Employers For Childcare

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Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme

Note that this factsheet applies to Northern Ireland only. For more information on schemes in other parts of the UK, visit: beststartinlife.gov.uk

Please note: Changes are currently being made to the NICSS eligibility criteria so that children in Northern Ireland who turn 11 between 2 July and 31 August will continue to be eligible for NICSS even if they cease to be eligible for TFC. This factsheet will be updated in due course when these changes come into effect.
For further information on this change see our news article

The Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme (NICSS) is a Department of Education initiative designed to reduce the childcare costs of eligible working parents in Northern Ireland by 15% for all qualifying children, to help with the affordability of childcare.
The Northern Ireland Executive has agreed that the subsidy scheme will target working parents who are eligible for Tax Free Childcare (TFC) and have children of Primary School age and younger.

Early Years - the organisation for young children, has been appointed to administer the scheme on behalf of the Department of Education.

Which parents are eligible for the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme?

Working parents eligible for Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) with children of Primary School age and younger are eligible for the scheme.

If you are not yet in receipt of TFC and are unsure if you are eligible contact the Family Benefits Advice Service for further information on fbas@employersforchildcare.org or see our Comprehensive Guide to Tax-Free Childcare.

Please note: Parents in receipt of Childcare Vouchers or Universal Credit are **not** eligible for this scheme, you should seek advice before moving from any of these benefits to ensure that it is the best option in your household circumstances.

Which children are eligible for the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme?

Children are eligible for the subsidy until the 1st September after their 11th birthday and children with disabilities who are attending post-primary or special schools are eligible until the 1st September after their 16th birthday.

Which childcare providers can offer the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme?

The subsidy can be offered by all types of registered childcare providers who are signed up to the TFC scheme and registered to care for children up to the end of primary school age. This includes nurseries, playgroups, childminders and Approved Home Childcare (AHC) providers who are approved by Department of Health NI. The subsidy scheme is not mandatory for providers, therefore not all providers may decide to offer the subsidy.

Information for childcare providers, including how to register to offer the scheme is available at www.early-years.org/nicss/provider.

How much can I save through the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme?

Providers who decide to offer the subsidy will reduce the normal fee charged to eligible parents by 15% - this is the subsidy which will be paid by the Department of Education. Your bill/invoice should show the normal fee, the 15% subsidy, and the net amount you will be expected to pay.
The maximum amount that can be claimed per child under the subsidy scheme is £203 per month, which is £2,436 per year. For children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance the subsidy remains at 15% however the maximum saving is £406 per month, which is £4,872 per year

How does the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme work with Tax-Free Childcare?

Parents can then make a further 20% saving towards their remaining childcare costs through Tax-Free Childcare. The maximum amount that can be saved per child through Tax-Free Childcare is £2,000 per year, or £4,000 for a child in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

Example of savings through NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme + Tax-Free Childcare

The following sets out an example of how the NI Childcare Subsidy and Tax-Free Childcare can impact a monthly childcare bill:

- Monthly fee normally charged by provider to a parent = **£1,000 per month**
- NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme discount of 15% applied to the bill = **£150**
- Reduced monthly fee charged by the provider = **£850**
- Tax-Free Childcare claimed by a parent 20% of the remaining childcare costs = **£170**

- Combined saving to parent NICSS £150 + TFC £170 = **£320 per month**
- Net cost of the childcare fees to parent = **£680 per month**

How do I apply?

Guidance on how to apply including the information that is required to complete the application process is available at www.early-years.org/nicss/parents

Where can I get more information?

There are FAQs and further information available on the Early Years website www.early-years.org/nicss.
For further information on the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme, Tax-Free Childcare or any childcare or work-related issue, contact our Family Benefits Advice Service by email fbas@employersforchildcare.org