

Early Years Funded Places for 2, 3&4 year olds in Lancashire – A Guide for Professionals



Lancashire County Council aims to provide young children with the best possible opportunities to develop physically, emotionally and socially and to fully achieve **this we need your help!** We realise that you play an important role in supporting families at critical points in their lives and with your support we believe we can help Lancashire's children to thrive.

Some of the families that you are working with will have children that are entitled to funded, early education sessions at a local childminder or nursery but are unaware they are entitled to these sessions or may need a little help to take up their place.

We have designed this guide to provide you with an overview of the key messages that can assist you in helping children and families in Lancashire access their early years entitlements.



2 YEAR OLDS
Play, Learn & Grow



3 & 4 YEAR OLDS
Play, Learn & Grow

Early years funded places for 2 year olds

Some families are eligible to claim 15 hours per week (up to a max of 570 per year) funding to enable them to access a place at an early years setting. Children qualify from the term following their 2nd birthday.

Families may be eligible if:

- Their economic circumstances deem them to be a low income family (e.g. in receipt of certain benefits/household income is below the minimum thresholds)
- Their child is receiving support from social care or have been previously looked after (e.g. Child in Need, Child Protection, Child Looked After)
- Their child is receiving Disability Living Allowance, has an Education Health and Care Plan in place, or is in receipt of Portage support.
- They are children of Gypsy, Roma Traveller families.
- They are children of armed forces personnel residing in Lancashire.
- [Further information about eligibility can be found on our website.](#)
- [Families need to check if they are eligible through our eligibility checker.](#)
- Where families qualify under the 'non-economic' circumstances you, as a professional working with the family can make a referral by completing a 2 year old [referral form.](#)

Early years funded places for 3&4 year olds

- All 3&4 year olds in Lancashire are eligible to claim 15 hours per week funding to enable them to access a place at an early years setting (up to a max of 570 per year). Children qualify from the term following their 3rd birthday. [For further information please see our website.](#)

30 Hours funded childcare for 3&4 year olds

- Some working families of 3 and 4 year olds are also entitled to an additional 15 hours per week (i.e. 30 hours per week, up to a total of 1,140 hours per year), if they meet the [eligibility criteria](#).
- To qualify, both parents have to be working (or be a working single parent), earning above the minimum income threshold, which is the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the minimum or living wage (approximately £103-£140 per week depending on age).
- It doesn't matter if parents work less than 16 hours per week providing the earnings are above the minimum threshold. [For further information please see our website.](#)
- To check eligibility and apply parents need to apply via the, [Gov website](#). There is one application for 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare and as part of their application, parents will find out if they can get both.



Other financial support to help working families with the cost of childcare

In addition to the early years funding for 2, 3 4 year olds there are a number of other government support packages to help families towards the cost of childcare:

- [Tax Free Childcare \(TFC\)](#) – an online payment account, topped up by the Government, which parents use solely to pay their childcare costs. For every £8 that families pay in, the Government will make a top-up payment of £2, up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year (or £4,000 for disabled children).
- [Universal Credit \(UC\)](#) – families in receipt of universal credit can claim up to 85% of their childcare care costs back up to a up to a maximum of £646 per month for one child in childcare or up to £1108 with two or more children
- [Working Tax Credit \(WTC\)](#) – families can get up to 70% of their childcare costs covered up to a maximum of £122.50 per week for one child in childcare, or £210 for two or more children. This is slowly being phased out and replaced with universal credit, so it will depend which area a family lives in as to whether they are eligible.

A little extra support...

Parents and carers can find a suitable childcare provider that will meet their needs using the [childcare search](#) options available on our website, but for those that might need a little bit of extra support, our Family Information Service (FIS) is here to help. The friendly team are happy to answer any questions families may have and will provide any advice and support needed even after the child has taken up a place. The service can be accessed by calling **0300 123 6712** or by emailing **FIS@lancashire.gov.uk**

Further Support/Information

We have also created a [flyer](#) and a [guide for parents](#) to show the benefits of taking up a place to their child. You may want to use these when speaking to families.

Further information about the early years entitlements can be found by contacting the Early Years Entitlements team at:

fee234@lancashire.gov.uk
or telephone **01772 533552**.

This email/telephone number is for professionals working with families.

Families and carers who require any support should be directed to our Family Information Service by calling **0300 123 6712** or by emailing **FIS@lancashire.gov.uk**

