

# **Guidance for parents on reopening of applications for The Childcare Offer for Wales: coronavirus.**

## **1. If I submitted my application to the local authority before the pandemic, what should I do now?**

- If you submitted an application before 1 April, you should contact your local authority to check if they still hold your details and tell them you are still interested in taking up the Offer.

## **2. I am taking up the Offer at the moment and my child is in regular attendance at the childcare setting, do I need to do anything?**

- If you applied for the Offer before 1 April and your child is in regular attendance at their setting then you do not need to do anything at this time. You will stop being eligible for the Offer once your child is offered a full time education place or if your circumstances, including your income, changes in a way which affects your eligibility for the Offer. If that is the case, you should discuss your circumstances with your local authority.

## **3. My child turned 3 before the summer school term and I think I may have missed out on one term of eligibility, what should I do?**

- If you think you will still be eligible in the Autumn Term, contact your local Family Information Service or look at your local authority's website for further information on what to do next. We are unable to back date the cost of any childcare that has been missed as a result of the suspension of the Offer.

## **4. My child turned 3 during the summer school term, what do I need to do to take up the Offer from September?**

- You will need to contact your local Family Information Service or look at your local authority's website for further information on what to do next. Each local authority will have their own process and timescales for applying for the Offer.

## **5. Will I be entitled to holiday provision for the summer term which I've missed?**

- If you were eligible for and using the Offer before 31 March and you continued to use the Offer throughout the summer term you may be able to claim holiday hours that you have not used. However, if your provider has received holiday funding (30 hours per week) for you between 18 March and 22 June this will be deducted from your entitlement. The 30

hours will be paid only if you have unused holiday allowance and where there is space at a setting for your child.

- In any other situation you would not be entitled to holiday provision. Your local Family Information Service can tell you if you are entitled to holiday provision.

**6. Can I use the Offer during the summer holidays to cover holiday clubs?**

- Yes, holiday clubs can deliver the childcare element of the Offer, providing they are registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (or equivalent in England) and providing you have some holiday entitlement left to use. You can accrue 3 weeks of holiday entitlement for each term you are eligible for the Offer and can carry any unused weeks over from one term to the next. Due to the number of settings closing because of COVID-19 it will be your responsibility to find a holiday club that best meets your childcare needs. You can speak with your Family Information Service for advice on services available locally. If, for any reason, a provider does not want to participate in the delivery of the Offer, it will be for you to decide whether to continue with the preferred provider or to use an alternative provider through which you can access the Childcare Offer.

**7. The local authority is taking a long time to process my application and I need to access childcare so that I can work**

- Local authorities are dealing with a high volume of applications, some of which are complex and take time to fully assess. They are prioritising applications from parents whose children have missed one term of funded childcare and will then move on to consider applications from parents becoming eligible from September. It will always help if you provide all of the information required for a local authority to consider your application, as this is likely to save time.

**8. Can I start using childcare although the local authority hasn't processed my application yet?**

- You need to have your application approved by the local authority and agreed with your provider before you can start to claim the Offer. If you choose to access childcare whilst you are waiting for your application to be processed this will be at your own cost.

**9. Can I swap early years hours for childcare hours?**

- Under no circumstances can you swap your Foundation Phase Nursery hours for childcare hours. You can however speak to your childcare provider to organise additional childcare which you must pay for yourself.

**10. My school is doing a staggered start for early education and doesn't start until later in the week, can I access more hours of childcare on the days when my child is not in early education provision?**

- You are unable to swap your Foundation Phase Nursery (FPN) hours for childcare hours. If your school is doing a staggered start you will not be able to claim additional hours from the Offer to cover any FPN hours which are not available.

**11. I don't know what childcare options are available to me in my local area.**

- Your local Family Information Service can provide information on what help is available in local areas and may be able to offer advice and options based on your specific circumstances.

**12. Can my child attend more than one setting funded under the Offer?**

- Limiting social contacts is an important part of reducing the likelihood of seeing large outbreaks of the virus. Children should remain in the same, consistent group for the duration of their time at their childcare setting. If a child attends more than one setting, for example school and wrap-around or out of school childcare, the child should remain in the same group across both settings wherever possible. Where this is not possible they should remain in consistent groups within each setting to reduce the overall number of contacts.
- Where children need to attend more than one setting, parents and settings should discuss these risks and consider how to manage them to reduce the spread of the virus while adhering to the guidance about protecting children and staff from coronavirus - <https://gov.wales/protecting-staff-and-children-coronavirus-childcare>

**13. My income has dropped as a result of Covid-19, do I need to let my local authority know?**

- Yes, you should notify your local authority of any changes to your circumstances. If you have fallen out of eligibility because, as a result of COVID-19, your income has fallen below 16 hours at the applicable minimum wage, you may be able to continue to receive the Offer for a period of time.

**14. I'd like to apply for the Offer from September, but I'm earning less now than I was before Covid-19**

- If you are applying for the Offer for the first time from September 2020, you may be considered eligible if you can evidence to the local authority that you would normally meet the eligibility criteria for the Offer.

#### **15. What other help is available to me with childcare costs?**

- Your local Family Information Service can provide information on what help is available in your local area and may be able to offer advice and options based on your specific circumstances.
- The UK Government can also provide help with childcare costs:
  - **Tax Free Childcare**  
<https://www.gov.uk/get-tax-free-childcare?step-by-step-nav=f237ec8e-e82c-4ffa-8fba-2a88a739783b>
  - **Tax Credits**
- <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/tax-credits?step-by-step-nav=f237ec8e-e82c-4ffa-8fba-2a88a739783b>

#### **16. Will my benefits be effected by using the Offer?**

- Any funding you get from us towards your childcare costs could affect other benefits you get.

#### **17. Tax Free childcare**

- If you get tax-free childcare you need to report any changes to HMRC on GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/sign-in-childcare-account?step-by-step-nav=d78aeaf6-1747-4d72-9619-f16efb4dd89d> - when you reconfirm your details every 3 months. This includes funding you get from us to help pay for childcare costs. You may be able to use tax-free childcare to pay for extra costs such as food, transport and retainer fees. You need to check with HMRC if you can claim these cost as part of tax-free childcare.

#### **18. Universal Credit**

- If you get the childcare part of Universal Credit you need to report any changes in your family or work life to Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on GOV.UK - <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/changes-of-circumstances>

#### **19. Tax credits**

- If you get tax credits you need to report any changes in your family or work life to HMRC on GOV.UK. This includes funding from us to help pay for childcare costs - <https://www.gov.uk/changes-affect-tax-credits>

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