

# Harrogate College

## Financial help with Childcare costs- Frequently Asked Questions

### Will I qualify for help with childcare costs?

To qualify for help with childcare costs you must:

- Be a “home student” who meets the residency requirements, i.e. have been resident in the country for three or more years.
- Be aged 20 years or over at the start of your course.
- Be enrolled on an approved Government funded programme (ESFA, ESF, Publicly funded, or traineeship programme).
- Be on a funded course and be studying a minimum of 5 hours per week.
- Have an annual gross income of £30,000 or below.
- Be the parent or have parental responsibility for the child you are claiming for.

### How do I apply for childcare funding?

You can download the childcare funding application from the college website. The application will need to be completed and returned with evidence of your household income and copies of the child/children’s birth certificates that you are applying for.

Your chosen childcare provider must be registered with Ofsted, please ensure the quote form is completed by the provider and return it along with the childcare application.

### How long does it take to deal with my application?

We aim to notify you of the outcome of your application within 20 working days of the application being received by college.

### What evidence do I need to provide?

You will need to provide evidence of your Tax Credit Award and child’s birth certificate. We require photocopied documents and these will be kept with the form.

- Your Tax Credit Award Notice must be dated 2024-2025. The preferred evidence is a full Tax Credit Award because this gives up to date evidence of your circumstances, including income evidence and details of your children. If you only have a Tax Credit Review letter or a Provisional Tax Credit Award for 2024-2025 you must also provide your most recent bank statement showing the on-going payment of Tax Credits.

In some cases where parents do not have a Tax Credit Award, other evidence may be accepted such as:

- Evidence of state benefits such as a letter from the Department for Work and

Pensions (DWP)

- Asylum Seeker evidence, such as a home office letter and ARC card and post office receipts

### **How do I know when my application has been awarded?**

You will receive an email from the college notifying you of the decision.

### **My course has started and I haven't been told that I have been awarded funding, can I take my child to the childcare provider?**

You must wait for confirmation of childcare funding before your child starts to attend the nursery. The funds are limited and not guaranteed, you must not enter into an agreement with a provider on the assumption that the college will pay. You will be liable for the costs if they are not agreed with college beforehand.

If your child is aged 2+ and eligible for the 15 free hours government funding then they could attend for the 15 hours only until you have been notified of the outcome of your childcare funding application.

### **What hours can I be funded for?**

The college funds childcare to accommodate student timetables taking into account reasonable travel time. This will be dependent on individual circumstances taking into consideration the location of college campus, home and the childcare provider.

### **I am not happy about the childcare process/ or the outcome of my application, what can I do? (Appeal process)**

You can discuss your application informally with tutors, curriculum administrators or directly with the Student Financial Support Team. If you are still dissatisfied, you can make an appeal.

To make an appeal you would need to write to the Student Funds Finance Manager.

### **My child is eligible for the 15 free hours; can I use these outside my college hours?**

We expect the free hours to be used to accommodate your timetabled sessions, the college will then fund the hours over and above the 15 free hours. If you are working and require these hours during your working pattern, then please see a college staff member to discuss this.

**Can my child attend through the holidays?**

No, the funding will only support your timetabled days and are based on the college term dates published on the college calendar.

**My chosen childcare provider charges more than the college will agree to fund, can I still consider this provider?**

Yes, however you will have to pay the additional cost yourself directly to the provider and the provider must not include these costs on an invoice to college.

**My timetable is only 2.5 hours on some days but my childcare provider can only offer full days, not half days, what can I do?**

You can discuss this with your chosen childcare provider to enquire if they could accommodate your timetable request. If they are unable to offer this then you would be required to find a different provider that can offer half day places. If you do decide to take your child to this provider then you would be required to fund the additional cost yourself.

**My preferred childcare provider doesn't have spaces for all of my timetable, can I use 2 providers?**

Yes, you can use 2 childcare providers however we would advise that it would be most suitable for any child to attend one setting to assist them with settling in.

**I want a friend or family member to care for my child. Can you pay them?**

We can only fund childcare places with Ofsted registered childcare providers.

**When can my child start receiving childcare?**

Your child can start attending with the childcare provider from the start date of your course, providing you have been approved childcare funding.

Some childcare providers enable children to have settling in visits prior to your start date, please discuss this with your childcare provider. If there is cost of visits prior to your start date the college will not support this cost. Any costs over and above what the college has agreed would need to be met by the student.

**What does the college expect from students awarded childcare funds?**

Whilst you are in college we will regularly monitor attendance, behaviour and attainment, a minimum attendance of 90% is required to continue receiving support. We will apply our discretion to individual cases to accommodate students' individual needs

Students are expected to attend 100% of their classes, if your attendance falls below 90% then your childcare funding can be suspended.

Students are expected to give 4 weeks' notice of withdrawing childcare, if students do withdraw from the course without notifying the finance department then you will be liable to meet the childcare costs yourself.

### **What are the rules about attendance?**

Students are expected to attend 100% of their classes; if your attendance falls below 90% then your childcare funding can be suspended. The Learner Support team will monitor your attendance and if this is low then you will be contacted to discuss this. Failure to attend meetings around attendance could lead to suspension of the childcare fund.

### **What do I do if my child is sick and I can't take them to the childcare provider?**

You must contact your childcare provider to notify them of why your child is unable to attend. Your childcare provider will still receive payment providing you have contacted both the childcare provider and college to notify them of this

### **Can I still take my child to the childcare provider if I am not coming to college?**

If you do not attend college due to sickness or unforeseen circumstances then your child can still attend the childcare place and college will still fund the place in the short term. You must inform the college of the reason as to why you are not attending and how long your absence is likely to be. The Student Funds Finance Manager will make a decision about continued funding support if your absence continues, they will take account of your individual circumstances and the nature of your absence along with the principles of the fund being to support students to attend education and progress. If you are not attending college and you have not informed the Learner Support Team of the reasons for your non-attendance, then you could be liable to meet the costs of childcare yourself.

### **I am going on holiday during term time, can college pay for my childcare?**

If you are going to miss college for reasons such as a holiday or to visit family during term time then your childcare fees will not be paid. You will be required to meet the cost of childcare yourself to enable your child to return to the provider.

### **I need to have a break from college because of health, caring responsibilities or other mitigating circumstances, will college still pay for childcare for me?**

Childcare funding is to help students study and stay on course. We understand that occasionally due to circumstances beyond the student's control they may need to take a break in study. College may be able to continue to fund childcare for a short absence, however, this will be considered on a case by case basis by the Student Funds Finance Manager and is not guaranteed. You will need to speak to a member of the Learner Support Team and provide evidence of your circumstances.

### **Can I transfer my child to another setting midway through the year?**

Yes, however the provider must be registered with Ofsted, you must inform college before you change childcare providers and give 4 weeks' notice to the current provider.

**I am unhappy with the childcare provider and the way my child is being looked after, what can I do?**

Childcare providers need to work to Ofsted standards, so if you feel your child is not being cared for to these standards, you need to get advice and consider making a formal complaint. Please speak to the college's Childcare Adviser.

**I am due to have a baby after my childcare funding has been submitted, what do I do?**

You must submit a new childcare funding application along with your evidence of income and child's birth certificate. If the application is successful then the same procedure will apply as it had previously.

**I have an exam, which is not on my normal college day, what can I do?**

We would advise that you speak to your childcare provider to enquire if you can change your childcare days to accommodate this. If not then you would need to request the additional funding to cover the costs through the college. This must be approved first before your child attends the additional session and we require evidence from your tutor confirming this.

**I have to attend work placement for my course, what do I do?**

You must speak your childcare provider as soon as you know the dates of your work placement to enquire if they can support the additional childcare days. If they are able to then you must inform the Learner Support Team and complete an additional childcare request funding form. The additional funding must be approved before your child starts to attend the additional days, if you fail to do this then you will be liable for any costs that have not been authorised by the college.

**It is nearing the end of my course; do I need to inform the childcare provider of my leaving date?**

The childcare contract signed by you and the provider automatically expires at the end of the academic year. If you complete your course early or withdraw, you must inform college and the provider giving 4 weeks' notice.

**I'm coming back to college next year, do I need to apply for childcare funding again?**

Yes, you need to apply for childcare funding each academic year and provide up to date evidence of income.

**I want to use the same childcare provider next year, can the college pay a summer retainer so I can keep my place open?**

The college does not fund summer retainers. If you are intending on returning to college the following year then notify the nursery of your intention to return and request that your child's name be placed on the waiting list. If you do return the following year then you must apply for childcare funding.