

A guide for partners and supporters

# Funded childcare

for children aged 9 months  
to four years old





# 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 children from **nine months old**, 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 children from 9 months old - working parents - [page 3](#)
- Funding for 2 year olds - Think 2 - [page 4](#)
- Funding for 3 and 4 year olds - [page 8](#)
- Other funding - [page 10](#)
- Questions - [page 11](#)
- Useful contacts - [page 12](#)
- How you can help - [page 13](#)
- Resources to help you promote the funding - [page 14](#)



# Age 9 months

## For working parents

Some children whose families are working, are eligible for funded early learning childcare sessions at a childminder, nursery or preschool.

- For eligible working families in Staffordshire.
- Parents must be earning equivalent to the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage for 16 hours a week on average and not earning more than £100,000 each in the current tax year
- 30 hours per week for 38 weeks (term time)
- Parents choose which childminder, preschool or nursery to use - they can use more than one
- Funded childcare starts from the term after the child turns 9 months and if eligible remains until they start school



**Apply online at:**

**[www.beststartinlife.gov.uk](http://www.beststartinlife.gov.uk)**



# Age 2 - Think 2

## For families receiving additional government support

Some 2 year old children whose families receive additional government support are eligible for funded early learning childcare sessions at a childminder, nursery or preschool. In Staffordshire this is called **Think 2**.

- For families claiming certain benefits
- 15 hours per week for 38 weeks (term time)
- 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 5](#)
- How to apply - [page 6](#)



# Age 2 - Think 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)

### Children who:

- Receive 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 - Think 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 needs support, they can visit a Staffordshire library, Family Hub, childminder, preschool, or nursery who will help them to apply.



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



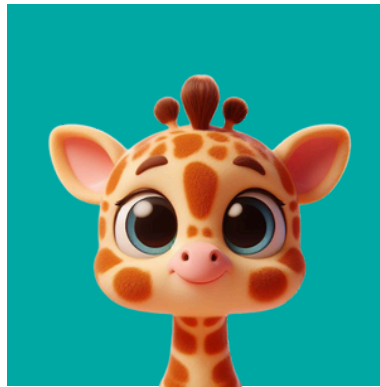
# Age 2 - Think 2

## Think 2 and working parent funding

Some parents whose child is eligible for Think 2 may also be working. If eligible, these families can also claim working parent funding to receive a combined total of 30 hours of funded childcare.



15 hours  
Think 2



15 hours  
working  
parent



30 hours  
funded  
childcare



**Parents must complete both applications.**

Apply online at:

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

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



# Age 3 and 4

## For all parents

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 can 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

## For working parents

Some 3 and 4 year olds whose families are working, are also 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.beststartinlife.gov.uk](http://www.beststartinlife.gov.uk)**



# Other funding

Some children may be eligible for other funding, including:

## **Tax free childcare**

Government help for working families to pay for childcare.

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



# Questions?

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

- Age 9 months working parents -  
[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare)
- Age 2 - Think 2 -  
[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2)
- Age 3 and 4 -  
[www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare)



## Help finding a childcare provider

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

Visit Staffordshire Connects to search for childminders, preschools and nurseries near you.



# Contact us

## Early Years Team at Staffordshire County Council



eeac@staffordshire.gov.uk



01785 278 201



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



## Useful contacts

- Best Start in Life  
[www.beststartinlife.gov.uk](http://www.beststartinlife.gov.uk)
- Staffordshire Connects  
[www.staffordshireconnects.info](http://www.staffordshireconnects.info)



# How you can help

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, Instagram and LinkedIn.
- Adding information to bulletins, newsletters and emails.

Use the resources in the rest of this guide to help you promote the funding.





# Promoting the funding

Digital resources are available to help you promote the funding including:

- Flowchart - [page 15](#)
- Videos - [page 16](#)
- Think 2 Staffordshire logo - [page 17](#)
- Suggested posts to share on social media - [pages 18 to 19](#)
- Poster, leaflet and digital web banner - [pages 20 to 22](#)
- Prepared text for emails or newsletters - [page 23](#)
- Promoting other funding - [page 24](#)

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/fundedchildcare](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare)

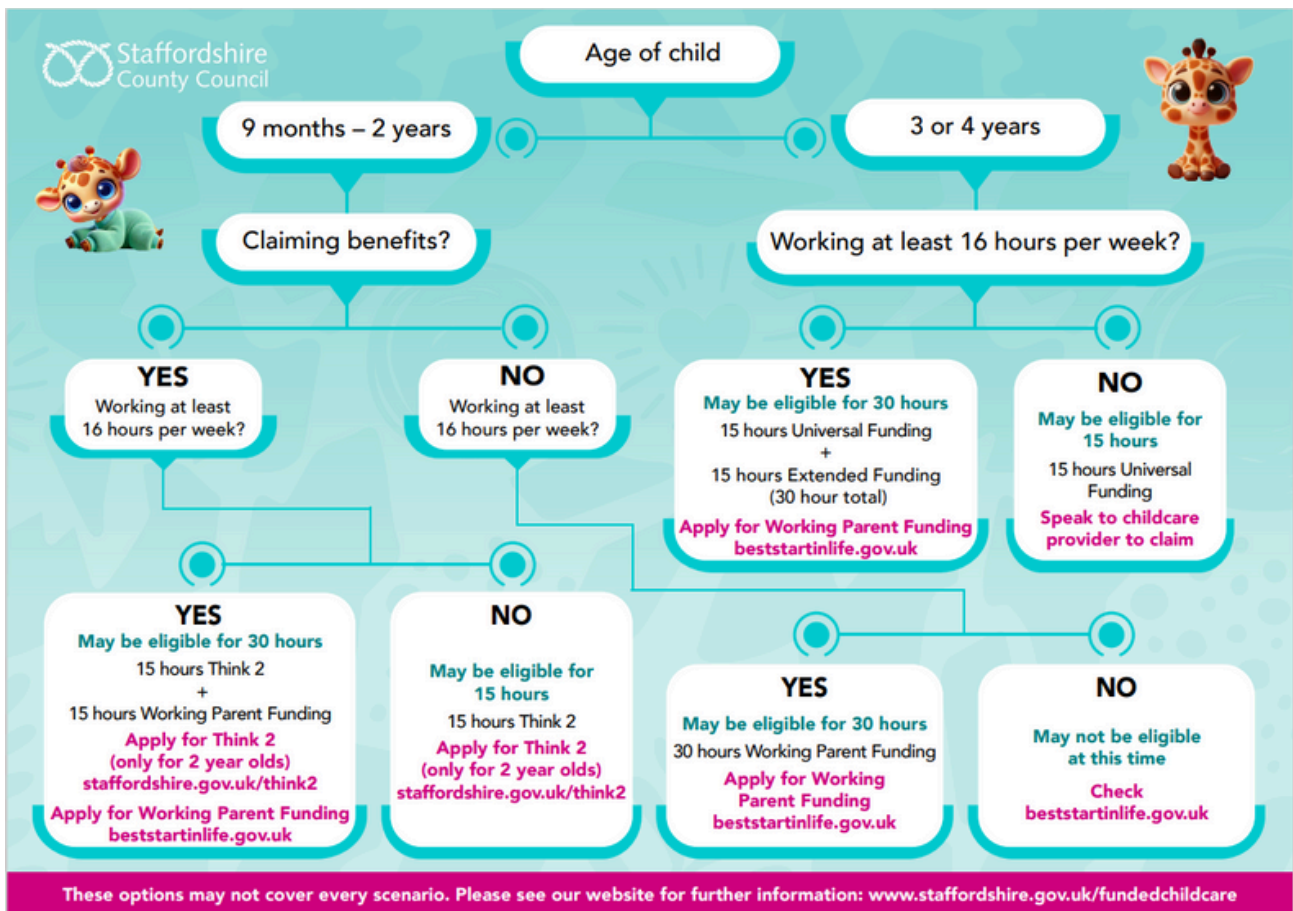
Click on the QR code to download it.





# Flowchart

Please email to request a PDF file of the image below to print and share: [ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk).





# Videos

We have a suite of videos featuring Staffordshire early years settings, children and parents.

Watch to hear parents and providers talk about the benefits of funded early learning childcare sessions.

Click on the list below to view on Youtube and share with parents. You can also embed these into your website.



- Benefits of childcare
- Child's Play childminding - Melodie
- Childcare at Oopsie Daisy childminding
- Childcare at Tina's childminding
- Childcare at St Benedict's school
- Childcare at Strawberry Poppets nursery school



# 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).





# 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 children from 9 months old in Staffordshire are eligible for funded childcare at a preschool, nursery or childminder. Find out more at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare)
- All 3 and 4 year olds in Staffordshire are eligible for funded childcare at a childminder, nursery or preschool. Find out more at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare)
- Childcare support has expanded – even more working parents can get help to pay for their childcare. Find out more at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare)
- Could you get help with your childcare costs? Check online at [www.beststartinlife.gov.uk](http://www.beststartinlife.gov.uk)



# Image for Facebook and Instagram

Please click on the image 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 email for a file you can print and display  
[ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk).



Childcare provider  
name Contact details





# Leaflet for parents

Please email for a file you can print and display  
[ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk)

**Help with childcare costs**

You can use your funded hours alongside other schemes like Tax Free Childcare or Universal Credit to pay for extra hours, food, transport and activities. Childcare providers may have charges for these so they may not be covered by funded hours. Check with your childcare provider about how they offer their funded hours and check the cost of any additional services if you access them.

Find out more about additional help with childcare costs and what is best for your family through the easy to use website [www.staffordshire.gov.uk](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk)

**Other funding**

Some children may be eligible for additional funding. Speak to your childminder, nursery or preschool for more details.

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is paid by your childminder, nursery or preschool to cover the facilities, equipment or learning resources to benefit your child. Find out more at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eypp](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eypp)

Disability Access Fund (DAF) is paid to your childminder, nursery or preschool to help them make reasonable adjustments to improve accessibility or other resources to benefit your child if they are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Find out more at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/daaf](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/daaf)

**Contact us**

- Email: [ema@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ema@staffordshire.gov.uk)
- Telephone: 01929 216221
- [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare)
- [www.staffordshire.gov.uk](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk)

**Early education and childcare**  
For children from 9 months old

QR code

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

**Children from 9 months of age - working parents**

Some children whose families are working are eligible for funded childcare at a childminder, nursery or preschool.

If you are a working parent with a child aged from 9 months old, you may be eligible for up to 30 hours childcare each week, over 38 weeks a year, from the term after your child turns 9 months old. Some providers will allow you to 'bank' funding over more weeks per year by using fewer hours per week. Check with your childcare provider about how they offer funded hours.

To find out if you are eligible and to apply, go to [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk). You can apply for your code up to 18 weeks before your child becomes age eligible.

Funding starts from the term after your child turns 9 months old and you have successfully applied and received a code.

Child turns 9 months of age between	You can apply between	Earliest funding can start
1st January - 31st March	Spring term (from 1st January)	Summer term (from 1st April)
1st April - 31st August	Summer term (from 1st April)	Autumn term (from 1st September)
1st September - 31st December	Autumn term (from 1st September)	Spring term (from 1st January)

If your application is approved you'll be sent a confirmation code which needs to be passed onto your childcare provider as soon as possible. Parents must receive their code on time and will be sent a reminder 14 days before their code expires. Failure to receive your code on time may mean your code will expire.

**For families of 2 year olds receiving additional government support**

Some families may be eligible for up to 15 hours of funded childcare for their 2 year old if they are in receipt of certain benefits such as Universal Credit. In Staffordshire this is called Think2 and is different to the offer for working parents, although you need be working and still apply for Think2 each term.

Applications for Think2 are made directly to Staffordshire County Council.

To find out more and apply, go to [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/think2](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/think2)

If you can't get online or need help to apply, talk to your local Family Hub [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/familyhub](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/familyhub). You can also call one of the team on 0300 111 8607 or email [think2@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:think2@staffordshire.gov.uk)

**When can I apply for Think2?**

Apply from the term your child has their 2nd birthday or at any point after.

Child turns 2 years of age between	Earliest you can apply	Earliest you can start
1st January - 31st March	Spring Term (from 1st January)	Summer Term (from 1st April)
1st April - 31st August	Summer Term (from 1st April)	Autumn Term (from 1st September)
1st September - 31st December	Autumn term (from 1st September)	Spring Term (from 1st January)

Once you are claiming Think2 funding, you don't need to re-apply. It will continue even if your circumstances change. Your Think2 will automatically move to 15 hours universal funding the term after they turn 3.

If you're working and receive additional government support

If you claim Think2 and are a working parent, you may be eligible for an additional 15 hours funded childcare, totalling up to 30 hours per week.

To find out if you're eligible and apply go to [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

If your application is approved, Childcare Choices will send you a code which needs to be passed onto your childcare provider. You must receive your code every 2 months. If you do not do this on time you may lose your additional 15 hours.

**3 and 4 year olds**

Every 3 and 4 year old is entitled to 15 universal funded hours per week over 38 weeks.

You don't need to apply for this funding, just go straight to a registered or approved childminder, nursery or preschool to book your child's place.

The funded hours will start from the term after your child's 3rd birthday.

**For working parents**

If you are a working parent with a child who is 3 or 4 years old, you may be eligible for an additional 15 hours funded childcare, totalling up to 30 hours per week.

This can be taken over 38 weeks per year, however some providers will allow you to 'bank' funding over more weeks per year by using fewer hours per week. Check with your childcare provider about how they offer funded hours.

To find out if you are eligible and to apply, go to [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

If your application is approved you'll be sent a code which must be passed onto your childcare provider. Funding can start:

Child turns 3 between	From
Child turns 3 between 1 January and 31 March	From 1 April
Child turns 3 between 1 April and 31 August	From 1 September
Child turns 3 between 1 September and 31 December	From 1 January

If your application is approved you'll be sent a code which must be passed onto your childcare provider as soon as possible. Parents must receive their code on time and will be sent a reminder every 2 months and you will be sent a reminder when it's time to re-claim. If you do not re-claim your code on time you may lose your additional 15 hours, although you will still receive your universal 15 hours.

If you are already receiving working parent funding, there is no need to re-claim, simply continue to re-claim your code every 2 months. You can re-claim your code up to 14 days before it expires. If you do not do this on time you may lose your additional 15 hours, although you will still receive your universal 15 hours.



# 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 children from 9 months old

Some working families with children from 9 months old are eligible for funded childcare, at a childminder, preschool or nursery.

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

Find out more about help with childcare costs at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare)

If you can't get online, ask at your Staffordshire Family Hub or library.



# Promoting other funding

Please email to request a PDF file of the image below to print and share: [ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk).

Staffordshire  
County Council

Ask a staff member for more details

## Early Years Pupil Premium

Extra funding to support your child at their nursery, preschool or childminder.

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