

# Registered or approved childcare

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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 and not a complete list.

A childcare provider can choose whether or not to register with a childminding agency designated under the Childcare Act 2006. To check whether a provider is registered, contact the relevant national inspection authority as follows:

- England: Ofsted([link is external](#))
- Wales: Care Inspectorate Wales([link is external](#))
- Scotland: Care Inspectorate([link is external](#))
- Northern Ireland: Family Support Northern Ireland([link is external](#))

Once it has been confirmed that the person providing childcare is registered with one of these agencies, Universal Credit can reimburse childcare costs up to 85% subject to the maximum limit.

Some childcare providers (for example, 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 (for example, 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 or tuition classes may be OFSTED registered and will need a separate decision to determine whether these are reasonable and relevant childcare.

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

## 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 (link is external)(OFSTED). 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 such as 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(link is external)
- 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 must be registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales.

### Childcare in Scotland

The child minding or day care must be provided by:

- a provider registered with the Care Inspectorate(link is external)

- 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 Family Support NI (link is external). 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, the claimant's partner or a relative

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

However, a claimant 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 1 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, Welsh or Northern Ireland equivalent) or approved under a voluntary approval scheme.

Certain other childcare arrangements are also excluded. A claimant is 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).

## Childcare agencies

Childcare costs can be paid to a Childminder registered to an agency. In this circumstance the name of that agency is required to verify the agency is OFSTED registered.