

Funded early learning sessions for children aged 9 months - four years

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 children from **nine months old** (starting September 2024), 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 children from 2 years old - working parents - **page 4**
- Funding for 2 year olds - Think 2 - **page 5**
- Funding for 3 and 4 year olds – **page 8**
- Useful contacts - **page 13**
- Other funding - **page 14**
- Resources to help you promote the funding – **page 15**

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Sept 2024



Age 9 months

working parents

Some children whose families are working, are eligible for funded early learning childcare sessions at a childminder, nursery or preschool from **9 months old**.

- For eligible working families in Staffordshire.
- 15 hours per week for 38 weeks (term time) from September 2024.
- 30 hours per week for 38 weeks (term time) from September 2025.
- Parents choose which childminder, preschool or nursery to use - they can use more than one.
- Sessions are funded from the term after an eligible child turns 9 months.



Apply online at:

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

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April 2024



Age 2

working parents

Some children whose families are working, are eligible for funded early learning childcare sessions at a childminder, nursery or preschool from **2 years old**.

- For eligible working families in Staffordshire.
- 15 hours per week for 38 weeks (term time) from April 2024.
- 30 hours per week for 38 weeks (term time) from September 2025.
- Parents choose which childminder, preschool or nursery to use - they can use more than one.
- Sessions are funded from the term after an eligible child's second birthday.



Apply online at:

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

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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.

- 2 year olds whose families receive additional government support are eligible.
- 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 6](#)
- How to apply - [page 7](#)



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)

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 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

If a parent can't get online to apply, they can visit a Staffordshire library, Family Hub, 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, 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



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

Resources to help you promote the funding are available on [page 15](#) of this guide.



What we're doing

Each term we send a postcard through the post to parents of two year olds from families receiving additional support who may be eligible for a place. We also send them two emails and a text message encouraging them to check their eligibility.

Parents postcard front:



Parents postcard rear:





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
- Age 2 - Think 2 -
www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2
- Age 3 and 4 -
www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare

STAFFORDSHIRE
CONNECTS



Help finding a childcare provider

www.staffordshireconnects.info/earlyyears

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



Contact us

Early Education and Childcare Team at Staffordshire County Council



eeac@staffordshire.gov.uk



01785 278 201



www.staffordshire.gov.uk/eeac

STAFFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL



Useful contacts

- Childcare Choices
www.childcarechoices.gov.uk
- Staffordshire Connects
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

Early years pupil premium

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

www.staffordshire.gov.uk/EYPP

STAFFORDSHIRE
EARLY YEARS ALLIANCE

Disability access fund

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

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



Promoting the funding

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

- Think 2 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
- Leaflet for parents
- 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/fundedchildcare



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.



STAFFORDSHIRE
GOVERNMENT





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 children from 9 months old in Staffordshire are eligible for a funded place at a preschool, nursery or childminder. Find out more at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare
- 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/fundedchildcare
- Childcare support is expanding from April– even more working parents can get help to pay for their childcare Find out more www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare
- Could you get help with your childcare costs? Check online at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Images for X (formerly 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.





Images for X (formerly 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.





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.




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


Ask us about funded childcare



You could be entitled to help with childcare costs. The government is funding childcare hours to support parents.

Visit staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare

Childcare provider
name Contact details



THINK 2 

Funded early learning sessions for 2 year olds.

Is your child eligible?



www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Think2



Leaflet for parents

Please click on the image below to download. If you need the images files please email ema.roberts@staffordshire.gov.uk.

Staffordshire County Council

Help with childcare costs

Tax Free Childcare
Parents can enjoy online through Childcare Choices and can save up to £2,000 per year, per child, or up to £4,000 per year for a disabled child. For every 10 pence you pay, the government will top it up with an extra 2 pence.

Find out more
Find out more about additional help with childcare costs and what is best for your family through the way to our website www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare

Other funding
Some children may be eligible for additional funding, based on your child's disability, nursery or preschool for some weeks if you think your child may be eligible.

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is paid to your child's nursery, preschool or nursery to spend on facilities, equipment and learning experiences to benefit your child. Find out more at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare

Disability Access Fund (DAF) - Find out more at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/DAF

Early education and childcare

For children from 9 months old

All the small things your child learns from 9 months old can make a big difference later.

Early education and childcare sessions at a nursery, preschool or childminder can help your child:

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

Give your child the best possible start to life.

Contact us

- Email: www.staffordshire.gov.uk
- Telephone: 01827 276201
- www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare
- www.staffordshire.gov.uk/daaf

www.staffordshire.gov.uk/fundedchildcare

Children from 9 months old - working parents

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

From April 2024 - 15 hours for children from 2 years old

From September 2024 - 15 hours for children from 9 months old

From September 2025 - 30 hours for children from 9 months old

For families receiving additional government support

THINK2

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. This is called **THINK2**.

Applications for **THINK2** are made directly to Staffordshire County Council. To find out more and apply go to www.staffordshire.gov.uk/think2

0800 111 800 or email think2@staffordshire.gov.uk

If you are already receiving **THINK2** funding, there is no need to reapply or register.

When can I apply for Think2?

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

If your child is confirmed eligible for **THINK2**, the funding will stop if you stop or if your circumstances change.

Child turns 2 years of age between	Eligible from	Eligible until
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)

3 & 4 year olds

15 Hours

- Every 3 and 4 year old is entitled to 15 hours of funded early education and childcare sessions per week.

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 the child's 3rd birthday.

30 Hours - for working parents

- Some families of 2 and 4 year olds who meet the earnings criteria may be eligible for an additional 15 hours of early education and childcare sessions, ending up to 30 per week.

Child turns 3 years of age between	Eligible from	Eligible until
1st January - 31st March	Summer Term (from 1st January)	Autumn Term (from 1st September)
1st April - 31st August	Autumn Term (from 1st September)	Spring Term (from 1st January)

Is your child eligible?

Check online for the **THINK2** eligibility criteria at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/think2

If your application is approved you'll be sent a confirmation code from HMRC, which must be passed onto your childcare provider. Parents must reconfirm their eligibility with HMRC every 3 months.

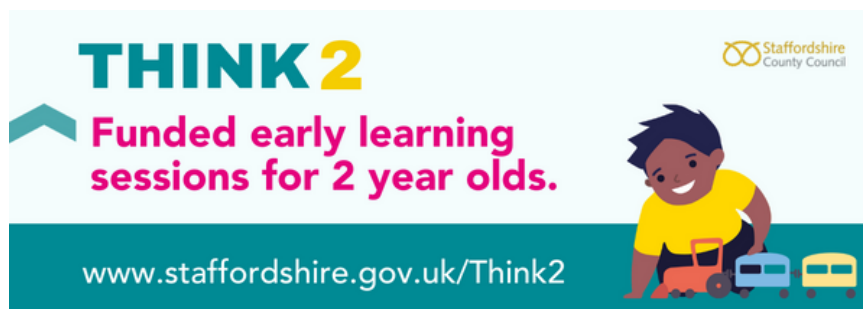
The extra 15 hours start from the term after you receive your code from HMRC for an eligible child.

If you are already receiving working parent's funding, it must be reconfirmed every 3 months to remain eligible every 3 months.



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.





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 children from 9 months old and all children aged 3 and 4 years, are eligible for 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/fundedchildcare

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



Promoting other funding

Click on the text below to download a poster and flyer to promote the EYPP funding.

- [EYPP poster \(PDF\)](#)
- [EYPP flyer \(PDF\)](#)

