

## **Holiday Play scheme - Guidance and Information**

National Highways is committed to the retention and selection of a diverse and highly skilled workforce and is aware that for employees with parental responsibilities there are sometimes difficulties in trying to manage and finance childcare requirements.

Flexible working and other work life balance policies enable parents to manage their busy home lives with their work commitments. Although flexible working can help to manage the expense and amount of additional childcare required, for some the cost can be the difference between staying in work or leaving to be the primary carer as being in work may not be cost effective.

Therefore, in order to assist with the financial cost of childcare, National Highways offers assistance to specifically cover school holiday periods. National Highways will contribute towards the cost incurred per child attending a Holiday Play scheme. The holiday play scheme is applicable to any permanent or Fixed Term employees who have childcare responsibilities for children aged between 4 and 15 years of age or in the case of disabled children up to 18 years of age.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **1. What is registered or approved play scheme?**

A holiday play scheme operates in the school holidays and offers groups of children a range of organised activities, from art and crafts to outings. They are usually open between 8.30am to 6pm.

Financial help under this scheme is given to employees who choose **either** to use a registered or approved Holiday Play scheme **or** their local unregistered scheme. However, the scheme must be a recognised holiday play scheme. This subsidy is not applicable when an employee is simply paying a friend or relative to mind their children during the school holidays or is simply extending existing childcare arrangements to provide holiday cover.

Checks can be made regarding registration or approval of a scheme by contacting any of the following:

- OFSTED: by phoning 0300 123 1231 or at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) quoting the Unique Reference Number (URN) for registered childcare.
- Surestart Childcare Approval Scheme (responsible for the childcare approval scheme): by phoning 0370 000 2288 or at [www.gov.uk/find-sure-start-childrens-centre](http://www.gov.uk/find-sure-start-childrens-centre)
- The Care Quality Commission (responsible for registering domiciliary care agencies): by phoning 03000 616161 or on the internet at [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

Employees are reminded that Ofsted provide protection for children through the production of regular inspections and reports on registered schemes and they also deal with any complaints. Parents are advised to access reports via the Ofsted website.

## 2. What are the eligibility criteria?

Please note that employees on TUPE terms and conditions are not entitled to National Highways employee benefits. Employees on TUPE terms and conditions who transferred to NH employment prior to 1 April 2024 retain an entitlement to National Highways benefits.

### **Parent or legal guardian and employment status**

As a minimum, employees must be the parent or legal guardian of the child(ren) for whom financial support is being claimed. They must also be permanent employees or Fixed Term appointees.

### **Age of child**

There is a limit on the age of the child for which the financial help can be used: From the age of 4, if the child is attending school and up until the September following the child's 15th birthday (or 18th in the case of a disabled child).

## 3. Is the amount that can be claimed back capped?

Yes. We will contribute whichever is the least of either 60% of the cost incurred/child or £15/day/child for up to 5 days per week.

## 4. How do I make a claim?

Complete the claim form including receipts and approval. Then raise a service ticket through [HR Zone](#) and attach the fully completed form. Employees should make sure that all the required information is provided before submitting it and only claim forms for dates that are in the past should be submitted. Claim forms should be submitted on a monthly basis.

## 5. Will a childcare payment show on the employee's payslip?

Yes. The amount of the payment will show on the payslip when it is paid through payroll.

## 6. What about payments for each child or each employee?

Payments are made to employees on the basis of:

- **Each employee:** if there are two employees responsible for the same child(ren), then only one employee is eligible to receive the financial payment, as it is the Play scheme place which is being subsidised.
- **Each child:** payment will be made for each child subject to the cap mentioned at question 3.

## 7. For how many weeks per year will financial assistance will be available?

The main school holiday periods, i.e. summer, Christmas, Easter and half terms but also any school training days or when the school is closed.

**8. Will payments be made for paid and unpaid leave?**

Yes, payments will be made for periods of both paid and unpaid leave, for example, maternity leave, paid and/or unpaid sick leave, and industrial action.

**9. How long does it take for the claim to be paid?**

It depends on whether everything has been supplied correctly. Generally the claim will be entered onto the next pay-run. If the claim is received just after the pay cut-off, (usually the middle of the month, please refer to payroll dates on [HR Zone](#)) then the payment would be made the following month.

**10. Is the payment taxable and subject to NICs?**

Yes. Tax and National Insurance Contributions (NICs) must be paid on the amount of help given (and the liability must be met by the person receiving the help). Tax and NICs will not be met by National Highways (on behalf of an employee). As such this will reduce the actual financial benefit for the employee. Employers NICs must also be paid on any payments.

**11. What if I am paid too much/too little?**

If you are paid incorrectly, please raise a service ticket via [HR Zone](#). If you claim regularly we can correct the amount on your next claim. If not, in the case of an overpayment this would be recovered from your salary the following month or, in the case of an underpayment a credit would be made to your bank account.

**12. What do employees need to consider before using the scheme?**

**Impact on Childcare Vouchers (Salary Sacrifice) Scheme**

If employees are thinking about joining or have already joined the Childcare Vouchers (Salary Sacrifice) Scheme then as long as they get any additional payments (for childcare) through their salary these (additional payments) will have no impact on the Childcare Vouchers (Salary Sacrifice) Scheme.

Example: If an employee receives £30 subsidy a week (via salary) and as a result pays tax and NICs on that amount they can also apply for up to £55 a week (£243 a month) of childcare vouchers.

**Working Tax Credits (WTCs) and Child Tax Credits (CTCs)**

If employees get additional help from National Highways towards the cost of childcare this may affect the amount of WTCs they get. If employees are eligible for the childcare element of WTC, the amount of payment received from National Highways is taken into account and will often lead to a reduction in their CTC allowance. National Highways cannot advise on the impact this may have on an employee's WTCs/CTCs and an employee should contact the tax credits helpline on 0345 300 3900 (or text phone 0345 300 3909) about their personal circumstances.

**Childcare that qualifies for tax and NICs exemptions via employer-supported childcare, and for help via the childcare element of Working Tax Credit**

This consists of:

- Childminders, nurseries and play schemes registered by Ofsted (England only), the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales, the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care and the Health and Social Services Trust in Northern Ireland.
- Out of hours clubs run by a school on the school premises or by a local authority.
- An approved foster-carer (the care must be for a child who is not the foster carer's foster child).
- In England only, a childcarer who is approved by Ofsted to care for your child or children in your own home – these are childminders who have further qualified to become 'home childcarers'.
- In England only, a childcarer approved under the Childcare Approval Scheme. See below for information about the Childcare Approval Scheme.
- In England only, childcare given in the child's own home by a domiciliary worker or nurse from a registered agency that cares for the child or children.
- In Scotland only, childcare given in the child's own home by (or introduced through) childcare agencies, including sitter services and nanny agencies, which must be registered.

### **Childcare provided by relatives of the child**

Childcare provided by a relative of the child is generally not eligible for help via the childcare element of the Working Tax credit or the tax and NICs exemptions on employer-supported childcare. The sole exception to this is the situation in which a relative has been registered or approved as a child-carer, and happens to care for a related child, but whose primary or main paid child-caring is for children to whom they are not related. In short being a paid child-carer for the child to whom they are related is INCIDENTAL to their usual paid child-caring. This care must be provided outside the child's own home.

A relative of the child means a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother or sister - whether by blood, half blood, marriage, or affinity.

### **13. Are ex-Surrey Police and any other TUPEd staff entitled to claim?**

This depends on the contract, if they are a permanent member of staff who has changed onto a National Highways contract then, yes. However, if they are still bound by their previous contract (e.g. their police contract, etc) then no.

Please note that employees on TUPE terms and conditions are not entitled to National Highways employee benefits. Employees on TUPE terms and conditions who transferred to NH employment prior to 1 April 2024 retain an entitlement to National Highways benefits.

### **14. What other help is available to employees?**

- The Childcare Vouchers (Salary Sacrifice) Scheme (for existing members only).

- Additional childcare costs can be claimed when on occasions, additional costs are incurred as a result of you having to attend meetings, training courses or being unable to finish a shift because of operational necessity.
- Current childcare provision available externally – see the following website for a list of local providers [www.childcare.co.uk/information/childcare-link](http://www.childcare.co.uk/information/childcare-link)

#### **15. How much does a Holiday Play scheme cost?**

- Costs vary and many offer very different ranges of hours and activities but the weekly cost for a full day place can range from £3.00 to £25.00 daily per child or £15 to £125 per child per week. The average regional cost in England, according to the Family & Childcare Trust, is £123.49 per week.
- Some offer reductions for siblings or lone parents.
- You may be able to get financial help to meet your childcare costs through the Working Families Tax Credit or through a scheme run through your employer such as Childcare Vouchers.
- To find out the cost of local childcare go to <https://www.childcare.co.uk/information/childcare-link>.

#### **16. When should I start looking for a Holiday Play scheme?**

- If your child is already attending an out of school group during the term and you know you will need childcare during the school holiday you should ask if they run a holiday scheme themselves or if another group uses their premises during the holidays.
- The local authority's Families Information Service (FIS) can provide you with a list of groups that generally offer holiday schemes.
- As soon as you know you will need a place, register your child with the group you are interested in although some holiday play schemes have a date on which they will start to accept bookings and will not register children prior to that date.
- Families Information Service can provide you with a list of groups that generally offer holiday schemes and you can contact them for when their brochure for the next holiday is being produced and when the first booking date is.
- Consider how many staff are qualified and to what level in the schemes you research.
- Ask if you can see the facilities that the group uses and any outside play space.
- Ask what food and drink you get or do you need to supply a packed lunch.
- Ask what sort of activities your child will be involved in. If your child is learning a specialist sport or activity, will the staff be qualified in that field?
- Ensure you ask how good behaviour is encouraged in the play scheme.

#### **17. Things to look for when choosing a Holiday Play scheme**

- You know your child best, so look for a holiday play scheme that you feel will suit your child's needs.
- You may not be able to see a group in operation before you book a place as they only run in the holidays. Does your child have a friend or friends who already use a group that they can recommend? Having a friend to go with can make a strange place a lot less worrying.

**18. If you can see the group in operation**

- Are the children calm, safe and happy?
- Do children play and talk together?
- Are the staff listening to children and answering them carefully?
- Are the staff friendly and proud of their work?
- Are the staff joining in with what the children are doing?
- Are there lots of fun activities planned to help children learn and play?
- Are there plenty of clean toys, games and equipment for children to use?
- Are the premises clean, well-kept and safe for children? Do they have access to an outside play area (or will children go to parks and other places regularly)?
- Are parents encouraged to say what they want for their children?

**19. How do I find a Holiday Play scheme?**

- Ask your child's before or after school group if they are linked to any holiday play schemes.
- Contact the National Association of Family Information Services (NAFIS), 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, The Bridge, 81 Southwark Bridge Road, London, SE1 0NG Telephone: 0207 940 7510 Fax: 0207 515 9001 Email [info@familyandchildcaretrust.org](mailto:info@familyandchildcaretrust.org)
- Log on to <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/nafis>
- Further information on the registration and inspection of childcare can be obtained from OFSTED'S helpline 0300 123 1231 or their website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)
- It is recommended that OFSTED inspection reports are viewed before choosing a childcare provider. These can be downloaded from the OFSTED website or you can contact the FIS to make arrangements to read the latest report. All childcare providers should have copies of their latest inspection report available to view at the premises.

# **HOLIDAY PLAY SCHEME EXPENDITURE CLAIM FORM**

*Please note that supporting evidence for each item claimed must be attached (e.g. receipts.)*

<b>SECTION 1: Please complete your details</b>			
<b>Employee Name:</b>		<b>Employee Number:</b>	<b>Tel No:</b>
<b>Description of Expenditure</b>			
<b>Name of child</b>	<b>Dates of holiday play scheme</b>	<b>Number of days being claimed</b>	<b>Total cost</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>			
<b>TOTAL CLAIMED</b> <i>Note that National Highways will contribute whichever is the least either:          60% of the cost incurred/child          OR          £15/day/child up to 5 days per week.</i>			
<b>SECTION 2: Please complete the declaration</b>			
I certify that the above expenditure is correct and in line with National Highways procedures; all receipts are attached; the correct process for financial approval and purchasing have been followed and the goods/services have been received. National Highways has not previously paid for the goods/services covered in this claim.			
<b>Your signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>SECTION 3: As the approving Manager you must check all eligibility criteria against the Holiday play scheme guidance. In signing this approval, I confirm that I have authority to authorise this payment and I am satisfied that this claim meets the criteria and is approved for payment.</b>			
<b>Approving Manager's Name:</b>		<b>Approving Manager's Signature:</b>	
<b>Tel No:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

Once completed please forward to HR by raising a service ticket via [HR Zone](#) and attaching the form.