

[News story: Pay for Easter childcare with Tax-Free Childcare](#)

HMRC is reminding working parents that they can use Tax-Free Childcare to pay for regulated holiday clubs during the Easter holidays.

More than 55,000 registered childcare providers including school, football, art and tennis clubs have signed up.

Parents, including the self-employed, can apply online for Tax-Free Childcare – part of the government's Childcare Choices offer – for children who are under 12.

Tax-Free Childcare will cut childcare costs for working families by up to £2,000 per child per year, or £4,000 for disabled children. For every £8 parents pay into their childcare account the government will add an extra £2, up to £2,000 per child per year.

The money can go towards a wide range of regulated childcare, including nurseries, childminders, after-school clubs or holiday clubs.

This website includes a [Childcare Calculator](#) that compares all the government's childcare offers to check what works best for individual families.

Once eligible parents have opened their new account they can start paying their childcare provider straightaway, using the government contribution.

Sinead, a mum of one from West Sussex, said:

I use 30 hours in term time, and then Tax-Free Childcare for after-school and holiday clubs. The school holidays are always tricky, but when I applied for Tax-Free Childcare I was really surprised by how much support I could get. It's a really great help, and the application was really straightforward.

Looking back, I wonder how we managed before – it's really taken a weight off my shoulders.

Liz Truss, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said:

School holidays like Easter are great fun for kids, but working parents can need help with childcare.

Tax-Free Childcare can be used to cut the stress and bills for parents, and there are lots of brilliant holiday clubs and childcare providers to help parents over the Easter holiday.

Our message to eligible families across the UK is sign up now and save on your childcare costs.

Tax-Free Childcare builds on other childcare support already available including:

- Childcare support through tax credits, or Universal Credit
- 15 and 30 hours free childcare in England.

Press release: Mordaunt leads aid sector action on sexual exploitation at landmark summit

The Department for International Development and the Charity Commission will co-host a safeguarding summit today (Monday 5 March) to bring together UK international development charities, regulatory bodies and independent experts to commit to drive up safeguarding standards and take bold steps to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse within charities and by staff abroad.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has tasked the delegates to come up with a series of actions to address the shortcomings in the aid sector. Some of the ideas to be discussed at the summit include:

- Introducing new standards for vetting and referencing across the sector.
- Ensuring whistle-blowers and survivors of exploitation and abuse get the counselling and support they need.
- Creating an independent body to promote external scrutiny and ensure the highest possible standards across the aid sector.
- Changing organisational culture to tackle power imbalances, encourage reporting, take allegations seriously and hold people to account.

NGOs and charities in attendance will sign a joint statement setting out the key principles they will adhere to, and agree on a set of practical actions to take forward. This summit will speed up the process of improving standards and restoring full trust following the allegations that have come to light since early February.

Speaking ahead of the event, International Development Secretary Penny

Mordaunt said:

Now is the time for action. The aid sector needs to ensure it is meeting its duty of care to the world's most vulnerable people. It needs to be honest about past mistakes. It must do all it can to win back the trust of the British public.

This summit is a crucial moment to learn lessons from the past and drive up standards across the sector.

Today, we begin taking the practical steps to ensure the safety of the people we help is always our first priority and that the British aid sector sets the standard for the rest of the world to follow.

In a strong statement to Parliament following the Oxfam scandal, Ms Mordaunt set out how the public must be able to trust organisations, not only to do all they can to prevent harm, but to report and follow up incidents of wrongdoing when they occur.

Baroness Stowell, Chair of the Charity Commission added:

The recent accounts of sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector are deeply distressing. Not only have some aid workers abused the people they were sent to support, but by not exposing and responding to these serious failings properly at the time, charities have betrayed the public's trust in what the word charity actually means.

I am encouraged to see leaders of international aid agencies coming together at today's summit with a firm commitment to bringing about cultural change in charities and making the protection of people their top priority. The Charity Commission will work constructively with charities to identify practical changes and help make them work.

But however noble the cause, it will never justify means which fall below basic standards of conduct expected of any organisation. And if we are to restore public trust and the nation's pride in what charities achieve, we have to show that's what we understand.

The points raised at the summit will be taken to a wide-ranging global

safeguarding conference later in the year to drive action across the whole international aid sector.

This summit will build upon the action already taken by DFID in response to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector, including:

- Establishing a new Safeguarding Unit in DFID to urgently review safeguarding across all parts of the aid sector and catalyse further action to ensure everything is being done to protect people from harm, including sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Appointing Sheila Drew Smith, a recent member of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, to bring her expertise to support DFID's ambition on safeguarding. She will report to the Secretary of State directly and will Chair the Safeguarding Summit.
- Writing to every UK charity that receives UK aid insisting that they set out the steps they are taking to ensure their safeguarding policies are fully in place and confirm they have referred all concerns they have about specific cases and individuals to the relevant authorities, including prosecuting authorities. A similar request has been sent to non-UK charities and other DFID suppliers, including those in the private sector.
- Agreeing with Oxfam that they will withdraw from bidding for any new UK Government funding until DFID is satisfied that they can meet the high standards we expect of our partners.
- Continuing to work with UN Secretary-General António Guterres to stop abuses under the UN flag and we have introduced specific clauses in our funding agreements with a number of UN agencies to take every action possible to prevent all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse and take robust and prompt action in response to any allegations.
- Reviewing any allegations of sexual misconduct involving DFID staff, which will conclude shortly.

Notes to editors

- On 12 February, the International Development Secretary announced a series of actions to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector. The fourth of the five actions was "to co-host a safeguarding summit with the Charity Commission to agree a set of actions to strengthen safeguarding processes and mechanisms, including around staffing and recruitment."
- In a statement to Parliament on 20 February, International Development Secretary committed DFID to a review of reported allegations of sexual misconduct involving DFID staff and delivery partners. That is due to report back by Tuesday 6 March.
- The International Development Secretary has written to every UK charity working overseas that receives UK aid—192 letters to 179 organisations—insisting that they spell out the steps they are taking to ensure that their safeguarding policies are fully in place, and that they confirm that they have referred all concerns they have about specific cases and individuals to the relevant authorities, including prosecuting authorities.
- The Charity Commission opened a statutory inquiry into Oxfam on 12

February after it examined documents sent by Oxfam regarding allegations of misconduct by staff involved in its humanitarian response in Haiti. The Commission has concerns that Oxfam may not have fully and frankly disclosed material details about the allegations at the time in 2011, its handling of the incidents since, and the impact that these have both had on public trust and confidence. Details on the scope of the inquiry is available [here](#)

- The Charity Commission has [announced a suite of measures](#) to help ensure charities learn the wider lessons from recent safeguarding revelations involving Oxfam and other charities, and to strengthen public trust and confidence in charities. This includes a new Charity Commission taskforce to handle the recent increase in safeguarding incident reports.

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[Press release: PM call with President Trump: 4 March 2018](#)

The Prime Minister had a telephone call with President Trump earlier today.

They discussed Syria, and the appalling humanitarian situation in Eastern Ghouta. They agreed it was a humanitarian catastrophe, and that the overwhelming responsibility for the heart-breaking human suffering lay with the Syrian regime and Russia, as the regime's main backer.

They agreed that Russia and others with influence over the Syrian regime must act now to cease their campaign of violence and to protect civilians.

The Prime Minister raised our deep concern at the President's forthcoming announcement on steel and aluminium tariffs, noting that multilateral action was the only way to resolve the problem of global overcapacity in all parties' interests.

[Press release: PM call with the Chancellor Merkel: 4 March 2018](#)

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[News story: Government announces £1.5 million fund to help tackle the gender pay gap](#)

The fund, which will launch on Monday 5 March, will offer grants to projects which help people to return to work in the private sector. These projects could help returners update their skills, provide other training, or support businesses to increase employment opportunities for returners. The fund will prioritise projects that focus on small and medium enterprises, employers outside London, and projects that support returners at all skill levels. This is part of the government's wider strategy to develop the evidence base on what may help to close the gender pay gap.

Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities, Amber Rudd, said:

It is truly striking that nearly 90 per cent of people out of paid work because they are caring for the home or family are women.

Too often people struggle to get back into paid work after taking time out to care for others. That is a huge loss not only to those individuals, but to our economy and to businesses all over the country.

That's why I'm delighted to announce this government will be launching a £1.5 million fund to support people, particularly women, back into work after time out looking after children and other relatives.

By offering meaningful work that pays, the fund will give people who want to return to employment the opportunity to use their valuable skills, talents and experience.

A toolkit and guidance have been created to support companies that would like to employ returners. The guidance, which was developed by Timewise and Women Returners, is aimed at employers across sectors and of all sizes. The toolkit, sponsored by Vodafone, explains the business benefits of employing

returners.

Vodafone UK General Counsel and External Affairs Director and member of the Women's Business Council, Helen Lamprell, said:

Vodafone is proud to support Returners: A toolkit for employers. Having launched ReConnect – Vodafone's programme to help both women and men return to work after a career break – we've seen first-hand the benefits of hiring returners, and the positive impact this can have on them, as well as on our business.

We are keen to share what we've learned, and to learn from other employers, so that we can all do more to support people back into work. With this toolkit, which contains best practices and clear advice on supporting returners, we hope to help even more employers develop returner programmes of their own.

The [guidance](#), toolkit and [fund](#) are all part of a commitment of £5 million made by the Prime Minister in the 2017 Spring Budget, to help people back into employment after a career break. There are already public sector returner projects running in the health professions, social work, and the civil service. In addition, a Cyber Security Skills impact fund, run by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, will be particularly looking for initiatives that help women who have been out of the labour market due to caring responsibilities to get jobs in cyber security.