Childcare Options for Parents/Carers

Sheffield Directory provides information about various types of childcare available.

**Childminders**

- Self-employed carers who look after one or more children to whom they are not related on domestic premises usually in the childcarer’s home.

You can search for a Childminder using the Sheffield Directory.

**Day Nursery**

- Can be private nurseries run on a commercial basis; workplace or college nurseries for employees or students; or non-profit making nurseries usually serving a local community.
- May provide full and part-time childcare.
- Some nurseries also provide breakfast clubs, after school clubs and/or holiday clubs.

You can search for a Day Nursery using the Sheffield Directory.

**Playgroups and Pre-schools**

- Group care for children with sessions lasting for 2-3 hours and taking place between 1-5 times a week during term time.

You can search for Playgroups and Pre-schools using the Sheffield Directory.

**Holiday Clubs**

- Group care and play care for children during the school holidays.

You can search for Holiday clubs using the Sheffield Directory.
**Breakfast and After School Clubs**

- These are also referred to as Out of School clubs.
- Some clubs also run holiday playcare schemes.
- They offer group care and play for children before and/or after school during term time.

You can search for Breakfast clubs and After School clubs using the Sheffield Directory.

**Creche**

- Group care for children for occasional or limited amounts of time.
- Often in permanent premises attached to sports centres, shopping centres or colleges.

You can search for a Creche using the Sheffield Directory.

**Nanny / Home Childcarer**

- Carer aged 18 years or over who cares for children from birth to 17 years at the home of one of the children.

You can search for a Nanny / Home Childcarer using the Sheffield Directory.

**School Nursery Class**

- A number of primary schools have a nursery class.

You can search for a School Nursery Class using the Sheffield Directory.

**Choosing childcare**

Visit several providers and consider, observe and ask the following:

**Formal requirements**
Childcare available to children aged 0 to 8 years old for more than 2 hours should be registered and have current public liability insurance. Certificates may be displayed, if not you can ask to see them.

For a crèche, out of school club or holiday club, check whether the group is registered (if this is required by Ofsted) and has current liability insurance – certificates may be displayed, if not you can ask to see them.

Always use a registered childminder – ask to see their certificate and proof they have up to date public liability insurance. They also need to have Business Use car insurance if they drive.

If the childcare is registered, ask if it’s possible to look at a copy of their latest Ofsted Inspection Report. Copies of individual childminder’s inspection reports are shown on Ofsted’s website. Reports can be found using the carer’s unique registration number.

Staff
- Are the staff friendly and approachable? How do they relate to the children?
- If you choose a nursery, is there a key worker for your child and are staff qualified? (All supervisors and managers must hold a relevant level 3 qualification, with half the remaining staff holding a relevant level 2 qualification.)
- How does the childcare provider deal with discipline and difficult behaviour?
- Are staff involved with children’s play?
- In a crèche environment, do staff have professional qualifications? (e.g. NVQs, NNEB, and Nursing Qualifications).

Are all staff DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checked? This replaced the CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks from 1st December 2012. More information can be found on the GOV website.

In a holiday playscheme check if staff have any childcare qualifications? (for playschemes registered on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register at least half the staff should be qualified).

Regarding childminding: Does the childminder drive and if so do you need to provide a car seat?

Quality improvements and training
- Ask a provider about any awards, qualifications and on-going training.
- Those who look after children, whether childcare, early education or playcare, are encouraged to ensure their services reach a quality standard above basic requirements.

Activities and environment
- Are the premises warm, clean, light and well ventilated with enough space for play?
- Are there enough toys, books and play equipment provided?
- Do the toys and activities take into account the children’s ages, cultural backgrounds and any special needs?
- Is there a safe, supervised outdoor play area that is kept secure and how much time will the children spend outside?
- Is there a programme of appropriate and varied activities?
- If you choose a childminder, does the childminder take the children out (on visits, shopping, to the library, to a toddler group)? Are there any pets that the children will come into contact with at a childminders house?
- If you choose a playgroup/pre-school, are parents encouraged to be involved in the group?
- At an out of school club and holiday club environment are there planned activities and are children involved in planning? (e.g. how many children attend the club and are there children your child’s age?)
Safety and security
- Do the children look happy, settled and busy?
- What are the staffing ratios? Nursery ratios are set according to the ages of the children. Are there volunteers and are they properly supervised?
- Is there a safe, supervised outdoor play area that is kept secure?
- Do staff carry out regular fire drills and have their equipment maintained?
- Are parents and carers provided with information about the childcare provider’s service and policies, e.g. fire drills, medical emergencies, outings?
- In a crèche environment how will staff identify your child (e.g. wrist band)?
- In a crèche environment what is the procedure for signing children in/out? (if someone picks the child up other than the person that took the child, how will they be identified?).
- Do staff carry out regular fire drills and have their fire equipment maintained?
- Regarding out of school clubs: does the club have a procedure for school collection?
- Regarding childminders: can the childminder take/collect your child to/from school? If they do, how many other children are they taking/collecting from school, and how many schools do they cover?
- In a childminder environment, ask who else is in the house when your child is there. Can you meet them?

Costs and equipment
- Can the childcare provider offer free sessions for 2, 3 and 4 year olds through Free Early Learning? Check that you are clear about how you will be charged if you take up additional sessions or services above the free 15 hours. See ‘Code of Practice’ for further information on what Childcare Providers need to do to receive funding.
- Confirm when you need to pay.
- Where applicable, check if meals, drinks, snacks, nappies, outings etc. is included, or are there extra charges for these?
- In a childminder environment, is there any equipment you are required to provide (e.g. buggy or car seat)?
- Is there a reduced rate for more than one child?
- What happens when you or the childcare provider has a holiday? There are no set guidelines about holidays. The provider may have a policy on this and detail should be written into your contract with the provider.
- What happens if your child or childcare provider is ill? Normally, if your child is ill and does not go to the childcare provision, you would pay as usual. If the childcare provider is ill and there is no service available, you would not normally have to pay. This could vary depending on provider policy and should be written into the contract.
- Do they accept Employer Supported Childcare Vouchers? These can be purchased from your employer with a tax and national insurance saving to yourself, if your employer is participating in a voucher scheme. See HMRC for more details.
- If reserving a place at your chosen childcare provider, do you need to pay a retainer fee?
- Where possible, speak to other parents whose children attend.

Complaints and problems
- Discuss any difficulties with staff as soon as they happen.
- The provider should have a complaints procedure, which you can follow.
- If you are unable to resolve your difficulties and they relate to the quality of care being provided, as long as the provider is registered with Ofsted, you can call Ofsted’s complaints line on 0300 1234666.
- Quality concerns about a non-registered provision cannot be made to Ofsted.
If you are concerned about the risk of potential harm or abuse then you should report this to social care or the Police.

Childcare for a child with special needs or a disability

- All registered childcare is required to ensure that it is accessible and inclusive.
- This means childcare should not be refused, or a child treated less favourably, because of any disability or learning difficulty.
- All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that the needs of each child are met and that children with disabilities have access to the premises.

Specialist services can provide support and advice to parents and childcarers about children’s play, learning and development. They include:

- **Early Years Inclusion Team** for 0 to 5 year olds (SEN Early Years).
- **Special Needs Inclusion Playcare Service** (SNIPS) for children attending mainstream out of school and holiday clubs.
- Find childcare for children and more information using the [Local Offer Website](#).