

Factsheet for parents in England

01

What are my childcare options?

Families use childcare for many reasons - to help you work, look for jobs, train or study or just take time out, and to help your child's development. Childcare can offer many positive benefits for your entire family.

Registered and unregistered childcare

There are two types of childcare, registered and unregistered. Childcare is registered and inspected by Ofsted. Childcare falls under one of three registers:

- Early Years Register (EYR): This covers childcare for children up to the age of five until 31 August following their fifth birthday.
- Compulsory Ofsted Childcare Register (OCR): This covers childcare for children aged five to seven inclusive (unless exempt).
- Voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register (vOCR): This covers childcare for children aged eight and over and care for children of any age that is activity based or provided in the child's own home.

This factsheet looks at the different types of childcare and what they can offer you and your child. It aims to explain the different options and could help you to decide which type of service best fits your needs.

The different types of registered childcare include:

- childminders;
- children's centres;
- day nurseries;
- preschools/playgroups;
- crèches (open more than two hours per day and last more than five days per year);
- nursery schools*;
- extended schools;
- out-of-school services or kids' clubs; and
- holiday playschemes/clubs.



Some types of childcare can be registered on the voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register; however, they are not legally required to register. These include:

- nannies and home childcarers;
- parent/carer and toddler groups; and
- activity-based care.

Unregistered care includes:

- childcare provided by a family member;
- babysitting in the child's home; and
- childcare provided by a friend (who is not receiving payment for caring for your child).

*Nurseries for children age three and over that are attached to schools, where at least one child in the nursery is a pupil at the school, are not registered on the Early Years Register but are instead registered as a school. This does not affect the standard of care the nursery must offer young children and the nursery will still be inspected by Ofsted.

Financial help for childcare costs is generally restricted to paying for childcare services that are registered.

All 3- and 4-year-olds (and some 2-year-olds) are entitled to at least 15 hours of free early education per week. Many of the registered childcare providers discussed in this factsheet offer this free education. For more information see our factsheet 'Free early education for 2, 3- and 4-year-olds'.

For a list of questions to ask potential childcare providers, see our factsheet, 'Visiting childcare settings'.

Your Family Information Service (FIS) can provide you with details of local registered childcare. You can find contact details for your FIS by visiting: www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/findyourfis

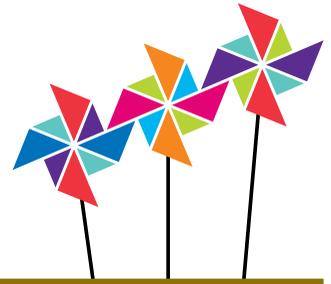
Childminders

Childminders are usually paid on an hourly basis. You may be able to negotiate the rates with them depending on your needs and the services they offer. Hourly rates vary around the country. See our annual 'Childcare costs survey', which is available on our website, www.familyandchildcaretrust.org, for details of average costs for a full-time place.

You'll need to discuss required hours, holiday pay and other terms and conditions and ensure that details of these are included in the contract you have with your childminder.

Childminders can often provide very flexible care. As they work with small groups of children, they may be able to provide more individualised care. They can also look after siblings of different ages. In some places, there are childminding networks that provide training for carers to work with children with disabilities and special needs.

Childminders are self-employed childcare providers who will look after your child in their own home. They must be registered with Ofsted and are inspected at least once within three years of the last inspection. They may offer full day care or childcare before or after school or during school holidays.



How much can I expect to pay a childminder?

Childminders are self-employed, so there are no standardised rates; it is up to childminders to set their own fees. Currently, the average cost for 25 hours of care with a childminder is £99.77 per week (for a child under 2). However, prices can vary. Childminder costs are often slightly lower than nursery fees. This is not reflective of the service provided, but linked to differences in overhead costs.

Do I have to pay for a childminder if my child is sick, on holiday or I am looking after them at home?

Yes, you may have to. Childminders are self-employed, so to some extent they set the 'policies' regarding sick pay and holiday pay. Childminding rates are a childminder's income, so - like all workers - they need to ensure that their income is maintained. All details relating to sick and holiday pay should be made clear in the contract you sign with the childminder. The contract should state when you will and won't pay fees and also any notice period required. For example, some childminders may not charge a fee or may charge a reduced fee if either you or they notifies the other far enough in advance of forthcoming holidays.

How will I know if this is the right type of care for my child?

You will only really know if this is the right type of care after your child has been with the childminder for a while. It is advisable to negotiate a settling-in period. This is an agreed period (for example, three to six months) where both you and the childminder can assess whether the care arrangements are working. Having this settling-in period stated in the contract ensures that both you and the childminder are aware that this might happen.

Is there anything that I should do before visiting potential childminders?

It is always a good idea to be as prepared as possible when visiting any potential childcare provider. You could ask your local Family Information Service (FIS) if they have a sample questionnaire to take with you when interviewing childminders. Find contact details for your local FIS by visiting: www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/findyourfis

Alternatively you could refer to our factsheet, 'Visiting childcare providers: How to find high-quality childcare' found at: www.familyandchildcaretrust.org

And remember, you can always talk to other parents who use the childminder.

The Professional Association of Childcare and Early Years (PACEY - see details in the next box) can provide sample childminding contracts or can advise you more on common practice among childminders with regards to fees, contracts, holiday and sick pay.

For further information about childminding and childminding networks, contact your Family Information Service (FIS) or visit the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years website: www.pacey.org.uk



Children's centres

Some children's centres provide childcare for children under the age of five, alongside other family services, such as links to Jobcentre Plus and health and family support. They can also provide you with advice about drop-in sessions, local childcare providers and free early education for two, three- and four-year-olds. For further information about children's centres, contact your Family Information Service (FIS).

Day nurseries

Day nurseries look after and educate children from birth to age five. They are usually open all day, but not in the evenings or at weekends. There are different types of nurseries, including private, community, local authority and workplace nurseries. All nurseries should be registered and inspected by Ofsted. All nurseries have a designated Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to co-ordinate provision for children with special needs.

How much does a nursery place cost?

The average cost of nursery place for a child under 2 for 25 hours is £109.89 per week, but prices can vary quite dramatically. Nursery costs are higher for children under two.

Preschools/playgroups

For further information, contact your Family Information Service (FIS) or the Pre-school Learning Alliance on **020 7697 2500** or visit their website: www.pre-school.org.uk

Preschools/playgroups

Preschools/playgroups provide play and education sessions lasting about three hours for children aged two–five. Costs for this type of care will vary, check with individual settings for details.

Crèches

Crèches provide occasional childcare during particular events (such as training courses) or at particular locations (such as supermarkets and leisure centres) while you are engaged in an activity.

Nursery schools

Nursery classes are offered at nursery schools as well as infant and primary schools. Nursery schools operate in school hours during term time. Children can attend all day or on a sessional basis. To find out about the nursery schools in your area, contact your local educational authority.

Crèches must be registered if they:

- care for an individual child for more than two hours continuously;
- provide care for children for more than four hours a day (if the parents are within the immediate area); or,
- provide care for children under 8-years old for more than 14 days in a year.



Extended schools

These are schools that open beyond the normal school day in order to provide the local community with facilities and services, such as childcare, throughout the year. The care is provided by the school itself or in partnership with local childcare providers. Extended schools offer care such as parent and toddler groups and breakfast, after-school and homework clubs.

If the school that your child attends does not offer extended services, they may be part of a network of local schools that does. The local education authority or Family Information Service should be able to tell you which schools in your area offer extended services. Details of your local education authority will be in your phone book or on your local authority's website.

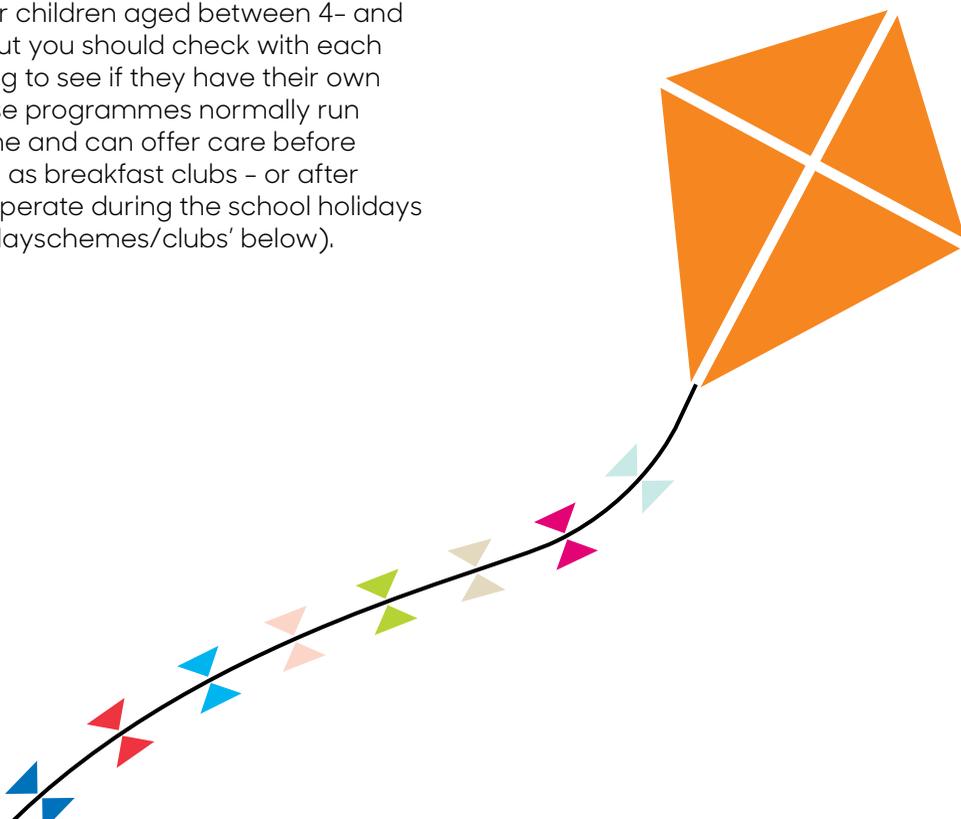
Out-of-school services and kids' clubs may pick your child up from their school and take them to a club on their own premises. However, not all clubs offer this service and you will need to check if you have to make arrangements for having your children transported there. Alternatively the club may be situated on the school's grounds.

There will be a range of activities offered by the club, which may include outings. There will be different areas for the children to play or learn, usually including an outdoor area. Out-of-school clubs should have a policy of promoting integration. They should be able to meet the requirements of children who have a disability or special educational needs.

It is a good idea to look into these services as early as possible because they often have waiting lists. Your Family Information Service (FIS) will have listings of out-of-school services.

Out-of-school services or kids' clubs

Out-of-school services and kids' clubs generally provide care for children aged between 4- and 14-years old, but you should check with each individual setting to see if they have their own age limits. These programmes normally run during term time and can offer care before school - known as breakfast clubs - or after school. Some operate during the school holidays (See 'Holiday playschemes/clubs' below).





Holiday playschemes/clubs

Holiday clubs offer similar services to out-of-school clubs, but run during the school holidays. Some can offer a full-day place, but some only operate on a part-time basis and will only be able to offer children care for the morning or afternoon.

Many local authorities offer subsidised holiday schemes, but places often fill up very quickly. Some clubs may have an advance booking system that allows you to reserve a place for your child, but others will offer places on a first-come first-serve basis as soon as the holidays begin.

Nannies

Nannies are employed by you, as the parent, to care for your children at home and may be suitable if you need a more flexible childcare option. Although many nannies do have nursery nurse or childcare training, they are not required to hold qualifications. However, nannies can opt to register on the voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register.

Nannies who have registered have gone through similar checks as other registered providers and have qualifications and training. They will also be insured. You may feel more reassured employing a registered, rather than unregistered, nanny. However, even if a nanny is registered, it is still important to interview them and thoroughly check references.

It is important to agree your nanny's responsibilities before they start working for you. You should also write up and agree a contract of employment detailing duties, pay, working hours and holidays.

For more information about holiday clubs, contact your Family Information Service (FIS). Find details for your FIS at:
www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/findyourfis



How can I find a nanny?

Your local Family Information Service will have details of registered nannies. They can also be found through reputable nanny agencies. If you cannot find an Ofsted-registered nanny in your area, you could approach an unregistered one to see if they would be willing to apply to be registered. Nannies may be more willing to do this if you offer to pay for the registration. However, as nannies are able to terminate their contract at any time, you may end up paying registration fees for a nanny you do not employ long term.

How much will a nanny charge?

Wages will depend on factors such as whether they live in or live out, the number of children you have and their ages, the average wages in your area, the hours of work and specific duties required. The average weekly wage for a daily nanny in London was £495 in 2012 and £389 in the rest of the UK (Nannytax, 2013).

As the nanny's employer, you are responsible for paying their tax and National Insurance Contributions. This can be done by the Revenue's and Pay as You Earn (PAYE) scheme. You can contact your local tax office or HM Revenue and Customs Employer Helpline on **0300 200 3200** for more information, details are available on their website: www.hmrc.gov.uk

Is a nanny the same as an au pair?

Nannies and au pairs are quite different. A nanny is an individual who is employed (often full time) to care for your children. They often have relevant childcare qualifications. Au pairs are often students, from outside the UK, who are here to study and increase their knowledge of English. Au pairs generally do not have childcare experience or qualifications and should not be left in sole charge of children below the age of four. If your au pair requires a visa to work, there may be restrictions on their working hours. Their passports should state any restrictions that apply. All au pairs must be able to attend their language/study lessons. They must also be provided with room and board.

Parent/carer and toddler groups

Parent/carer and toddler groups are not childcare. They are drop-in sessions for children and their carers. As parents stay with their children, these groups do not have to be registered. Your local Family Information Service may have listings of local groups. You can also check for information at your library, in local newspapers and online local notice boards.

In order to qualify for the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit or for employer-supported childcare, such as vouchers, your nanny must be registered.



Activity-based care

Activity-based care – such as sports or leisure activities – does not need to be registered. However, activity-based care that is provided for a child for over two consecutive hours is eligible for registration on the voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register.

Childcare provided by a family member

When a family member cares for your child in your home, the care they provide does not need to be registered. A family member can include a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle, or brother or sister.

Care provided by a family member does not qualify for financial help with childcare costs unless:

- your family member is a registered childcare provider; and
- the care is not provided in your home; and,
- the care is provided to non-related children in addition to your child.

Childcare provided by a friend

Childcare provided by a friend does not need to be registered if:

- the childcare is provided as an occasional 'favour' rather than for payment;
- the children are all aged eight or over; or
- the childcare is provided in your home.

Remember, you can only get financial help with childcare costs when you use registered childcare.

If you have a friend who cares for children under the age of eight in their home and you pay for the childcare, your friend will need to be registered as a childminder. In this case, the care your friend provides would qualify for financial help.

The Family and Childcare Trust is the charity created from a merger of Daycare Trust and the Family and Parenting Institute. Together we bring over 40 years of experience in campaigning and research into family life and childcare.

The information in this factsheet refers to childcare in England only. For information about childcare options in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, contact your local Family Information Service (FIS). Find details of your local FIS by visiting: www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/findyourfis or by searching in your phone book.

This factsheet provides general information only and was accurate at the time of publication. The information is not to be taken as legal advice. You are advised to seek independent advice if you need further assistance

www.familyandchildcaretrust.org

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