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Working parents will be able to claim 30 hours of free childcare for three and four-year-olds if they meet the eligibility criteria, thanks to a new government scheme.

The scheme means those eligible are entitled to an additional 15 hours from September 2017, meaning their child could receive up to 1,140 hours of free childcare prior to primary education.

Currently, all three and four-year-old children can receive up to 15 hours free early education per week over 38 weeks of the year.

The new entitlement can also be 'stretched' at some childcare providers so that fewer hours can be used across more weeks of the year.

The changes have come about as part of the Childcare Act 2016.

More than 200 settings in Peterborough are offering 30 hours free childcare, which include childminders, day nurseries, pre-schools and independent schools.

Karen Hingston, head of early years and childcare for Peterborough City Council, said: "This is a fantastic scheme designed to help parents with the costs of childcare. Children will benefit immensely from spending more time in stimulating environments and amongst their friends.

"With one month to go until the scheme opens, I'd encourage everyone with a three or four-year-old to find out if they're eligible. Parents with a two-and-a-half year old can also apply early to ensure they don't miss out."

To be eligible for 30 hours' free childcare, both parents must be in work and earning at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage. Each parent must also earn less than £100,000 per year. Self employed and single parent families can also apply, providing the sole parent is in work.

To apply for additional hours, applications must be made on the [childcare choices website \(https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/\)](https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/). If successful, parents will obtain a code which must be used before term commences. Every three months, families will need to re-confirm their eligibility on the HMRC website to continue the funding.

For more information about the scheme, visit our [30 hours free childcare page](#).