

**Do you have children under 16?  
Do you pay for childcare?  
Is your childcare provider registered or approved?  
If your answer is “yes” to all 3 questions, you could be saving money!**

## Frequently asked questions

### What are childcare vouchers?

The Government introduced childcare vouchers to help working parents, like you, pay for childcare.

The vouchers are in e-voucher format and you can use them to pay for all types of registered or approved childcare.

### How does the scheme work?

You choose to exchange part of your salary for childcare vouchers. As you don't have to pay tax or National Insurance (NI) on this value you could save over £900 per year on the cost of your childcare.

Registering for the scheme alters the Terms and Conditions of your employment, allowing LCC to pay part of your salary in vouchers.

Each month, Sodexo will credit your online childcare voucher account. You simply pay your childcare provider with the vouchers using the online system.

You can pay e-vouchers directly into your childcare provider's bank account and childcare providers can redeem vouchers online. (They will receive this payment, by BACS, within 3-5 working days).

### Who can join the scheme?

You can join the scheme if:

- You are a parent or legal guardian responsible for, and paying towards, the upkeep of a child.
- Your child is under the age of 16. (Vouchers can be used until 1<sup>st</sup> September following their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, or 1<sup>st</sup> September following their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday if they are registered disabled).
- You are using a registered or approved childcare provider – this can include nannies, childminders, nurseries, play schemes, after-school clubs and holiday camps.
- Your salary will remain above the National Minimum Wage AND the Lower Earnings Limit AFTER you take your vouchers. This is to make sure you always pay the minimum

amount of NI to cover your state benefits such as Statutory Sick Pay.

### When can I join the scheme?

You can join the scheme at any time throughout the year. You will need to register by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month to qualify for the following month's payroll.

### Is there a limit to the amount of vouchers I can have?

The County Council limits take up to the maximum for your earnings, or up to £55 week or £243 per month, if you were participating in the scheme prior to April 6<sup>th</sup> 2011. This is also the HMRC limit.

If you were already participating in your employers' childcare voucher scheme before 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011 or have been transferred via TUPE, and were continuously participating in a childcare voucher scheme prior to April 6<sup>th</sup> 2011, HM Revenue & Customs allows you to take a total of £2,916 per calendar year, generally as £55 per week or £243 per calendar month.

If you joined on or after 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011, your employer will carry out a Basic Earnings Assessment (BEA) and the result from this BEA will tell you how much you can receive in childcare vouchers.

Earnings/Rate	Amount you can take		
	Weekly	Monthly	Annually
Up to but not exceeding £42,475 (Basic)	£55	£243	£2915
Greater than £42,475 but less than £150,000 (Higher)	£28	£124	£1484
Over £150,000 (Additional)	£22	£97	£1166

### Can my partner and I both have vouchers?

Yes – each parent or legal guardian can take up to £243 per month (or £55 per week), so together you could save up to £2,390 on your childcare costs.

If your partner's employer is not currently running a scheme, Sodexo would be happy to talk to them. Call 0800 328 7411 for more information.

### What if my childcare costs vary every month?

Your vouchers won't expire for over a year so you can save some for when you have a more expensive month e.g. during the school holidays.

### What if my childcare provider doesn't know about the scheme?

Many childcare providers already accept childcare vouchers as payment. If your childcare provider is not yet registered with Sodexo, they simply need to complete a Childcare Provider Registration Agreement. There is also useful leaflet available to explain the scheme to your childcare provider.

### What if I have more than one childcare provider?

With e-vouchers you have complete flexibility on who to pay and when.

### Can I change my childcare provider?

Yes, as long as they're registered with Sodexo. Simply print a [Childcare Provider Registration Agreement](#), or ring the Sodexo Childcare helpline on **Freephone 0800 328 7411**. Ask your childcare provider to complete the form and send it to Sodexo with their approval certificate.

Please note that under the Inland Revenue guidelines for childcare vouchers you have a responsibility to inform Sodexo of any changes to your provision of childcare.

### Will my claim for Working Tax Credit be affected?

There may be an effect on the childcare tax credit element of the WTC. It is advisable to contact the WTC helpline on **0845 300 3900** prior to applying for childcare vouchers. Alternatively visit [www.hmrc.gov.uk/specialist/salary\\_sacrifice.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/specialist/salary_sacrifice.htm) for more information.

### Can the vouchers go out of date?

Yes – vouchers are valid for 15-18 months. However, Sodexo will generally replace any childcare vouchers up to 18 months after their expiry date if you write to their finance department.

### Will my pension be affected?

Most pension providers are happy to accept vouchers as notional pay, in which case your pension will not be affected. We recommend that you check with your pension provider before you decide.

### How will my overtime be calculated?

Most work benefits are calculated on gross salary, so overtime/other benefits should not be affected. Your employer will be able to confirm this.

### Will taking childcare vouchers affect my Statutory Maternity Pay?

If you take childcare vouchers when your Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) or Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) is being calculated, then your SMP/SAP may be affected. For this reason we advise women to come off the scheme during this 'qualifying period' [17 weeks of pregnancy], however, they are free to rejoin the scheme after this period, if they feel it would be beneficial to do so.

If you are taking childcare vouchers when you go on maternity or adoption leave, and you will be receiving contractual maternity or adoption pay, then your salary sacrifice can continue as usual.

If you are not eligible for contractual maternity or adoption pay, your vouchers will continue to be provided by the company during your maternity or adoption leave as a non-cash benefit (for up to 52 weeks).

### Can I leave the scheme at any time?

You can leave at any time however Sodexo asks that you remain in the scheme for at least one month, to avoid unnecessary administration.

### What happens if my vouchers are lost or stolen?

Please call **Freephone 0800 328 7411** for advice.

## How much will I save?

The amount you save will depend on your individual circumstances, as well as the value of your vouchers; your tax rate, which is based on your salary; and your NI contributions, which are based on whether you opt in or out of a state pension.

As the scheme is run through your payroll you will see an immediate increase in your net salary each pay period.

The amount you save depends on the level of tax and NI you pay. If you joined the childcare voucher scheme prior to April 6<sup>th</sup>, you could save up to £1,195 per year.

If you joined on or after 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011 your savings depend on your earnings and your exemption rate:

Your rate	Savings amount (per year)
Basic	Up to £933
Higher	Up to £623
Additional	Up to £606

## Where can I use my childcare vouchers?

- **Registered childminders, nurseries and play schemes**
- **Out-of-hours clubs run by a school or local authority**
- **Childcare schemes run by school governing bodies under the 'extended schools' scheme**
- **Childcare schemes run by approved providers, for example, an out-of-hours scheme or a provider approved under a Ministry of Defence accreditation scheme**
- **In England only, childcare given in the child's own home by a person\* approved to care for your child or children**
- **In England only, childcare given in the child's own home by a domiciliary worker or nurse\* from a registered agency who cares for children**
- **In Scotland only, childcare given in the child's own home by (or introduced through) childcare agencies\*, which must be registered**
- **Approved foster childcare providers (the care must be for a child who is not the foster childcare provider's foster child)**

All childcare providers must be registered by Ofsted, or an equivalent national body, in order to qualify to accept childcare vouchers. Please check with your childcare provider before you order your vouchers.

For more information on registered care available in the UK please visit [www.childcarelink.gov.uk](http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk)

\*Childcare provided in the child's own home will not qualify if the person approved to give that care is a relative of the child.

## What do I do next?

**To join the scheme all you need to do is fill in a 'Salary Sacrifice' agreement. The form simply gives your employer permission to pay part of your salary as childcare vouchers.**

Your employer will invite you, by email, to join your company's scheme; click on the link within the email to begin your registration online. Your account won't take long to create – just follow the two simple steps.

Sodexo will need the details of your childcare provider before you can pay them with your vouchers. If they're already registered with Sodexo they will have a 6-digit childcare provider ID number – you can use this to link them to your account online.

If your childcare provider is not yet registered with Sodexo please give them a copy of the [Information for Childcare Providers leaflet](#). They will need to complete the [Childcare Provider Registration Agreement](#) and post or fax it back to Sodexo, with a copy of their Approval Certificate. (If you print this form during your online registration it will have a unique reference to automatically link the childcare provider to your account).

If you would rather fill out your Salary Sacrifice agreement by hand, please call 0800 328 7411 and ask for a form. Simply add your childcare provider's name and ID number in the space provided and we'll take care of the rest. (Please bear in mind that this route takes a little longer).

## Useful Contacts

### Sodexo Customer Care

Tel: **0800 328 7411**

Fax: **01276 687025**

Email: [Customercare.motivation.uk@sodexo.com](mailto:Customercare.motivation.uk@sodexo.com)

Address: **Sodexo Motivation Solutions, Unit 5 Albany Court, Albany Business Park, Frimley Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 7QR**

All the processes of joining the scheme and leaving the scheme are dealt with online.

Schools (Teachers and Support Staff) should email [LCC\\_Payroll\\_Support@mouchel-lincoln.com](mailto:LCC_Payroll_Support@mouchel-lincoln.com) with their request to join

Directorate Staff should email [People\\_Services\\_Corporate@mouchel-lincoln.com](mailto:People_Services_Corporate@mouchel-lincoln.com) with their request to join

Also, existing members should log onto SayCare at <https://uk.childcare-vouchers.sodexo.com/User/Login> if they want to amend or leave the scheme.

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