

Did you know that if you have a child under 5 years old you may be entitled to funded childcare and education?

What are the benefits of funded childcare and early education?

There are a number of benefits for both your child and your family of taking up funded childcare, such as:

- Improving your child's social skills by mixing with other children of a similar age;
- Helping with your child's speech and development;
- Increasing your child's confidence and independence;
- Allowing parents to increase working hours, move into work or access training
- Giving parent/carers a break

Does my two year old qualify for funded childcare and education?

Two year old children with special educational needs or disabilities are often entitled to a funded 15 hour childcare place. To be eligible, children must meet the following criteria:

- Your child has a current statement of special educational need (SEN) or an education, health and care plan (EHC); or
- Your child receives disability living allowance

If your child meets any of these criteria and you want to apply for a funded childcare place then please contact 01782 232200 and press option one. If your child does not meet the above criteria then you could still be entitled to funded childcare and early education if you receive certain benefits and meet have a low income (income thresholds apply). You can check the full eligibility criteria and apply at www.stoke.gov.uk/beststart.

Two year olds also qualify who:

- Are looked after by their local authority
- Have left care through or through an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement order

For further information or to apply, please click here or contact 01782 232200 and select option one.

Funded childcare places for three and four year olds

All three and four year olds in Stoke-on-Trent are entitled to funded childcare and early education.

Children are entitled to 15 hours each week, usually over 38 weeks each year during school term time (570 hours), although some settings may 'stretch' the entitlement and offer you less hours over more weeks, for example 11 hours each week over 51 weeks.

Contact a local a provider to book you place and they will do the rest.

You can search for providers of places at www.stoke.gov.uk/beststart.

Is my three or four year old entitled to 30 hours funded childcare?

Parents of three and four year olds may be entitled to an additional 15 hours per week of funded childcare if they are in work.

- You, and any partner, must each expect to earn (on average) the equivalent of working 16 hours a week at your national minimum wage (£125 at the National Living Wage, less if you are on the National Minimum Wage).
- If you, or your partner, are on maternity, paternity or adoption leave, or you're unable to work because you are disabled or have caring responsibilities, you could still be eligible.
- You can't get 30 hours funded childcare if you, or your partner, expect to earn £100,000 or more.

You can apply for 30 hours funded childcare at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk.

Is there anything else that I need to know?

Funded early education is usually available from the start of the term after the child's birthday and places are available at a range of early years settings including childminders, day nurseries and preschool play groups. Maintained nurseries, schools and academies also offer provision.

All providers of free early education and childcare in Stoke-on-Trent are supported by the local authority to provide inclusive care that meets the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Please contact the provider for further details of expertise and experience of caring for children with specific needs