



Nannies / Au Pairs / Mother's Help / Babysitters:

A guide to finding a home-based child carer

What is a home-based child carer?

Home-based child carers provide childcare in your own home and are a popular choice for many families. They can look after children of any age and should provide care and activities for your children in their own home. They are often able to work more flexibly and provide care at more unsociable hours than other types of childcare.

Unlike many other forms of childcare for young children, care that takes place in a child's own home is not required to be registered with Ofsted. However, there is a new register available for home-based child carers to register with Ofsted voluntarily, as detailed on page 4 of this guide.

Types of home-based child carers

There are a few different types of home-based Childcarers, all known by a variety of different terms and all slightly different from one another. See below for an explanation of each of the main types:

- **A Nanny** – At least 18 years of age and usually with some qualifications in childcare (often an NNEB, CACHE Diploma, NVQ or BTEC) as well as training in first aid and child protection. A nanny will preferably have 2 years practical or theoretical experience and therefore should be able to cope with sole charge of the children in their care. Some nannies will live-in, while others will commute to your home to work. Typically a live-in nanny will cost in the region of £200-£300 per week, while a live-out nanny can cost between £300-400 per week.
- **An Au Pair** – A single person aged between 17 and 27 years of age whose main purpose of being in the UK is to learn the language whilst living with a family. They are generally able to help with the housework and childcare, although may not necessarily have any qualifications. Au pairs are required to stay for a minimum of 6 months, but no longer than 2 years. They are usually given full board (i.e. their own bedroom, food etc.) and are provided with pocket money in the region of £60 per week.
- **Mother's Help** – The common term for an individual with childcare experience but no formal qualifications. They are more commonly used as an 'extra pair of hands' to support parent(s) looking after their children, as opposed to a child carer themselves, and are generally more prepared to undertake light household duties. The cost of a mother's helper varies considerably from £160 live-in depending on experience and duties set.
- **A Babysitter** – Usually a young adult who is able to look after a child or children while the parent(s) go out for an evening or short period of time. Often these are family friends but they can also be found through agencies. The NSPCC recommends that a babysitter is at least 16 years of age, as by law using a babysitter under this age leaves the parents still legally responsible for ensuring their child/ren comes to no harm. Babysitters are usually paid by the hour or the night, and this is for you to negotiate.



The benefits of using a home-based child carer

- Your child can form a close one-to-one bond with a regular carer in the comfort of their own home, with their own toys, books, food and bedroom close by.
- Siblings of different ages can be looked after together.
- You can have a high degree of control over your child's routine, diet, activities and play environment.
- Able to offer care more flexibly and for a greater range of days and times than other forms of childcare.
- You and your child don't have to travel to the childcare setting.
- Children can be looked after even when unwell, whereas other settings may be reluctant to accept them, especially if the illness is contagious.

Factors which might make a home-based child carer less suitable

- Your child is happier and better stimulated when around lots of other children.
- Continuity of care is important – au pairs can only stay in the UK for 2 years, and a nanny will eventually move on.
- You may not want the added responsibility of employing someone and arranging contracts, sorting out payslips, tax and national insurance contributions etc.
- You may lose out on the childcare element of tax credits or childcare vouchers that help pay towards childcare costs. (see page 4)

Finding a home-based child carer

As there is no requirement for a home-based child carer to be registered with Ofsted, a different procedure must be used to find a suitable person. The Family Information Service does provide details on individual home-based child carers who have been registered with Ofsted on the voluntary register and we can supply you with a list of agencies that can help to find a carer for you is included towards the end of this leaflet.

Some families will be able to find a home-based child carer for themselves, through a friend of the family or by word of mouth. You are also welcome to advertise for yourself, through local newspapers, notice boards, and informal websites such as Gum Tree (www.gumtree.com). Useful contact details for where you can go to find a nanny for yourself is contained at towards the end of this guide. However, if you are considering this you will need to be aware of a number of issues, many of which can be minimised by using a nanny agency.

Why use an agency?

Although using an agency to find you a suitable home-based child carer can be more expensive than searching for yourself, there are benefits. Agencies will almost always vet individuals to a greater or lesser extent before they will put families in touch with a potential child carer. This includes verifying qualifications, obtaining and checking references, conducting a police records check (through the Criminal Records Bureau) and arranging visa applications in the case of au pairs. They are also able to assist in the drawing up of contracts, and to advise you on a number of



important factors, including pay. This is because in many cases using a home-based child carer means that you are effectively becoming an employer, and there are certain legal requirements that accompany this, for example, you will be responsible for paying the National Insurance and tax on top of the child carers' wages. There are a number of companies that can process payslips on your behalf, and the HMRC (Revenue and Customs) do offer support on this issue (see contacts at end of leaflet for more information). A list of agencies to use to help find a home-based child carer can be found at the end of this guide, and it is recommended that you always check references and interview potential child carers thoroughly yourself before employing them.

Interviewing and crosschecking

Whether you have found a potential candidate for yourself, or through an agency, it is highly recommended that you conduct some kind of interview with them. This is a two-way process, so that you can get to know the person better, and also so that they can learn more about what is required of them.

Suggestions about things you might like to ask would include how much experience with children they have and why they have chosen this as their career. You could also ask them about the kind of activities they would do with your child/ren each day, and what it is about working with children that they enjoy. Importantly you should ask why they left their last job, and ensure they can provide a good reason for any lengthy gaps in their employment history.

It is also highly recommended that you obtain references from the child carer before offering them employment. If they have worked for other families in the past, ask for their contact details and discuss their experience of the carer with their ex-family. Even if they have not worked for a family previously, a character reference from someone who knows them is useful. If you are using an agency, never assume that they have checked references in advance - although it is commonplace for them to do so, you are likely to gain additional knowledge of what the carer is like by speaking to other families who have used them in the past.

Details of Employment

Once you have decided to offer a child carer work with your family, you will then need to discuss a number of things with them. These include:

- The salary, including details of tax and national insurance arrangements
- Payment type, i.e. whether this is going to be weekly or monthly, by cash, cheque, or directly into a bank account
- The hours of work, and the duties involved. You should be very clear what is expected: Are they going to cook for the children? Are they expected to tidy up after them? Does housework form part of their duties?
- Entitlement to holiday, and if they are happy to take these at convenient times for you, for example during school holidays or when you have annual leave
- The length of the probationary period, if appropriate

Once all of this has been agreed, it is best to get this drawn up into a contract outlining specific duties and responsibilities for you as an employer and for the child carer. An agency should be able to help you with this, if you have used one. Otherwise professional legal advice should be obtained, for example from the Citizens Advice Bureau.



The voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register (vOCR)

As the name suggests, and as mentioned earlier, home-based child carers are not required to register with Ofsted, but they are now able to do so on a voluntary basis. There are benefits to using a child carer who is on this register, and the major advantage to this is that in order to obtain registration the carer must have a childcare qualification or training/experience to meet a set of Common Core Skills as detailed by Ofsted. They must also have a recent paediatric first aid certificate. Furthermore, in order to get registered a Criminal Records Bureau (police record) check will be done on the individual to ensure that they are not unsuitable to work with children.

In addition, a parent using a voluntarily registered child carer is able to obtain financial support through the childcare element of working tax credits (if eligible) and also through employer-supported childcare voucher schemes, which could save you over £1000 per year. For more information on tax credits and childcare voucher schemes, call us and we can explain in further detail, and provide you with literature that will elaborate further on how these work.

The fee for registration is £100 per annum. For further details on the vOCR and for an application form, you can call Ofsted on 08456 40 40 40 or visit www.ofsted.gov.uk

List of Agencies

Below is a list of nanny agencies that are able to provide you with details of home-based child carers. Some will specialise in providing one type of carer, for example nannies or babysitters, and although the agencies are not necessarily based within the Borough, they have indicated that they are usually able to find a carer who is able to provide care in at least some areas of the London Borough of Hounslow. See the additional information section or call the agency directly for further details. Almost all agencies will interview candidates as well as check references, qualification certificates and view or conduct a CRB check, however it is your responsibility to check what the agency has done and to verify these again for yourself.

Please note that none of the agencies below are recommended or endorsed by the Hounslow's Family Information Service.

Name and Contact Details	Additional Information
<p>Abbeville Nannies 18a Franconia Road, Clapham, London, SW4 9ND Tel: 020 7627 3352 Website: www.abbevillennannies.co.uk Email: info@abbevillennannies.co.uk</p>	<p>Able to provide live in/out nannies, mother's helps, maternity nurses, housekeepers, temporary or emergency home childcare arrangements and a babysitting service.</p>
<p>Absolute Childcare 44 Constance Rd, Twickenham, TW2 7JA Tel: 020 8288 1807 Website: www.absolutechildcare.co.uk Email: info@absolutechildcare.co.uk</p>	<p>Able to provide full/part-time, live in/out nannies, maternity nurses, mother's help and also run a babysitting service and register.</p>



<p>Angels International Au Pair Agency Bristol & West House, Post Office Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 1BL Tel: 01202 313 653 Website: www.aupair1.com Email: earnot@btinternet.com</p>	<p>Able to source mother's help and au pairs from European and Commonwealth countries for temporary, short and long-term placements. Also able provide a back-up service of au pairs.</p>
<p>Ideal Nannies West London Office GW1, Great West House, Great West Road Brentford, Middlesex TW8 9DF Tel: 0845 652 2000 Website: www.idealnannies.com Email: info@idealnannies.com</p>	<p>Able to provide temporary/permanent, live-in/out nannies, mother's helps and maternity nurses.</p>
<p>Buttons Nanny Agency (West London Branch) Tel: 020 8998 6660 Website: www.buttonsnannyagency.co.uk Email: patricia@buttonsnannyagency.co.uk</p>	<p>Specialises in the placement of Nannies and Nursery Nurses both permanent and temporary throughout Surrey and West London.</p>
<p>Sitters 288 House, Aston Way, Poole, BH12 4FE Tel: 0800 38 900 38 Website: www.sitters.co.uk Email: enquiries@sitters.co.uk</p>	<p>A nationwide agency who are able to provide babysitters for evenings out. Most carers are registered childminders or work/have worked in professional childcare.</p>
<p>Busy Bee Nannies Tel: 020 7096 1059 Website: www.busybeenannies.co.uk Email: info@busybeenannies.co.uk</p>	<p>London-wide agency able to provide nannies, mother's help and maternity nurses, all of whom are CRB-checked and have at least 2 years experience</p>
<p>The Nanny Service 17 Nottingham Street, London W1U 5EW Tel: 020 7935 3515 Website: www.nannyservice.co.uk Email: nannyservice@ukonline.co.uk</p>	<p>Able to provide permanent or temporary nannies and maternity nurses both from the UK and from Australia and New Zealand. Also have a babysitting service and specialise in providing emergency home carers and proxy parents.</p>
<p>Swansons 4 Brackley Road, Chiswick, London, W4 2HN Tel: 020 8994 5275 Website: www.swansonsnannies.co.uk Email: anne@swansonsnannies.co.uk</p>	<p>Well-established agency with branches in Chiswick and Islington. Able to provide live-in/out, full and part-time nannies and mother's helps and can help to organise nanny share arrangements.</p>



<p>Premier Nannies 23 Angel Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey, KT7 0AU Tel: 020 8339 0298 Website: www.premier-nannies.com Email: info@premier-nannies.com</p>	<p>Able to provide nannies, maternity nurses, babysitters and mother's helps across the whole of West London, Surrey and Middlesex. Also specialise in finding trained night nannies for newborn babies who can help with sleep training and assist during the twilight hours.</p>
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Useful Contacts

Below is a list of contacts that you may find useful in your search for a home child carer. A brief explanation is given to summarise the type of help the contact is able to provide. Some are more able to give you information on payment, tax queries etc. while others are websites and agencies that can help you to find a child carer but are not strictly an agency.

Name and Contact Details	Additional Information
<p>Nanny Nanny Tel: 0845 257 2880 Website: www.nanny-nanny.co.uk</p>	<p>Very useful website which is full of lots of information for parents looking to employ a nanny. Also produces the "Good Nanny Agency Guide" which lists only nanny agencies who have shown that they have met the professional and ethical guidelines stated in their code of practise.</p>
<p>Nannytax PO Box 988, Brighton, BN1 3NT Tel: 0845 226 2203 Website: www.nannytax.co.uk Email: mailbox@nannytax.co.uk</p>	<p>Runs a payroll service which will ensure all employer responsibilities are met by a family employing a home child carer, including working out tax and national insurance contributions.</p>
<p>The Nanny Sharers 124 Somerset Road, London SW19 5HP Tel: 020 8789 9556 Website: www.thenannysharers.co.uk Email: hello@thenannysharers.co.uk</p>	<p>Provides a database of families who are looking for similar families nearby who would like to share a nanny or home child carer, to make it more affordable or because they only need care part-time. Also have a frequently asked questions section on their site, which is full of useful information.</p>
<p>UK Border Agency Tel: 0870 606 7776 Website: www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk</p>	<p>Able to provide information on the Home Office's guidelines on au pairs.</p>



Name and Contact Details	Additional Information
<p>Emergency Childcare Tel: 0845 676 7699, Website: www.emergencychildcare.co.uk Email: info@emergencychildcare.co.uk</p>	<p>A west-London based service which is able to provide emergency childcare solutions at short-notice. This includes local nurseries, nannies and childminders when your usual child carer is unavailable.</p>
<p>Council for Awards in Children’s Care and Education (CACHE) (incorporates the National Nursery Education Board (NNEB)) CACHE Head Office, Beaufort House, Grosvenor Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3AW Tel: 0845 347 2123 Website: www.cache.org.uk Email: info@cache.org.uk</p>	<p>A national organisation and charity which designs courses and qualifications in the care and education of children and young people. Run a number of courses which are specifically designed for home-based child carers and can help locate the most convenient centre to study from.</p>
<p>Maternity and Nanny Training (MNT) Unit 10 Rooks Farm, The Street, Rotherwick, Hampshire, RG27 9BG Tel: 0844 8268446 Website: www.mnttraining.co.uk Email: info@mnttraining.co.uk</p>	<p>Runs a large range of training courses for home-based child carers including first aid courses and childcare qualifications which fulfil the minimum standard for registration on the vOCR, as well as running training courses in a number of other relevant areas. Also has a Jobs section on their website where parents can create an advert for a child carer free of charge.</p>
<p>Council for Awards in Children’s Care and Education (CACHE) (incorporates the National Nursery Education Board (NNEB)) CACHE Head Office, Beaufort House, Grosvenor Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3AW Tel: 0845 347 2123 Website: www.cache.org.uk Email: info@cache.org.uk</p>	<p>A national organisation and charity which designs courses and qualifications in the care and education of children and young people. Run a number of courses which are specifically designed for home-based child carers and can help locate the most convenient centre to study from.</p>
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<p>Nanny Job Website: www.nannyjob.co.uk Email: info@nannyjob.co.uk</p>	<p>A website which had a database of CVs of home-based childcarers as well as the option to post your vacancy online. The website also has plenty of relevant information for parents looking for a child carer including maternity rights, CRB advice etc.</p>
<p>Simply Childcare Tel: 020 7701 6111 Website: www.simplychildcare.com Email: info@simplychildcare.com</p>	<p>An online service which posts adverts from both families and home child carers. Also runs an advice service from their telephone helpline.</p>
<p>Gumtree Website: www.gumtree.com</p>	<p>A free and informal London-based online web directory with the opportunity for home child carers to state they are looking for a family and for families to advertise for a child carer.</p>
<p>Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Website: www.hmrc.gov.uk/childcare</p>	<p>This page is full of links to useful information relating to tax and national insurance requirements when employing a home-based child carer. Further information is also provided on tax credits and childcare vouchers.</p>

Hounslow's Family Information Service

www.hounslow.gov.uk/fis

Email: fis@hounslow.gov.uk

Tel: 0800 783 1696