

## **Back to school and childcare – what you need to know**

Going back to school or starting school for the first time can be daunting, and the initial costs of uniforms and buses can be stressful. Kirklees offers some different schemes to help you get prepared to get the kids back to school;

- ***Kirklees council Uniform exchange*** - Visit the website to see how you can donate items your children have grown out of or how to receive free school uniform items. The aim is to recycle uniforms rather than have them thrown away with collection points around the local area. Local community pages are a good source of excess or 'grown out of' uniforms also. Find it here: [www.uniform-exchange.org](http://www.uniform-exchange.org)
- ***Kirklees Council 'Schools' page*** – information regarding free school meals, bus passes, special educational needs and more, with email and phone contacts. Find it here: [www.kirklees.gov.uk/schools](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/schools)
- ***West Yorkshire Metro*** – information about school buses including timetables, applications forms, eligibility criteria and guidance for low income families and more. Find it here: [www.wymetro.com/schools](http://www.wymetro.com/schools)
- ***COVID-19*** – From September, high school bubbles are to be scrapped, and students will only have to self-isolate if they have tested positive, but no changes have been confirmed to the twice weekly lateral flow tests for high school students. Your child's school will ensure you have all necessary information, and everything will be provided free of charge by the school.

Although many children will be back at school, for parents with younger children the increased pressure of childcare costs can be difficult. If you aren't sure where to start, we've compiled all of the government's programmes to help you reduce the cost of childcare below:

- ***Tax Free Childcare*** – for children 0-11 (0-16 if disabled). Available for working families including the self-employed earning at least £142 a week. For every £8 you pay for childcare, the Government will top up by £2. Not all childcare provides use this scheme yet so ensure you check in advance
- ***15 hours free for aged 2*** – available for families on Universal Credit and other benefits
- ***15 hours free aged 3 and 4*** – available for ALL families (some criteria still applies). 570 hours that can be used flexibly across a one year period

- **30 hours free aged 3 and 4** – available for working families earning at least £142 a week
- **Universal credit for childcare** – available for families claiming Universal Credit, with at least one parent is in paid work (no minimum number of hours). This allows up to 85% of childcare cost to be claimed back if paid in advance. There are some eligibility criteria which are more complex than other childcare systems, so please check the website below for further details.

Eligibility criteria applies for all of these programmes, so please ensure you visit [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk), or call Kirklees Citizens Advice and Law Centre on 0808 278 7896 (9:30-4 Monday to Friday) for help and advice on these and a range of subjects including benefits, housing, debt, employment and more. Alternatively, you can visit us at [www.kcalc.org.uk](http://www.kcalc.org.uk).