



Childcare Vouchers

An Introduction to Tax-Free Childcare

What's happening in 2017?

In March 2016, the Government confirmed their plans for a Tax-Free Childcare scheme (TFC) to be rolled out gradually from early 2017. Tax-Free Childcare will provide working parents and now self-employed workers with another option for tax savings on their childcare direct through the Government.

Until 2017, however, employer Childcare Voucher schemes remain the best way for working parents to reduce the rising cost of childcare. Many parents will not be able to claim under the new Government scheme so should join an employer scheme before it's too late as the Childcare Vouchers scheme will be closed to new entrants from April 2018. Parents can remain on the Childcare Vouchers scheme beyond 2018 and for as long as they require.

What is the new scheme that has been proposed?

The government have proposed a Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) scheme to start from 2017. The new scheme will allow some working parents (where both parents are working or are single parents) to claim up to £2,000 per child towards the cost of childcare per year.

It has been proposed that for every 80p parents transfer to a dedicated online account and spend on regulated childcare, the Government will top this up with 20p, which is capped at up to £2,000 of savings per child per year. This is equivalent to the basic rate of tax.

Parents will be able to use the vouchers with any Ofsted regulated childcare provider in England and the equivalent bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, just as they can with the current Childcare Vouchers.

Who is not eligible for the new scheme?

Those who are not eligible for the new scheme include any couples where one parent is not working and parents who claim for children older than 12 years old.

The proposed scheme will only be open to some working parents (where both parents are working or single parents) and the parent is not already getting support through the existing Childcare Voucher scheme. To be eligible, parents must be earning less than £100,000 annually, working a minimum of 16 hours per week and not be receiving support through tax credits.

Even when the new scheme is up and running, employer supported Childcare Voucher schemes provided by Edenred will continue to deliver help for many parents who will lose out under the new arrangements.

Under the new proposals, parents will be able to sign up for employer supported Childcare Vouchers until April 2018 and they can then continue to order vouchers beyond 2018, making tax and National Insurance savings, for as long as their employer continues to run the scheme or until their child is 15 years old (or 16 years old if disabled), whichever is sooner. Parents who aren't already using Childcare Vouchers don't have to wait until 2017, they can save now. To join just ask your employer to join or set up the scheme.

What do I need to do?

For now, nothing changes. The new scheme will commence in early 2017 and final deadline for new entrants to Childcare Voucher schemes is set for April 2018. Your existing employer funded Childcare Voucher scheme with Edenred will continue after this date for those who had joined the scheme prior to the deadline of April 2018. It will then be closed to any new joiners.

It is more important than ever to join the existing Childcare Voucher scheme before April 2018 to give you the choice in case you are not eligible for the new scheme and ensure you have access to the best scheme to suit your family's situation.

Will I still be able to receive Childcare Vouchers and if so for how long?

Yes. The existing Childcare Voucher scheme is open to new joiners until April 2018. At this point the scheme will be closed to new joiners. Beyond this date, existing scheme members will continue to receive employer funded Childcare Vouchers as they do today. And they will continue to benefit even if they would not be eligible for the new scheme or choose not to participate in the new scheme, or until your child is 15 years old (or 16 years old if disabled), whichever is sooner.

About Edenred Childcare Vouchers

Edenred pioneered the first Childcare Voucher scheme in the UK in 1989, is the No 1 provider in the market with the highest number of clients and beneficiaries and will be delivering employer supported Childcare Voucher schemes long after 2018.

- The Edenred Childcare Voucher scheme adheres to the highest audited quality standards in the industry, Edenred being a co-founder and an active member of the Childcare Voucher Providers Association (CVPA).
- A dedicated team of helpdesk experts are always on hand to answer questions and assist Childcare Voucher users and their childcare providers.
- Childcare Voucher users also have access to a 24/7 family advice helpline and Edenred's information website 'Parent Hub'.

Employer Childcare Vouchers vs. Government Tax-Free Childcare 2017

	Edenred Childcare Voucher scheme	Government Tax-Free Childcare scheme 2017
Official name	Employer Supported Childcare	Tax-Free Childcare
What do you get?	Depending on salary and when you joined, each parent can buy a max £243 vouchers per month from pre-tax and NI income. For a basic taxpayer, max annual gain is £933.	For every 80p spent on Childcare, the Government will add 20p, which is capped at up to £2,000 of savings per child. If you are two working parents (basic rate tax payers) you will better off with the new scheme only if you spend at least £9,500 per year on registered childcare.
Who is eligible?	Available to all working parents via their company if they choose to offer the scheme. All companies can sign up to join a scheme. Not for self-employed.	Only available to working single parents and couples (both must work) earning less than £100,000 each per year and working a minimum of 16 hours per week. Includes self-employed. If at any point, one parent loses their job, eligibility for both will cease. Other eligibility
What age can your child be to qualify?	Children from 0- 15 years old. Up to the first Saturday following 1st September after child's 15th birthday. If the child is registered disabled the age is up to 16 years old.	Children from 0- 12 years old. If the child is registered disabled the age is up to 16 years old.
When does it start?	Already in place.	2017 for some parents, then rolled out over the year to all parents with children under 12.
How to administer the scheme	The employer administers the payments into the account via salary sacrifice on the employee's behalf. Employees benefit from a dedicated support network provided by Edenred. E.g. 24/7 family advice helpline.	Parents must open an online account per child through the government website. Parents must pay into each account separately. Each account requires eligibility validation every three months.

Sources:

www.gov.uk, www.bbc.co.uk, www.channel4.com and www.theguardian.com

What the new TFC scheme will mean for you

As the new scheme replaces the existing, employer Childcare Vouchers will remain open to those only to those who are already participating, but closed to new entrants.

Find out who will benefit and who will lose out on the new TFC scheme below:

Winners	Losers
Working single parents with childcare costs over £5,000 a year	Two parent families where one parent does not work – they will not be eligible.
Families where both parents work, and have total childcare costs over £9,500 a year.	Two parent families with one child where both work will tend to be better off with the existing Childcare Voucher scheme.
Self-employed parents, if they fulfil eligibility requirements.	Families with part time childcare costs (particularly those with school age children) will generally be better off with the existing Childcare Voucher scheme.
	Employers - they will no longer save money from lower NI contributions.
	Families where either parent earns over £100,000 annually will no longer be eligible under the new scheme.

What's your annual childcare cost?

The average cost of childcare is £5,710 for a child under 5 and £2,505 for a school age child per year. Single parents will need childcare costs of more than £4,650 a year to benefit more with TFC. Families where both parents work will need childcare costs of more than £9,300 a year to be better off with the Governments planned TFC scheme.

Everyone's a winner with Childcare Vouchers

By signing up for Childcare Vouchers before April 2018, you can make sure you're a winner. You can continue to benefit even if you won't be eligible for the new scheme or you choose not to participate in the new scheme. By joining employer Childcare Vouchers now you have the power of choice between schemes come 2017.

Sources:

www.gov.uk, www.bbc.co.uk, www.channel4.com and www.theguardian.com

Key points to take away:

- TFC will provide savings for some parents, including the self-employed. However, many parents will be better off under the existing employer arrangements.
- In two-parent households where only one parent works, parents will not be eligible for the new TFC scheme.
- Parents who are in or who sign up to the current employer Childcare Voucher scheme will be able to stay in the scheme and they will not be disadvantaged by the proposed 2017 changes. However, if they move to a new employer after April 2018, they will be considered to have left the current scheme and be forced to switch to the proposed TFC scheme.
- Parents who want to join the employer funded scheme after April 2018 will not be eligible, and will have to join the new Government scheme.
- Currently you can claim Childcare Vouchers for children up to the age of 15 years old (or 16 years old if disabled) to use on afterschool clubs, child minders, holiday camps, swimming lessons, sports clubs, dance classes, private tutors and more (as long as they are regulated by Ofsted). However, the new scheme only applies to children aged 12 and under. If the child is registered disabled the age is up to 16 years old.

Start saving now

You could save up to £77.75 a month before the TFC Government scheme starts through the Edenred Childcare Voucher scheme (and twice that if you and your partner are claiming them – saving your family up to £155.50 a month). Speak to your HR department or manager for more information about joining.

Tell a friend

Parents who aren't already using Childcare Vouchers should ask their employers to join or set up a scheme now, rather than waiting until the new scheme is launched in 2017.



If you have any further questions about the TFC scheme please call HMRC for more information: **0345 300 3900**