

## Child Benefit: England

Many home educators ask about Child Benefit when they are contemplating home education. Child Benefit is payable for ALL children in full-time education (12+ hours in England) beyond the age of 16 up to the age of 20, whether they attend school/college or are educated otherwise as long as the education is not above Level 3 (A Level or equivalent). Child Benefit is administered by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs or HMRC.

Between January and June of the school year in which the child turns 16, parents will receive a letter from the Child Benefit Office at HMRC in Newcastle asking whether the child will be continuing their full time education post 16. It is at this point you should confirm that your child will be continuing home education.

The academic year begins on September 1st. Education is compulsory until 30th June after the young person's 16th birthday. For example if your son or daughter is 16 on September 5th, child benefit will continue to be paid automatically until 31st August after their 16th birthday.

Home education is recognised as "full-time education" after the age of 16 in the same way as it is legally recognised before the child was 16. In other words it is not necessary for your child to be studying for exams, receiving tuition or taking a course in order for the education to be counted as full time.

The Education Section at the Child Benefit Office uses Decision Makers Guide DMG11094 to decide whether or not full time education is taking place. DMG11094 states: "To decide whether education undertaken elsewhere is full-time, the decision maker should consider the guidance in DMG11093. This might include unsupervised study since the circumstances of home education could be quite different from those at a recognised educational establishment. If the decision maker is satisfied that the number of hours studied each week exceeds 12 they should accept the education as full-time."

Education otherwise than at a recognised establishment is covered in DMG11100. "Where the education is not at a recognised educational establishment (for example at home), the decision maker must recognise the education for the student to be regarded as a young person."

The 12+ hours of education must be "non-advanced." Non-advanced education is defined in DMG 11095.

Essentially, the course of study must not be above Level 3. Up to and including Level 3 is deemed to be "further education" but Level 4 and above are deemed to be "higher education" and if the young person is in higher education, Child Benefit is not payable.

As stated on the DirectGov website: "The Child Benefit Office can carry on paying Child Benefit up until the age of 20 if your child goes into relevant education or training. Your child would need to have either been accepted, enrolled or started on the course before the age of 19"

HMRC website says: "If your child is 19 and goes back into qualifying education or training, you can make another claim for Child Benefit as long as they were enrolled or accepted for the education or training before their 19th birthday"

HMRC also says: "You must tell the Child Benefit Office about changes to your child's education or training, whether they begin or finish education, (including home education) after the age of 16".

In cases where it is not known whether the young person will be attending college (for example when waiting for news of a college place or exam results in relation to a conditional offer) it might be sensible to tell HMRC that the young person will be continuing in full-time home education.

You can always update HMRC with a different place of full-time education from home, i.e. college, whereas it is harder to explain "no longer going to college" as "being home educated".

We are aware of families where Child Benefit was paid after the young person left a college course to continue education at home.

Many of the Child Benefit Enquiry Line operators are not aware of the rules applicable to home educators and can give out wrong information. If you contact them and are told that your Child Benefit will be stopped, ask to be put through to the Full Time Education Section so that you can get the correct information. You can also quote this web page and the Decision Makers Guide references.

## Links

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/childbenefit/keep-up-to-date/when-child-aged-16/child-16.htm>

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs web page on Child Benefit

[http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/dmgmanual/html/1Dmgcont/01\\_0002\\_DMGCNT1.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/dmgmanual/html/1Dmgcont/01_0002_DMGCNT1.htm)

Decision Makers Guides Index

[http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/dmgmanual/html/DMG11001/02\\_0061\\_DMG11094.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/dmgmanual/html/DMG11001/02_0061_DMG11094.htm)

DMG11094 Full-time education

[http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/dmgmanual/html/DMG11001/02\\_0067\\_DMG11100.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/dmgmanual/html/DMG11001/02_0067_DMG11100.htm)

DMG11100 Education not at a recognised establishment

[http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/dmgmanual/html/DMG11001/02\\_0062\\_DMG11095.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/dmgmanual/html/DMG11001/02_0062_DMG11095.htm)

DMG11095 Non-advanced education

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