



## Choosing childcare – all you need to know

We have put together this guide of things that you may need to consider when looking at childcare for your child. In this guide you will find information on the following:



**Types of Childcare** a brief description of the different types of childcare available and approximate costs.



**OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education)** is the governmental department responsible for the regulation and inspection of care for children and young people. It is also responsible for inspecting education and training for learners of all ages, including both primary and secondary schools. With the exception of schools or care provided in the child's own home, any provider that regularly cares for children under the age of 8 years for a period of 2 hours or more must, by law, be registered with Ofsted.



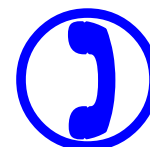
**The Childcare Checklist** Choosing the right childcare can be a difficult decision. Hopefully acting on all the points in the checklist will enable you to find the best possible childcare provider for you and your child.



**Staff to Child Ratios in Childcare** One very important factor when looking for childcare is the ratio of staff to children in the setting. You will want your child to get sufficient care and attention – after all, that is what you are paying for! The **Staff to Child Ratios in Childcare** is a simplified run-down on how many children to each member of staff you can expect in each type of childcare option available. Remember that staff to child ratios are set out by Ofsted who register and inspect all childcare for children less than 8 years of age in England.



**Helpful websites and contacts numbers**



We have put together a list of helpful websites and contacts in regards to choosing suitable childcare and these can be found at the end of this document



## Types of Childcare

Which type of childcare you choose for you and your child will depend on many factors such as the age of your child, the hours that you are at work or studying, affordability and location.

**Childminders:** Childminders usually look after children in the childminder's own home. Most will work early mornings, evenings and weekends – and in the holidays. Costs may start at around £4.50 per hour

**Day nurseries:** Opening hours can be from 7am to 7pm, though this varies. Your child can attend full or part-time sessions. Costs per day can be in the region of £50 to £60

**Nannies:** Nannies come to your home, and will often fit in with non-typical working hours. They may choose to register with Ofsted. Costs vary widely and you may have to pay your nanny's tax and national insurance.

**Pre-school playgroups:** Offer sessions of between 2.5 and 4 hours during term time. Many offer 15 hours a week of free early learning for three- and four-year-olds. Costs tend to be charged per session and start at around £9

**Breakfast clubs:** Breakfast clubs provide a safe place for children – plus a healthy meal – from 7.30am. If they are not based at the school, they will take your child there in time for registration. Costs average around £12 per session

**Extended services:** Many schools provide extended services for families. This means things like homework clubs and drama clubs, family learning and parenting support for parents. They are usually open from 8am to 6pm, but some also open in the evenings and at weekends. Some services are free, but there is usually a charge for childcare and some activities such as music clubs and museum visits.

**Holiday playschemes and clubs:** These are based in schools, youth clubs, and community halls and play centres, and provide activities for your child during the school holidays. They are usually open from 8am to 6pm during the summer break, and some open over Easter and at half terms. Costs vary, but average at around £20 per day

**Out of school clubs:** Out of school clubs provide a safe place for your child to play, study and socialise. They are based in schools, youth clubs, community halls and play centres, and some will collect your child from school. They are usually open from 3.30pm to 6pm in term time only, though many provide a holiday scheme. Costs vary; average around £7 per session.



## **OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education)**

In order for a childcare provider to obtain registration, Ofsted will first ensure that a number of requirements have been met. This includes suitability checks on the applicant and anyone else likely to have unsupervised contact with the children in their care, usually in the form of a Criminal Records (CRB) check. The provider must also demonstrate that they have completed training in paediatric first aid and that they hold a childcare qualification and public liability insurance. Furthermore, Ofsted will always visit the premises at which the care will take place to ensure that it is suitable, and to outline to the provider the number of children that they are able to care for within a strict outline of staff to child ratios.

Providers are inspected prior to registration, unless the registration is voluntary. The registration and inspection framework is in the form of 2 childcare registers:

**The Early Years Register (EYR)** for providers of childcare for children from birth until the 31st August following a child's fifth birthday. Providers on this register are required to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

**The Ofsted Childcare Register (OCR)** which is broken down further into 2 parts:

- 1.** A compulsory register for providers of childcare for children from the 1st September following a child's fifth birthday until 8 years of age
- 2.** A voluntary register for those providing childcare for children aged over 8 years of age or who are not required to be registered, for example nannies, activity-based settings like sports clubs, and short-term care such as some crèches.

Providers who care for children in both the 0-5 year and 5-8 year age categories are placed onto both registers.

Please note that registration on either of these registers means that parents are able to obtain financial assistance for using registered care in the form of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit and/or through employer-supported childcare vouchers. However, eligibility to these is dependent on employment status and income – see our 'Quids 4 Kids' guide for more details.

Ofsted inspects providers registered on the EYR approximately once every 3 years to ensure that they are complying with the requirements of the EYFS. Providers on the OCR are inspected proportionately on the basis of risk, as opposed to a pre-determined cycle. Ofsted aims to inspect approximately 10% of OCR providers every year. Some of these inspections may be triggered by complaints, while the rest will be randomly selected.

Anyone can inform Ofsted if they suspect that a provider is operating without registration, or if they have concerns about the quality of care. Ofsted will always inspect a provider following a complaint relating to the conditions of registration. Contact details for Ofsted can be found at the end of this document.



## What is the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)?

The EYFS is a framework which sets out how childcare providers should work with children and families to support their development and learning, how to keep children safe and cared for, the legal requirements for the learning, development and welfare of children and detailed information about the six areas of learning and development. This is set out in a single framework, and considered through a single inspection process. There is an emphasis on self-evaluation and working with other professionals, aiming for continual assessment and improvement. The EYFS means parents can be confident that all services which are provided for children aged from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday (such as by childminders and schools), will be inspected against common standards in care and early education. All childcare providers who will deliver the EYFS have to think about the development and early learning of children in their care.

## Inspections

Ofsted inspections usually occur without warning and involve the inspector visiting the setting and talking to parents, the children in the care and staff with regard to the inspection framework and all its requirements. Following inspection, Ofsted will publish a report on its website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) and provide a copy to the provider. This report will tell you about the quality of the childcare service, what they do well and what needs to improve. The provider must ensure that they provide a copy to parents of children using the provision free of charge. You are also able to find inspection reports for schools on the Ofsted website.

The reports are categorised into 4 grades:

**Outstanding** – exceptional provision with excellent outcomes for children and where inspectors make few, if any, recommendations.

**Good** – strong provision, where practice is worth reinforcing and developing

**Satisfactory** – sound and acceptable provision, but inspectors will make recommendations for further improvement

**Inadequate** - divided into 2 categories:

**Category 1** – weak provision giving cause for concern, but which is likely to improve without outside help. The provider is given a 'notice to improve' and inspected again within 6-12 months.

**Category 2** – poor provision needing urgent attention where the children may not be adequately safeguarded and which is unlikely to improve without external assistance. Re-inspection will occur within an agreed timescale, if the provision is still not satisfactory the provider's registration may be cancelled.

If you cannot find a report for the provider you are interested in, it could be for the following reasons:

- The inspection may have taken place recently and the report is still being published.
- The provider is newly registered and has not yet had its first inspection.
- The type of care the provider offers does not require registration (e.g. a crèche running for less than 2 hours).

All childcare providers are required to display their registration certificate during their hours of operation so that you can see it easily. Each certificate gives information about the childcare provision and where applicable any conditions of registration. Childcare providers are also required to investigate any written complaint that is made which relates to the registration requirements. They must keep a record of such complaints and share the results of any investigation with the person(s) who made the complaint.



## The Childcare Checklist

Choosing the right childcare can be a difficult decision. Hopefully acting on all the points in the checklist will enable you to find the best possible childcare provider for you and your child.

Visit the childcare provider to get a feel for the day-to-day routine, and take your child with you to see whether they like it too. Visit when it is in full flow and, if possible, make a return visit so you can see the setting at different times of the day and week.

Does the place have a friendly feel? Does it have plenty of space inside and outside? If there's no outside space where do children play in the fresh air?

Check what food is provided. Is there a healthy, balanced diet on offer? Is water available whenever children want it?

Ask about safety. What happens in an emergency? What precautions have been put in place? Is the building secure? Do they have visitor control systems in use? Your child's safety should be top priority.

Take time to see whether the staff and children are talking and playing together. Are the staff questioning and responding to questions in a way that interests the children and are the children encouraged to ask questions of their own?

How do the staff deal with misbehaviour and homesickness? There should be a written policy in place so ask to see it.

If you can, speak to other parents who use the childcare provider. Are they pleased with the service they are getting? How are their children getting along there?

Ask if the setting provides things like nappies, wipes, food and drinks. What will you need to provide?

Ask about the latest Ofsted inspection or view it online at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) also ask about the staff. Are they well trained? Do they have qualifications at the levels needed to best help children learn and develop at their own pace?

Talk to staff about their flexibility. Can they provide childcare that fits in with your work hours? Ask about costs. Do they charge for late pick-ups, sickness or holidays? Ask about contracts. Before signing a contract with your chosen provider, **be sure you read, understand and agree with the terms and conditions.**

Remember, not every childcare provider will match your child's personality, so be prepared to look around. Don't get disheartened – there's a suitable childcare setting out there for you and your child.

Check the equipment and facilities on offer. Is there a variety of creative equipment, such as painting stations, sand pits and play areas? Are they kept to a high standard? Are the children's paintings and other work displayed on the walls? It's important your child is offered a number of creative and stimulating experiences throughout the day, within a friendly environment.

Check the number of staff. There should be at least one member of staff for every eight children between three and five-years-old. Will there be a key person with special responsibility for your child and who will you be able to talk with about how your child is getting along?



## Staff to Child Ratios in Childcare

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### Childminders

Childminders registered on the Early Years Register (caring for children aged 0-5 years) can look after a maximum of 6 children under 8 years of age. Of these, no more than 3 may be under 5 years old, and of these 3, only 1 can be under 12 months. Exceptions to this can apply, for example in the case of twins under a year old, in which case Ofsted may grant a special dispensation.

Registered childminders may also look after additional children if they work with an assistant. In practise, not all childminders can care for 6 children. This is because although 6 is the maximum number, not all childminders have a suitable premises or skills to look after that many children. The numbers include the childminder's own children or any other children for whom they are responsible – for example, children who the childminder is fostering.

Childminders registered on the Compulsory Register and not the Early Years Register (only caring for children aged 5 years +) may care for up to 8 children. Any care provided for older children must not adversely affect the care of children receiving early year's provision

### Overnight Care

For childminders providing overnight care, required ratios continue to apply. The children must be close by and within easy hearing distance (this may be via a monitor).

For other settings providing overnight care, the ratios continue to apply. At least one member of staff must be awake at all times.

### Day Nurseries / Playgroups / Crèches

#### **1 member of staff for every 3 children under 2 years of age**

At least one member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification and have suitable experience of working with children under two. At least half of all other staff must hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification and at least half the staff must have received specific training in the care of babies. The member of staff in charge of the babies' room must have suitable experience of working with children under two years.

**1 member of staff for every 4 children aged 2 years** There must be at least one member of staff for every four children; at least one member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff must hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification.



## **1 member of staff for every 8 children aged 3 to 8 years of age**

Between the hours of 8 am and 4 pm, where a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status or another suitable level 6 qualification is working directly with the children there must be at least one member of staff for every 13 children; at least one other member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification.

At any time outside the hours of 8 am and 4 pm, or between the hours of 8 am and 4 pm but where a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status or another suitable level 6 qualification is not working directly with the children there must be at least one member of staff for every eight children and at least one member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff must hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification

## **Breakfast and After-School Clubs / Holiday Play schemes**

1 member of staff for every 8 children aged 3 to 8 years of age. (see above)

## **Maintained School Nursery Classes**

Staffing levels vary according to the size of class but are normally 2 adults to 26 children, with one adult being a qualified teacher and the other a qualified nursery assistant (or higher) holding a full and relevant level 3 qualification.

The early year's provision in each class or group of pupils must be led by a 'school teacher'. A teacher must be present with the children except during non-contact time, breaks and short term absence.

## **Independent School Nursery Class**

As long as one staff member has a Level 6 (teaching) qualification and one staff member has a Level 3 (nursery assistant) qualification, the ratios are one staff member to every 13 children; otherwise the ratios would be smaller. However, in practise, ratios are often smaller in Independent Schools.

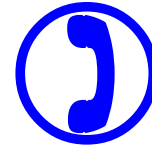
## **Parent and Toddler Groups**

Parents or other relatives/carers would attend with a child or children. As the person acts as the responsible adult for their children for the whole session, no specific ratio is necessary. The group usually operates with a leader, although there is no requirement for this person to be qualified.

**Registered childcare providers who work outside of these ratios** without expressed permission are doing so **against the law**. Please bear in mind that in all cases, staff to child ratios includes the children of the staff and volunteers who work at the childcare facility, and is the minimum ratio that Ofsted would expect. Care for children over 8 in many cases does not have to be registered and therefore staff to child ratios may vary widely.



## Useful websites and Contact Numbers




### Hounslow Family Information Service

The Family Information Service offer advice on services for children and young people aged 0-19 years (25 years for young people with a disability). Information includes:


- Childcare and education
- Activities for children and young people
- Local and national family support, health and parenting services
- Financial help for families
- Services for children with Special Educational Needs or a disability

 [www.hounslow.gov.uk/fis](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/fis)

 0800 783 1696 or 020 8583 3470

**Ofsted** is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They regulate and inspect to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages.

 [www.ofsted.gov.uk/](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/)

 08456 404040

**NCMA** (the National Childminding Association) work with registered childminders and nannies as well as other individuals and organisations such as local and national government, to ensure families have access to high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support

 [www.ncma.org.uk](http://www.ncma.org.uk)

**HM Revenue & Customs** (HMRC) ensure the correct tax is paid at the right time, whether this relates to payment of taxes received by the department or entitlement to benefits paid.

 [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)


Use this quick online questionnaire to find out if you're likely to qualify for tax credits.

 <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits/questionnaires.htm>

Childcare vouchers and tax credits - better off calculator

 <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/calcs/ccin.htm>

To do a calculation over the phone, you can call the tax credits helpline on

 0845 300 3900.

**Daycare Trust** - Paying for childcare website provides you with information to help you to understand what financial support you may be able to get for your childcare costs

 <http://www.payingforchildcare.org.uk/>

**Families in the Foundation Years** provide information for all families in England with children under the age of 5 years

 <http://foundationyears.org.uk/>



**Direct.gov** is the government's advice website

 [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

In the parent section of this website you can get information on the following:

Your child's health and safety, Childcare, Preschool, Schools, learning and development, Money and work entitlements, Family leisure and recreation, Having a baby, Parents' and children's rights, Your child, crime and the legal system, Looking after children if you divorce or separate, Children, divorce, separation and courts, Adoption, fostering and children in care

 <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/index.htm>

### **School admissions:**

 020 8583 2721 (between 2pm and 5pm)

E-mail: [admissions@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:admissions@hounslow.gov.uk)

School Admissions

Children's Services & Lifelong Learning

Civic Centre


Lampton Road

Hounslow

TW3 4DN

### **Extended Daycare:**

Information on the extended day care in your area

 020 8583 4187

### **Parents in touch:**


Parents in Touch (PiT) is a voluntary organisation run by and for parents and carers of children with disabilities that aims to address the needs of the whole family.

St Denys House

Church Street

Chiswick

W4 2PD

 020 8994 9602

Helpline open Tuesday -Thursday 10am till 2pm

Email: [parentsintouch@btconnect.com](mailto:parentsintouch@btconnect.com)

 <http://sites.google.com/site/parentsintouch/Home>