

DISABLED CHILDREN AND CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Quality childcare is good for all children and families. It can be particularly important for disabled children and children with special educational needs, and it may reduce the need for special educational needs intervention later on. Often disabled children do not have as many opportunities to play with other children, and can feel very isolated. Like other parents, many parents of disabled children want to go out to work to raise their family income, especially as it can cost three times as much to bring up a disabled child. And sometimes families just need a break from their caring duties to spend time with the rest of their family. Quality childcare can help with all these needs.

This fact sheet gives information about:

- Formal childcare such as nurseries, childminders and home-based carers
- Different sources of financial help available with the costs of this type of childcare
- Where to go for more detailed advice.
- What sort of childcare is available
- Medway's Local Offer for Children and Young People with Disabilities

Childminders

Registered childminders are self-employed carers based in their own homes. They and all the adults living in the house undergo criminal records bureau checks. Childminders also have to meet certain national standards and be registered with Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) if they look after children under 8. Childminders who care for children over the age of 8 may be registered on the voluntary part of the Ofsted Childcare Register (OCR). Childminders can often provide very flexible care, and as they work with small groups of children, may be able to provide more individualised care. They can also look after siblings of different ages. In some places there are Childminding networks who have undertaken special training to work with children with disabilities and special needs.

Nurseries

Day nurseries provide care and education for pre-school-aged children from six weeks to five years old. All day nurseries are registered and inspected by Ofsted and must comply with strict staff: child ratios as well as other standards. Most early years settings/providers have a designated Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to co-ordinate provision for children with special needs.

Extended school and holiday provision

Out of school clubs may operate before or after school, usually between 8am and 6pm. They are often based at a local school or nursery or in youth or community centres. They may also run holiday provision during school holidays. Local councils and voluntary groups may also run activities during the holidays. Some activities may only run for a few hours a day or for a few weeks during the holidays.

Playgroups and preschools

These provide early education for children between two and five years old and emphasise parental involvement. They are registered with Ofsted to meet the national standards. They frequently offer sessions of 2½ to 4 hours, although some run longer sessions or all day care.

Childcare in your home

Nannies and other home-based child carers are employed by you to provide care for children in your home. Some home-based child carers are now registered with the new Ofsted Childcare Register. Parents using an Ofsted registered carer and who are eligible, can get financial support through the working tax credit or through their employer to help pay for their childcare.

Your child's needs

- Talk to potential providers about any special needs your child has, such as dietary requirements or any medical assistance s/he needs.
- Discuss with them how best they can meet your child's needs. Think about whether your carer will need special training to care for your child.
- See if you can arrange a settling-in period or spend some time with the carer so that you, the carer and your child can get to know each other.
- Think also about how you will get your child to and from their childcare. Some childminders or out of school clubs may be willing to pick up your child from school, but you may have to be responsible for getting your child there.

Discrimination

Childcare services should state whether they have the facilities to cater for children with special needs when they register with Ofsted. Unfortunately whilst most providers say that they can cater for special needs at the time of registration, many parents say that the providers cannot offer a place when it is actually needed. This may be because they have long waiting lists or they cannot provide the necessary staffing levels.

Legally, childcare providers are not allowed to treat a disabled child less favourably than other children because of their disability. For example, this means that they cannot stop a disabled child coming on an outing or charge more for a disabled child without a good financial reason. They must also make 'reasonable adjustments' to their services and facilities so that disabled children can use the facilities. This might include adapting premises to make them wheelchair accessible, training staff to use special equipment, or setting up special meal arrangements for a child with a severe food allergy.

Help with childcare costs

Financial help with childcare costs is often restricted to help with the costs of paying for childcare services, which are registered. In practice this can mean that unregistered childcare – most often care by a family member or a friend, will not be eligible for financial subsidy from Government.

Registered childcare may be any of the following:

- Day nurseries (private, community or local authority)
- Workplace nurseries
- Childminders
- Pre-school playgroups
- Nursery schools
- Out of school clubs and holiday clubs
- Home-based carers who are part of the Voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register (OCR)

Help with childcare costs could be in form of:

- Direct payments
- Tax credits
- Free early education places for 3 and 4 year olds.
- Employer Childcare vouchers
- Childcare grants (for parents who are studying)

Local Offer:

Medway's Local Offer sets out all provision available for children and young people with SEN and disabilities aged 0-25. Including education, health and social care services. For more details visit the Medway Family Information Service Directory at www.medwayfisd.com or contact the team on 01634 332195.

For more info...

If you would like further information on childcare and a list of providers with current vacancies in the Medway area please call the Family Information Service on 01634 335566, email familyinfo@medway.gov.uk or visit www.medwayfisd.com

Medway Family Information Service cannot recommend or endorse any childcare providers and do not accept responsibility for the accuracy of this information.

**This information is available in different formats and languages.
Contact the Family Information Service on 01634 335566 for details.**

INFORMATION AND SERVICES AVAILABLE TO PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Advice and Support

The Early Support Programme - provides informal advice on the availability of appropriate services for disabled children from birth to five and their families.

For more information visit www.earlysupport.org.uk

Early Support Programme Medway – is a joint project between the Disabled Children's Team, Social Services and the Sanderson Child Development Centre at Medway Maritime Hospital, together with Early Years staff from Medway Education Directorate. Families who have a child with a complex disability (who uses two or more specialist services) in the pre-school age group 0 – 5 years can use this service. To access the service the child needs to be known to the Child Development Centre and has seen either a community paediatrician or community therapist. For more information contact the Family Link Support Coordinator 01634 825190

Medway Disabled Children's Team - Parklands Resource Centre provides support and assistance to families with disabled children. A range of flexible services are offered to allow children with disabilities to remain living at home with their families. The team works in partnership with health and voluntary organisations to offer families appropriate services to meet their individual needs. Telephone 01634 338500

Contact a Family – Contact a Family is a UK-wide charity providing advice, information and support to the parents of all disabled children - no matter what their health condition. Can put parents in contact with other families, both on a local and national basis.

Free phone Helpline 0808 808 3555 Website: www.cafamily.org.uk

Carers Line Carers UK – Dedicated helpline for carers, offering advice on benefits, social services and many more problems that carers face.

Free phone Helpline: 0808 808 7777 Website: www.carersuk.org.uk

Financial Help

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Tax free benefit for children & adults who need personal care or have walking difficulties because they are physically or mentally disabled.

For more information or to request a claim pack contact the Benefit Enquiry line.

Free phone: 0800 882200 Text phone: 0800 243355

For DLA enquires *once a claim has been made*, contact DLA helpline.

Telephone: 08457 123456 Text phone: 08457 224433

For more information and to make a claim online or download a claim form. Website: www.direct.gov.uk

Working Tax Credit

Supports working people on low to middle incomes. Can include extra amounts to help with childcare costs. The childcare element can be claimed for any child up to 1 September after their 16th birthday if the child is on the blind register or the parent receives Disability Living Allowance for the child.

Child Tax Credit

Supports families with children and 16 to 18 year olds in full-time education. Can include additional amounts for disabled children.

For advice or a claim form contact Inland Revenue.

Telephone Helpline: 0845 300 3900 Text phone: 0845 300 3909

Website: www.hmrc.gov.uk

Website: www.direct.gov.uk

Direct Payments

Cash payments from local authorities to enable parents and carers of disabled children and young people to buy their own support or care.

For more information on Medway Council Direct Payment Scheme Website:

www.medway.gov.uk Telephone enquires: 01634 334466 Email enquiries mdps@medway.gov.uk

Available Grants

Family Fund Trust - The Family Fund provides timely grants to families with severely disabled or seriously ill children, based on families' views and needs. The Family Fund is a registered charity covering the whole of the UK and is funded by the national governments of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Website: www.familyfundtrust.org.uk Telephone: 0845 130 4542

Adaptations to the home

Disabled Facilities Grant – Available through local authorities for equipment and adaptations to the home for disabled. For further information/request an application form contact Medway Council.

Telephone: 01634 331262 Website: <http://www.medway.gov.uk/index/socialcare/disability.htm>

Resources for equipment

Disabled Living Foundation – A national charity providing free impartial advice about all types of equipment for disabled people.

Website: www.dlf.org.uk Telephone Helpline: 0845 130 9177

Assist UK – A UK wide network of locally situated Disabled Living Centres. Each centre includes a permanent exhibition of products and equipment providing people with opportunities to see and try products and equipment and get information and advice from professional staff about what might suit them best.

Telephone: 0161 834 1044 Text phone: 0161 839 0885 Website: www.assist-uk.org

Respite cover and in-home support

Vitalise – A national charity providing essential breaks for disabled people and carers.

Telephone: 845 345 1972 Website: www.vitalise.org.uk

Crossroads - Caring for Carers - An organisation which provides 'in the home care'.

Telephone: 0845 450 0350