

# **Funded early learning sessions for 2, 3, and 4 year olds.**

*A guide for partners and supporters.*





# About funded sessions

All the small things a child learns in their earliest years can make a big difference later.

Funded early learning childcare sessions at a nursery, pre-school or childminder can help a child:

- make friends and have fun
- develop routines
- grow their language and communication skills
- get ready for school

In Staffordshire some **two year olds** and all **three and four year olds** are eligible for funded sessions at a childminder, preschool or day nursery.

Please use the resources in this toolkit to encourage parents to take up funded sessions.



## In this guide you will find:

- Funding for 2 year olds - **page 3**
- Funding for 3 and 4 year olds – **page 6**
- Useful contacts - **page 11**
- Other funding - **page 12**
- Resources to help you promote the funding – **page 13**

page 2



# Age 2

Some 2 year old children are eligible for funded early learning childcare sessions at a childminder, nursery or preschool. In Staffordshire this is called Think 2.

- 2 year olds whose families receive certain forms of financial or practical support are eligible.
- A maximum of 570 hours can be taken per year:
  - 15 hours per week for 38 weeks (term time)
  - Some providers will allow parents to 'stretch' the hours, using fewer hours per week for up to 52 weeks.
- Parents choose which childminder, preschool, day nursery, or out of school club to use - they can use more than one.
- Sessions are funded from the term after an eligible child's second birthday.



## More about Think 2

- Eligibility - [page 4](#)
- How to apply - [page 5](#)



# Age 2 Eligibility

## **Family claims:**

- Income Support or Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit, and has a household income of £15,400 a year or less
- Child Tax Credit OR Working Tax Credit and a household income of £16,190 a year or less
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

## **2 year olds who:**

- Receive a Disability Living Allowance
- Are looked after by their local authority
- Have left care through special guardianship or through an adoption or residence order
- Have an Education, Health and Care plan



**The list above may change, please visit**

**[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2) to see the full criteria.**



# Age 2

## How to apply

Parents apply to Staffordshire County Council for Think 2 funding.

### Apply online

The easiest and quickest way to apply is online at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2)

If a parent can't get online to apply, they can visit a Staffordshire library, children's centre, childminder, preschool, or nursery who will help them apply.



- Apply from the term the child has their 2nd birthday or at any point after.
- If a child is confirmed as eligible for Think2, the funding will stay in place until they attend school, even if the family circumstances change.





# Age 3 and 4

Every 3 and 4 year old child is eligible for funded early learning childcare sessions at a childminder, nursery or preschool. In Staffordshire this is called universal funding.

- All 3 and 4 year olds in Staffordshire.
- A maximum of 570 hours can be taken per year:
  - 15 hours per week for 38 weeks (term time)
  - Some providers will allow parents to 'stretch' the hours over 52 weeks, using fewer hours per week
- Parents choose which childminder, preschool or nursery to use - they can use more than one.
- The funded hours will start from the term after the child's 3rd birthday.



**Parents go straight to a registered or approved childminder, nursery or preschool to book their child's place, there's no need to apply for the funding.**



# Age 3 and 4 Extra hours (30 hours)

Some 3 and 4 year olds whose families are working, are entitled to an extra 15 hours of early education, this gives them a total of up to 30 hours per week.

- For working families in Staffordshire.
- A maximum of 570 hours can be taken per year:
  - 15 hours per week for 38 weeks (term time)
  - Some providers will allow parents to 'stretch' the hours, using fewer hours per week for up to 52 weeks.
- Parents choose which childminder, preschool or nursery to use - they can use more than one.



**Apply online for the extra 15 hours at:**  
**[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)**



# How you can help

Proactively promote the funding and encourage parents to take up their child's place by:

- Displaying posters or digital screens in high footfall areas.
- Sharing posts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Linked In.
- Adding information to bulletins, newsletters and emails.

Resources to help you promote the funding are available on [page 13](#) of this guide.







# What we're doing

Each term we send a postcard through the post to parents of two year olds who may be eligible for a place.

*Parents postcard front:*



*Parents postcard rear:*





# Questions?

Find out more about the funding, including answers to frequently asked questions, on our web pages.

- Age 2 - [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2)
- Age 3 and 4 - [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eef](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eef)



## Help finding a childcare provider

Visit Staffordshire Connects pages to search for childminders, preschools and nurseries near you.  
[www.staffordshireconnects.info/earlyyears](http://www.staffordshireconnects.info/earlyyears)



# Contact us

## Early Education and Childcare Team at Staffordshire County Council



[eeac@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:eeac@staffordshire.gov.uk)



01785 278 201



[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eeac](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eeac)



## Useful contacts

- Childcare Choices  
[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)
- Staffordshire Connects  
[www.staffordshireconnects.info](http://www.staffordshireconnects.info)



# Other funding

Some children may be eligible for other funding, including

## **Tax free childcare**

Government help for working families to pay for childcare.

[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

## **Early years pupil premium**

Funding paid to an eligible child's nursery, preschool or childminder.

[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/EYPP](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/EYPP)

## **Disability access fund**

Funding paid to an eligible child's nursery, preschool or childminder.

[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/DAF](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/DAF)

## **Special educational needs inclusion funding**

Funding paid to nursery, preschool or childminder to support a child with very significant difficulty.

[www.staffordshireconnects.info](http://www.staffordshireconnects.info)





# Promoting the funding

A digital pack of resources is available to help you promote the funding including:

- Think2 Staffordshire logo
- Suggested text and graphics to share on social media
- Prepared text to copy and paste into emails or newsletters
- Posters for you to print and display
- Digital display screen graphics
- Web banners and email signatures
- QR code linking to the web pages

!! When promoting the scheme, remember to always add the web address (or QR code) so that people can find out more:  
[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eeac](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eeac) !!





# Think 2 logo

The logo can be used alongside your own logo when promoting the scheme.

The logo is available as a PNG file (transparent background) or JPG file in full colour or white. Please click on the images below to download the files. If you need the images files please email [ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk).





# Suggested social media posts

You can just copy and paste the text below to use on social media, or feel free to amend to suit your audience.

**!!Remember to include a link to the web page in every post!!**

- Some 2 year olds in Staffordshire are eligible for a funded place at a preschool, nursery or childminder. Is your child eligible? Check online at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2)
- All 3 and 4 year olds in Staffordshire are eligible for funded early learning sessions at a childminder, nursery or preschool. Find out more at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eef](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eef)
- Could you get help with your childcare costs? Check online at [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)








# Images for Twitter, Facebook and Instagram


Please click on the images below to download. If you need the images files please email [ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk).



# Posters for you to print and display

Please click on the images below to download. If you need the images files please email [ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk).



**THINK 2** 

**Funded early learning sessions for 2 year olds.**

**Is your child eligible?**



[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2)





**All 3 and 4 years are entitled to funded sessions at a preschool, childminder, or nursery.**

**Find out more online.**

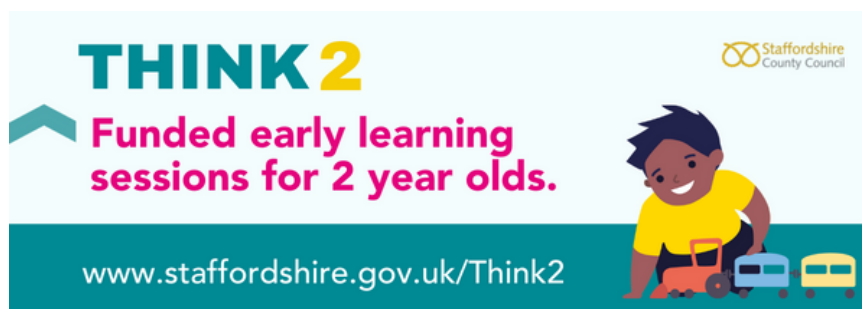


[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eeac](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eeac)



# Digital screen and web banner

Please click on the images below to download. If you need the images files please email [ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk).





# Pre-prepared text

Copy and paste the text below to use in emails or newsletters.

Subject: Funded early learning sessions for two, three and four year olds

Some 2 year olds and all children aged 3 and 4 years, are eligible for fully funded early learning sessions, at a childminder, preschool or nursery.

The sessions can help them:

- make friends and have fun
- grow their language and communication skills
- get ready for school

And, parents can use the time to return to training or work.

Find out who is eligible and how to apply at:

[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/helpwithchildcarecosts](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/helpwithchildcarecosts)

If you can't get online, ask at a Staffordshire Children's Centre or library.