

Registered or approved childcare

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Registered or approved childcare for Universal Credit

In order to be eligible for help with childcare costs through Universal Credit, a claimant must use a registered or approved childcare provider, such as:

- nurseries
- child minders
- day care services
- school-bases care
- certain after school provision
- holiday play schemes
- play provision

These are examples, not a complete list.

A registered provider can be checked with the relevant authority depending on location:

- Ofsted for England
- CIW for Wales
- CI for Scotland
- Family Support NI for Northern Ireland

Some childcare providers such as private schools are not required to be registered with the relevant local authority, however childcare costs can still be claimed from Universal Credit. These are known as approved providers.

Some other types of childcare such as after-school clubs on school premises may not be registered with the relevant national inspection authority but are allowable when authorised by the governing body of a school.

Activity clubs such as ballet lessons or football clubs are optional activities rather than necessary childcare and supervision to enable the parent to go to work, as such they would not be considered as approved childcare.

Informal childcare such as a friend or family member looking after a child is excluded. See below: [Child is looked after by the claimant, claimant's partner or a relative](#)

What registered or approved childcare means in each part of Great Britain

Childcare in England

The childcare provider must be registered with the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills ([OFSTED](#)) – see [Ofsted](#) or if a claimant uses childcare provided by a school it must be:

- provided by or under the direction of the person responsible for managing the school, or a local authority
- on school premises that may be inspected as part of a school inspection
- out of school hours (activity clubs, for example ballet lessons, do not count as after school care)

Childcare in Wales

The childcare must be provided by:

- a provider registered with the [Care Inspectorate for Wales](#) (CIW)
- a school on the school premises, or by a local authority
- a domiciliary care worker, also called a home carer, providing childcare in the child's home and registered under the Domiciliary Care Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2004
- someone approved under the Childcare at Home Voluntary Approval Scheme providing childcare in a child's home - or if several children are being looked after, in one of the children's homes

The upper age limit for the compulsory registration of childcare provision in Wales has been extended from 8 to 12 years.

The changes mean providers of childcare, for children up to the age of 12 years old, operating for more than two hours a day, will need to be registered with the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW).

Childcare in Scotland

The child minding or day care must be provided by:

- a provider registered with the [Care Inspectorate](#)
- someone registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide childcare in a child's home

Childcare in Northern Ireland

The childcare provider must be registered with the [Family Support NI](#). They are responsible for the registration, inspection, monitoring and support of child-minders and day care providers.

Claimant is a Crown servant working abroad accompanied by their children

If the claimant is a Crown servant (for example a civil servant or a member of the armed forces posted overseas) they may be eligible for help with their childcare costs through Universal Credit. The childcare provider must be approved by a Ministry of Defence accreditation scheme abroad.

Child is looked after by the claimant, claimant's partner or a relative

Childcare costs cannot be paid for childcare provided by the claimant or the claimant's partner.

However, claimants may be eligible for support with childcare costs through Universal Credit if the childcare is provided by a relative who is either:

- a registered child minder who cares for a child outside of the child's own home
- a childcare provider approved under the Childcare at Home Voluntary Approval Scheme in Wales who cares for a child outside the child's own home - but they must also care for at least one other child who is not related to them

Excluded childcare

Excluded childcare includes any that is not registered with the appropriate regulator (OFSTED or its Scottish or Welsh equivalent) or approved under a voluntary approval scheme.

Certain childcare arrangements are also excluded. Claimants are not eligible for help with childcare costs through Universal Credit where care is provided by a:

- close relative of the child in the child's home, for example the child's parents
- foster parent
- friend or family member looking after a child on an informal basis

The reference to 'close relation' refers to the relationship with the child and not the claimant, for example the child's grandparents would not be deemed close relatives