

Fees and Funding Explained

A quick guide to childcare costs



Welcome to Busy Bees

As the UK's leading early years provider, we're here to give every child the very best start in life.

Whether you're new to our nurseries or already part of the Busy Bees family, there are a few different ways to help fund your childcare. It can be tricky to get to grips with all the ins and outs, so we've put together this handy pack to guide you through. From explaining the government's early years funding schemes in England, to covering off those essential daily costs that create our unique Busy Bees experience, we'll help you work out all the fees and funding. Once that's sorted, we can all focus on the most important thing: taking care of your child.

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Government funding explained

Understanding childcare funding isn't always easy, but the good news is we're here to help. In England, there are two government funding programmes. In simple terms, you can make the most of either 15 or 30 funded hours per week, depending on your circumstances.

Here's how it all works:

Working family funded childcare

This scheme is for qualifying working parents.

The funded hours are provided across 38 weeks during term time and, if you're living with your partner you'll need to apply together.

Parents:

- Should be working at least 16 hours a week
- Can be on sick leave or parental leave
- Must each earn less than £100,000 a year
- Might still be eligible while claiming benefits.

We 'stretch' these hours and how that works varies between our nurseries as some Local Authorities have their own requirements regarding this. When you are eligible for 30 hours you can access up to 22.8 funded hours per week, across 50 weeks.

We can offer your child more than their funded hours per week, if you need them. These additional hours are paid for and are referred to as non-funded hours. Head over to [pages 10-13](#) for a detailed breakdown of how this looks for a full-time place.

There are some other specific things that can affect your eligibility, like your immigration status, where your child lives, and your child's exact age.

You can read more about this on the government website: gov.uk/browse/benefits

Where to get help?

Talk to us: speak to your centre director – they'll explain how the funding could apply to you and how stretching might work.

Check the government website: if you're struggling to make sense of eligibility, or want to find out about government schemes and incentives, visit gov.uk and follow the relevant links.

Universal funded childcare for 3 year olds

This funding goes towards 15 hours of childcare across 38 weeks of term time. All parents of 3 and 4 year olds can access this scheme.

Here's what you need to know:

- All 3 and 4 year olds qualify for this scheme.
- At Busy Bees, we 'stretch' these hours over the whole year for more flexibility. How we do this varies between our nurseries, as it depends on how many weeks a particular centre can stretch the funding for, but most of our parents access around 11.4 funded hours per week over 50 weeks. Your centre team can advise what stretch applies at your child's nursery.
- Our parents usually need their child to spend longer in nursery than funding allows, but that's no problem. We offer additional, non-funded hours to fit in with your schedule – see our fees on [page 10-11](#) for more details.
- You might be eligible for 15 hours' funded childcare at the same time as other government schemes or incentives. To find out more, visit gov.uk/browse/benefits

We also offer the scheme to some 2 year olds already in receipt of government support, if:

- Parents are receiving certain benefits
- The child has Disability Living Allowance or Special Education Needs (SEND)
- The child has a kinship or guardianship order
- The child is being looked after by a local authority.

Our 15 hours' funded places for 2 year olds can be limited. To find out more, speak to your nursery.



At Busy Bees...

We try and make things as consistent and simple as possible for our parents however, government funding is administered through individual local authorities who may have differing requirements, processes and timescales which affects how funding is delivered. Therefore there may be slight variations in our processes depending on the local authority of your local Busy Bees Centre.



Introducing Busy Bees One.

Government funding covers core care hours but excludes meals, nappies, extra hours, and trips. It's important to note that government funding is not intended to cover the full cost of childcare.

Busy Bees One includes our NHS Startwell accredited menus made fresh on-site by our chefs, and consumables such as nappies, wipes and sun cream*, all in one package, ensuring the best quality experience for children, and peace of mind and convenience for you.

*Some Busy Bees centres do not offer consumables. Please check with your local centre or view the fee sheet online.





One Package. Endless Benefits.

What's included in the package?

Food

- Three nutritious and balanced meals per day
- NHS Startwell accredited menus
- Freshly prepared by our on-site chef
- A range of snacks and drinks

Consumables

Unlimited nappies, wipes and sun cream.

Please note: Consumables are not provided at all centres. This is standard practice at some locations, so please check with your Centre Director for local availability.

Leading the way in Early Years nutrition

We're the only UK-wide early years provider with NHS-accredited menus, offering freshly prepared, nutritious meals made on-site by trained chefs. With our hassle-free Busy Bees One package, there's no need to prepare food yourself as everything your child needs is provided.

More than just a meal

Mealtimes are key learning moments, helping children develop confidence in exploring new tastes, handling food, and using cutlery - all essential skills for school readiness.

Fostering curiosity and independence

Our diverse menus and engaging routines encourage independence, social skills, and adventurous eating habits, all in a supportive, inclusive environment.

Thinking of opting out?

If you are considering opting out of Busy Bees One, please first discuss your decision with the Centre Director. They will explain the process and provide you with the relevant policy information. **Please note** that we require at least one calendar month's notice to process your request. This allows us to update our records, adjust invoices, and ensure the centre is fully prepared for any changes related to your child's care. If you choose to provide your own items before the notice period expires, the relevant charges will still apply.



How that looks

Now you have an overview of government funding and fees, let's take a look at how it all works together. See below our most popular scenario to give you a clearer idea of how funding at Busy Bees might work for you.

*These figures are used as an example to demonstrate how funding works only. Price of non-funded hours and food & consumables may vary per nursery.

Full-time place

(Stretching funding x 50 weeks) for 50 hours over 5 days from 8am to 6pm



Funded hours

22.8hrs - No cost to parents



Non-funded hours

27.2hrs - Chargeable according to the rate of the session (in this case the **full-time** rate)



Charged per funded session. Charges may vary slightly between centres.



Making childcare go further

For most of our parents, 15 or 30 hours' childcare isn't quite enough. That's why we stretch funded hours into longer spells at our centres, to fit better with working parents' schedules. Having a consistent routine can be great for your child's development, too.

Applying for funding

How and when you need to apply for your childcare funding depends on your child's age, the scheme and some other factors. We've broken it down for you below.

When to apply

You might be wondering when your child will be able to use the 15 and 30 hours of government funding. It's all down to when their birthday falls, so make sure you plan ahead. For Working Family Funding, you'll need to apply online for an eligibility code.

Working family funding for when the child becomes eligible	
Recommended time to apply for eligibility code:	Last date to apply for Eligibility code:
15th October to 30th November	by 31st December to be funded from 1st January
15th January to 28th February	by 31st March to be funded from 1st April
15th June to 31st July	by 31st August to be funded from 1st September

If you're a parent of an eligible 2 year old, the earliest you can apply for funding directly through your local authority is at the beginning of the term in which your child turns two.



Don't forget!

Every three months, sign into your HMRC childcare account to reconfirm your working family funding eligibility code. If you forget, you might lose your funding for the following term, which means you'll have to pay our standard fee for any time that isn't covered by the basic *15 hours scheme.



* 15hrs is not available to all age groups.



How to apply

Universal funded childcare for 3 and 4 year olds

For 3 and 4 year olds, all you have to do is get in touch with your nearest Busy Bees nursery. Our lovely team will talk you through the process and ask to see your child's birth certificate or passport as proof of your eligibility. It's as simple as that!

For eligible 2 year olds already in receipt of government support, you must get written confirmation from your local authority first. Then, just show it to the director of your chosen Busy Bees centre and if eligible, your funding will start the term following application.

Working family funded childcare

The process is a little more complicated for the working family funding, and takes around 20 minutes – so make sure you have time set aside to do it properly. We've explained it below.

Universal funded childcare	
A child turning 3 between:	Can be funded from:
1st September to 31st December	1st January
1st January to 31st March	1st April
1st April to 31st August	1st September

STEP 1

Visit the government website: gov.uk/apply-30-hours-free-childcare



STEP 2

Provide your supporting documents, like your child's passport.



STEP 3

Apply for your eligibility code. You'll need your National Insurance number too.



STEP 6

Remember to reconfirm your eligibility every three months.



STEP 5

Submit your eligibility code to Busy Bees at www.busybeeschildcare.co.uk/submit-funding-code, along with your National Insurance number, full name, and date of birth.



STEP 4

Wait for a decision. It might be instant, but can take up to seven days.

FAQs

Any questions?



Do Busy Bees offer totally free places?

Yes, although we prefer to call these 'funded', not 'free'. All our centres offer funded places where parents can access their funded hours without any additional charges. Many families, however, still choose our all-inclusive Busy Bees One package, which offers excellent value and convenience. It includes freshly prepared, nutritious meals, snacks, and drinks, as well as essential items such as nappies, wipes, and sun cream. This ensures children enjoy a consistent, high-quality experience while making things easier for busy parents.

How many hours will my child be funded each day at Busy Bees?

In short, it depends on the centre's opening hours, the number of funded hours you have, and how often your child is in nursery. Funded sessions are capped at ten hours per day by the government, and in line with these guidelines, we are only able to fund a maximum of 10 hours per day. We also don't offer childcare by the hour. As a Busy Bees parent, each month you'll be sent a monthly invoice, which shows your child's funded hours as well as any chargeable non-funded hours and the fee for food and consumables. So, it'll always be clear how many funded hours have been used each day.

If I pay for extra hours and don't use them, can I be refunded?

Unfortunately, not. We must make sure we cover all our running and team costs to provide high quality care for every child at Busy Bees.

Can I roll over my funded hours into the next term?

Sorry, due to restrictions by various local authorities we can't roll over your hours, but we can stretch your child's funding instead. Please speak to the centre director at your child's nursery to find out more.



Nurseries in my area allow parents to send in packed lunches. Does Busy Bees?

At Busy Bees, we're proud to include freshly prepared, [NHS Startwell accredited meals](#) as part of our Busy Bees One offering. By maintaining this approach, we can create a safe, inclusive, and enriching mealtime environment that supports children's well-being and development.

If you choose to opt out of the Busy Bees One, we regret to inform you that **we cannot allow pack lunches and only home-prepared hot meals will be permitted**. This decision has been made after careful consideration and is based on several important factors:

- Nutritional Consistency** - Ensuring all children have access to well-balanced meals that meet high nutritional standards. Packed lunches, while convenient, can vary greatly and are often higher in fats, salt, and sugars.
- Independence & Learning** - Mealtimes provide essential learning opportunities, such as using cutlery effectively, which supports fine motor skill development.
- Food Safety** - Hot meals undergo a reheating process to above 75°C, which helps reduce harmful bacteria to safer levels for safer consumption. In contrast, packed lunches pose a higher risk due to being stored out of the fridge for several hours and not undergoing the reheating process.

I've missed the deadline to apply for my Eligibility Code. Can my child still be funded?

Codes only provide funding in the term after you apply, so if you miss the deadline (on the last day of March, August and December), we will not be able to access the funded hours until next term. If your child is 3 or above then you're still eligible for 15 hours, because it's available to all children, regardless of whether parents are working. HMRC might prompt you to reconfirm your code before the start of the new term, so please remember to do this to stay eligible. When you have your code, please submit this to us online via our [webpage](#) and we'll check it's valid with the local authority and confirm your child's place.

I'm planning to take my child on holiday. How will this affect my funded childcare?

If you're planning on being away for under two weeks, generally this is fine, but the more notice you can provide, the better. If it's likely to be longer than this, talk to the team at your child's nursery. They will need to check with the local authority about whether funding can continue.

What should I do if I need to change how long my child attends nursery?

We ask for one month's notice, however if this applies to funded childcare, then speak to the team at your child's centre. Some changes may affect your child's funding claim and depending on the hours involved or when the changes are asked for, they may not be allowed by your local authority until the start of a new term.

Quick Recap: What Parents Need to Know



Funded sessions are capped at ten hours per day by the government.

If your centre is open for longer than this, then please discuss the charges for accessing the full open hours with your local Centre Director.

Government funding is not intended to cover the full cost of childcare, including food and consumables* such as nappies, wipes and suncream. Our new **Busy Bees One package** offers food and consumables* (where available) in funded sessions. On privately paid sessions, food and consumables (where available) are included within the fees. If you are considering opting out of Busy Bees One, please speak to your Centre Director.

Any privately paid sessions automatically include food and consumables* and therefore there is no need to opt in to this package on those days (*where available. Please check with your local centre).

You can find all fees and Busy Bees One package costs on your centre's fee sheet, available on our [website](#).



If you need any **extra advice**, support or information, we've put together some quick links and contact details below.

Government website: visit www.beststartinlife.gov.uk for a wealth of information on the government funded childcare schemes.

Busy Bees website: visit busybeeschildcare.co.uk to find out more about us, and how we can give your child the best start in life. You can also read our [Terms & Conditions](#) and [Admissions Policy](#) documents when you're ready to take that next step.

