.

For further information on both Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare, please visit [childcarechoices.gov.uk/providers](https://childcarechoices.gov.uk/providers). You will also find information in our stakeholder toolkit to help you advertise the scheme to your parents.

If you are interested in offering 30 hours free childcare please contact your local authority for further information.

# Social media

One of the quickest and easiest ways to share messages is through social media. You are welcome to use the examples below on your social media accounts, or in other communications, such as emails, your website or digital screens.



1. #30hours of #childcare for 3 and 4 year olds. Check you're eligible at [childcarechoices.gov.uk](https://childcarechoices.gov.uk)



2. Parents, make sure your details are up to date. You need to do this every three months [gov.uk/sign-in-childcare-account](https://gov.uk/sign-in-childcare-account) #30hours #Childcare



3. Find out more about the new government childcare offers at [childcarechoices.gov.uk](https://childcarechoices.gov.uk)



4. Parents, to keep your #30hours #childcare place next term, make sure your details are up to date [gov.uk/sign-in-childcare-account](https://gov.uk/sign-in-childcare-account)



# Glossary

**Approved childcare:** You can only take up 30 hours free childcare at an approved provider, this means they must be registered by an appropriate regulator. e.g. not a family member.

**Childcare Calculator:** The online tool allowing parents to check how much support they can receive from the government towards childcare costs. The Calculator is available on the [Childcare Choices](#) website.

**Childcare Choices:** The government's childcare offers website, [childcarechoices.gov.uk](https://childcarechoices.gov.uk)

**Childcare service:** The government service and website where parents can apply for both 30 hours free childcare and Tax-Free Childcare.

**Childcare service account:** The online government account where parents can manage their details, reconfirm eligibility and make Tax-Free Childcare payments. Parents apply through the childcare service to open a childcare service account.

**Code validation:** The check undertaken by childcare providers to ensure the eligibility code provided is legitimate.

**Eligibility code:** The code provided by the childcare service for a parent eligible for 30 hours free childcare. This usually starts with 500.

**Reconfirmation:** Every three months parents will need to reconfirm their eligibility by checking their details are up to date. The childcare service account is used to reconfirm eligibility for 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare.

**Regulator ID:** The ID given to childcare providers by their regulator (for example, Ofsted, CSSIW etc.).

**Sensitive providers:** Some providers are designated as sensitive by their regulators. This might be because they're a childminder working from their home address. To pay these providers using Tax-Free Childcare, parents need to search for them using their regulator ID and postcode.

**Unique Taxpayer Reference number/UTR:** The code childcare providers need to sign up for Tax-Free Childcare. Businesses are given a UTR when they register with HMRC for tax purposes.

**User ID:** The unique code childcare providers receive in their letter inviting them to sign up for Tax-Free Childcare.