

A guide to Government Childcare Funding at The Learning Tree Kindergarten.

Reviewed September 2026



We know funding is complex! Our guide aims to summarise and simplify what Government support is available and how this is offered at The Learning Tree, allowing you to make an informed decision about what is right for your family.

Funding and Childcare support – what help is available?

Early Years Funding is a national scheme, administered by local authorities, which offers funded childcare hours with an Ofsted registered provider. A variety of funded hours are available depending on the child's age and the family's situation.

9months- 3years Working Parents Entitlement

- ❖ From September 2025, eligible working families can access 30 hours (22 stretched) childcare, from the term after the child turns 9months.

2 year old Early Learning Funding

- ❖ Low income families receiving some additional form of Government support, or children with an Education, Health, and Care Plan may be entitled to 15 hours (11 stretched) per week of funded early learning.

3-4 year old funding

- ❖ **ALL** children become eligible for the '**Universal Government Funding**' of 15 hours (11 stretched) per week from the term after their 3rd birthday.
- ❖ Eligible working families can also access a further 15 hours (11 stretched) childcare through the **Working Parents Entitlement** which combined with the universal funding, equates to 30 hours (22 stretched) per week.

Tax-Free Childcare for working families.

- ❖ For every £8 you pay into your tax-free childcare account, the Government will add an extra £2, making a possible saving of up to £2,000 per child per year. This can be used in conjunction with the Government funding.

Universal Credit

- ❖ Working families who are eligible for Universal Credit, can claim back up to 85% of their monthly childcare costs.

Childcare vouchers

- ❖ This scheme has now been replaced by tax free childcare, but if you are already using vouchers, you can continue to do so.

Who is eligible and how can I apply?

The expansion of 15 and 30 hours is aimed at working families. For further details on the range of Government childcare support options available to you and your family and to **check your eligibility visit** <https://childcare.beststartinlife.gov.uk>



You will need a valid eligibility code from HMRC to claim either 15 or 30 hours.

1. **Check you are eligible**
2. **Check when you can apply** - you need to apply the term before you want to take up the place, see table below.
3. **Apply for your childcare code*** - if eligible, you will get an online childcare account and a code for the funded hours. If you use Tax Free Childcare, once you reconfirm your entitlement, you will then receive your code.
4. **Give the code to us*** - along with your national insurance number and your child's date of birth and child's ID. We will check if your code is valid.
5. **Complete a parent declaration form** - Regulation requires childcare providers to enter into a separate funding agreement with parents, called the Parent Declaration Form. The local authority Parent Declaration form must be signed returned to us, without this Early Years Funding cannot be claimed.
6. **Start accessing funded hours** – we will claim funding directly from the local authority and apply the funding to your invoice.
7. **Reconfirm*** - every 3 months you must log onto your HMRC childcare account and confirm your details are up to date or your code expires.

*Steps 3, 4 & 7 are not required if you are only claiming Universal Entitlement (15 Hours for children over 3) as no code is required.

<u>From September 2025</u> A child that turns 9 months of age between: **	Must get a HMRC code in place before:	Can access the working parent entitlement from:
1 st April- 31 st August	31 st August	1 st September
1 st September- 31 st December	31 st December	1 st January
1 st January- 31 st March	31 st March	1 st April

Returning to work from Parental Leave*

(*Parental leave includes maternity, paternity, shared parental, adoption or other parental leave)

For parents applying for the **child who is the subject of the parental leave**, the **date they return to work determines when they can access their funded hours**.

The current rules are as follows:

Return to work date	When you can apply	When funding can be accessed from
1 October – 31 January	1 September – 31 December	1 January (Spring term)
1 February – 30 April	1 January – 31 March	1 April (Summer term)
1 May – 30 September	1 April – 31 August	1 September (Autumn term)

- Paid annual leave is treated as having “returned to work.” It’s common for parents to use accrued annual leave at the end of parental leave to extend their time at home, and the start date of this paid leave is counted as their return-to-work date for eligibility purposes.
- If there are two parents, both need to have returned or be due to return within the same period.

Applying for childcare for an older child, who is not the subject of the parental leave, can be done as normal and is not impacted by the return to work date.



Stretched Funding- Making funding work for working families.

The Government only offers funded hours during the 38 weeks of term time which equates to 570 hours a year for 15 hours, or 1,140 hours a year for 30 hours. Whilst this works in a school environment, it doesn't suit early years when nursery places are usually needed throughout the year.

At The Learning Tree Kindergarten, we have designed our offering to suit the needs of working families and to ensure your bills don't escalate in non-term time.

We are open all year round and use the 'Stretched Offer'. This is the same number of funded hours but spread over the whole year. This means, that when stretched, the 30 or 15 funded hours become approx. 22 or 11 hours per week, respectively. We do not offer term time only places.

Please note, children that start accessing funded hours, or increase the number of funded hours claimed in either the Spring term (January) or Summer term (April) may find their weekly stretched funded hours are slightly less per week than 11 or 22. This is due to the way the Department of Education and Peterborough Local Authority apportion the funding by term. Once the academic year resets in September this issue is rectified. If this applies, we will discuss what this means on a case-by-case basis.

Sharing funding with another setting

DfE stipulates that Government funding can be split with another provider. If your child will be attending another setting as well as us, we will work with the other setting to ensure the best possible experience for your child.

However, you must notify us before registering at another setting so we can work out how funding will be split and add the details onto your Parental Declaration to ensure the correct claim with the local authority. Failure to do so may result in being charged at our standard fees in the case of an over claim of funded hours.

Funding- What is included?

Early Years Funding is intended to cover the delivery of childcare only and does not cover all costs of providing high-quality early years education.

The Department for Education (DfE) states:

“Government funding for the entitlements does not cover consumables like meals, nappies or sun cream, additional hours or additional activities, such as trips, so providers are able to ask parents to pay for these things. The Department is not encouraging parents to opt out, and we know that many parents prefer to purchase consumables from their provider”.



Childcare funding at The Learning Tree Kindergarten

We make it easy for parents to access funded hours, but in a way that is viable for us to maintain quality and future sustainability.

The Learning Tree Kindergarten is committed to providing high-quality early years education in a nurturing home from home environment. We aim to make life as easy as possible, providing everything for your child's time at nursery so there are no other hidden costs or unexpected charges throughout the year. We are one of the few nurseries in Peterborough to provide all nappies, wipes, formula milk and homecooked meals. We also strive to provide our children with a wide range of enriching and inspiring experiences to help them enjoy and discover the world around them, including additional activities, trips and visitors.

Whilst the Government funding does not fully cover the actual costs of delivering high-quality early years education, we never want to compromise the quality of our provision. **We provide Government funded hours at no cost to you and these are shown as free at the point of delivery on your invoice. However, to cover the cost of all meals and snacks, health and hygiene consumables and curriculum enhancements, activities, trips and visitors that are not included in the funding, we have created an 'all-inclusive package' at an additional charge.** This Additional Charge for funded hours offers value for money and allows us to continue to provide our 'All-Inclusive' high quality service and flexibility that our families have come to expect.

For those not qualifying for funding, the daily fee already includes our 'all inclusive' enhanced provision for your child so the additional charge does not apply.

We have always been proud to operate a system whereby disadvantaged families are not penalised, and any families suffering genuine hardship are always encouraged to discuss their situation with us to see what support is available.

Funding options at The Learning Tree- Transparency and parental choice



It is important that our pricing and fees are clear and transparent, so parents can make an informed choice as to the type of education they want for their child.

'Providers, who choose to offer the funded entitlements, are responsible for setting their own policy on providing parents with options for alternatives to additional charges' **Early education and childcare statutory guidance Feb 2025**

Accessing the funded hours and our additional services is down to parental choice. Additional charges are not mandatory or a barrier to accessing a funded place. **In accordance with DfE statutory guidance and in consultation with the Local Authority, if your child is eligible for Government funding, this can be used at The Learning Tree in one of two ways...**

Option 1) Flexible 'All Inclusive' funded place

- Minimum of 4 sessions (combination of 2 full days or 4 half days)
- Opportunity to book additional paid or part funded sessions, subject to availability and in accordance with our nursery fee structure.
- All health & hygiene consumables; nappies, nappy sacks, nappy cream, wet wipes and sun cream.
- All drinks, meals and snacks cooked freshly on the premises by our Nursery Chef.
- Formula milk and bottles if applicable.
- Full access to our enhanced provision, including additional activities, workshops, visitors and trips.
- Full 'FAMILY' access - our online communication platform.
- Funded day 0-3 year olds 8am-5.30pm (9.5hrs).
- Extended opening hours as standard for funded 3-4 year olds in a preschool group attending a full day 7.45am-5.45pm (10hrs).
- £50 non-refundable registration fee. £100 deposit refunded once the child leaves.

Transparent Fee structure and Additional Charge for funded hours.

All-inclusive funded additional charge	
Half day	❖ £8.75
Full day	❖ £17.50

Option 2) 'Funded only' place

- 2 x half day sessions only available per week.
- Set sessions of Monday and Friday PM 1.30-5.30pm, (8 hours funding).
- Limited availability, subject to change and reviewed termly.
- No access to additional paid sessions or flexible 'all inclusive' option.
- Nursery place will not include...
 - Nursery meals and snacks
 - Health and hygiene consumables package
 - Enhanced provision – trips, visitors, activities, celebrations above the EYFS.
- Basic 'FAMILY' access only.
- Full adherence to our 'Funded only- opt out policy' at all times.
- No registration fee.
- £100 deposit taken to secure the place. Refunded after the first 4 weeks if the place is taken up.

No Additional Charge for funded hours