

Early Years Nursery Funding Guidance from September 2025

Before accessing any childcare provision the team around the child must consider if it meets the needs of the child's care plan. Secure primary attachments are key to our children in care and please keep in mind the following quote from Elinor Goldshmeid:

'A very young child in nursery cannot understand why they are there. They can only explain it as abandonment and, unless helped in a positive and affectionate way, this will mean levels of anxiety greater than they can tolerate'

Entitlements available to all of our children in care:

1. Golden 2s – up to 15 hours based on their looked after status from the term after their second birthday – applications are made through their local children's centre and **no code is required**. **For children in care attending a Cheshire West Early Years setting, a letter of eligibility is provided through the Early Years Worker. For out of borough please speak to the child's relevant Education Advisor, as this varies from borough to borough.**

2. Universal 3- & 4-Year-Old entitlement – up to 15 hours available to all children the term after their third birthday until they start Reception in school.

Please note: There is no universal element for children 9 months + and a parent/foster carer must be working and meet the eligibility criteria to access any government funded hours for children of this age.

Entitlements available for children in care where Foster Carers are in paid employment over and above their fostering duties, from September 2025:

1. Babies of 9 months and over can have up to 30 hours of government funded childcare if the Foster Carers meet the eligibility criteria; however, this must be in the best interests of the child and should only be accessed in exceptional circumstances as it does not promote secure primary attachments.

2. For 2-year-olds – up to an additional 15 hours on top of the child in care 2 year old funding element if the Foster Carer/s are in paid employment outside of their Fostering duties and it is agreed with the Virtual School that this meets the needs of the care plan and is in the best interests of the child.

3. The 3- and 4-year-old additional 15 hours on top of the original 15 hours will continue for Foster Carers in paid work outside of fostering.

Important to know:

The Foster Carers application for the working entitlements must be made to the Council who is responsible for the child, regardless of where they live using the following link: [Apply for Foster Carers Funding - Your data - Self](#)

When to apply? Applications can be made when the child reaches the relevant entitlement age before the end of a term, see application and valid from dates...



Reconfirming eligibility every 3 months: The Cheshire West Early Years Team will be in touch with the allocated Social Worker and the Virtual School approximately every 3 months to confirm that continued eligibility for the carers and to confirm that it continues to fit with the care plan.

Please note: if a child moves to a different carer the additional government funded hours will come to an end unless the new carers also meet the criteria.

Deadline date for applying	Funding valid from
31 st December	1 st January
31 st March	1 st April
31 st August	1 st September