

Factsheet for parents

Childcare for older children

This factsheet looks at childcare options for school-age children and offers information about what help is available to pay for this.

What are my childcare options?

Extended schools/Community Focussed Schools

Extended schools (in England) and Community Focussed Schools (in Wales) offer a range of services to children and their families around the school day, from 8.00am to 6.00pm and include before and after-school clubs and out-of-school activities. All schools in England need to ensure that there is sufficient childcare during these hours, offered either by the school itself, or in partnership with a local childcare provider. Contact your local school for more information.

To find out about local childcare, contact your local Family Information Service (FIS) by searching in your local phone book, or visit www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation

Out-of-school 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 services normally run during term time and can offer childcare before school - known as breakfast clubs - or after school. Some operate during the school holidays (See 'Holiday playschemes/clubs' on page 3).

Out-of-school clubs should be able to meet the requirements of children who have a disability or additional needs. You may need to speak to the manager or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator at the club if your child has additional needs, but your child should have the same play and learning opportunities as other children.

Many out-of-school clubs are situated on school premises and offer childcare for a group of local schools. Some will provide a pick-up service from neighbouring schools and will take a group of children to the club. However, not all clubs offer this service and you will need to check whether you have to make travel arrangements for your children. There should be a range of activities offered by the club, which may include outings; different areas to play and learn and usually an outdoor area.

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 local out-of-school services.

Childminders

Childminders can offer a home environment to children before and after school. Many childminders will drop off and pick up from school and should offer a full range of activities. Children can do their homework, play and watch TV, in other words do what they would do at home.

If a childminder cares for children under the age of eight they will need to be registered with Ofsted (in England) or Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in Wales. If they care exclusively for children aged eight and over they do not need to be registered. However, such childminders in England can opt to join the voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register.

You can find details of childminders in your area from your local Family Information Service. Alternatively, to find out more about what childminders do and the activities they can offer school age children, contact the National Childminding Association on: 0845 880 0044 or visit: www.ncma.org.uk.

Nannies

Nannies are employed by you, as the parent, to care for your children at home. A nanny may be suitable if you need a more flexible childcare option, for example, if you also have young children or you work unsociable hours. Although many nannies do have childcare training, they are not required to hold qualifications. However, nannies in England can opt to register on the voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register and nannies in Wales caring for children under the age of eight can be approved under the Childcare Approval Scheme Wales.

Registered nannies have gone through similar checks as other registered providers and have qualifications and training. You may feel more reassured employing a registered/approved nanny, rather than an unregistered/unapproved nanny. However, even if a nanny is registered/approved, it is still important to interview them and thoroughly check any references provided.

As their employer, you will be responsible for paying their tax and National Insurance. You will also need to agree a contract which sets out terms and conditions, hours of work, holidays and pay.

For further information, see the 'Finding and choosing nannies' section of our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk. It offers information about choosing a nanny, questions to ask at the interview, contracts and pay.

Your local Family Information Service will have details of registered/approved nannies. Nannies can also be found through reputable nanny agencies. If you cannot find an registered/approved nanny in your area, you could approach a suitable person you have interviewed to see if they would be willing to apply to be registered/approved.

Holiday playschemes or 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. Always check the club's opening hours.

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.

Activity-based care

This kind of care includes activities such as sports clubs, drama, arts, homework and faith-based clubs.

Since the main focus of these clubs is the activity, rather than care, activity-based care does not normally need to be registered. However, activity-based care in England that includes children under the age of five for more than four hours a day, does need to be registered. Other activity-based care in England can choose to register on the voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register.

Currently there is no voluntary registration scheme for activity-based care in Wales.

Childcare provided by a family member

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

If your child is disabled, you may be able to use direct payments to pay a relative to provide care. See our 'Guide to childcare for disabled children' for information and speak to your social worker.

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

- your family member is a registered childcare provider;
- 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

If you have a friend who cares for your child as an occasional 'favour' rather than for payment, they do not need to be registered. However, if your friend looks after your child in their home and you pay for the childcare, they will need to be registered as a childminder. In this case, the care your friend provides would qualify for financial help.

Can I receive help to pay for childcare for my older child?

If your children are under the age of 16 and you pay for registered/approved childcare, you could get help with your childcare costs.

In England, childcare is registered through Ofsted and falls under one of three registers:

- Early Years Register (EYR): This covers childcare for children up to the age of five.
- Compulsory Ofsted Childcare Register (OCR): This covers childcare for children aged five to seven (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.

In Wales, childcare is registered or approved by two regulatory organisations:

- Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW): This agency regulates childcare for children up to the age of eight, for more than two hours per day.
- The Childcare Approval Scheme Wales: This is a voluntary scheme which approves providers who work with children up to the age of eight in the child's own home.

All registered childcare providers will have a unique registration number, which you will need if you apply for help with your childcare costs. For childcare that does not need to be registered, speak to the provider about joining the voluntary Ofsted Register, or being approved under the Childcare Approval Scheme Wales, as you may be able to get help with your childcare costs.

For further information, see www.payingforchildcare.org.uk.

Childcare element of Working Tax Credit

You may be eligible for help with your childcare costs through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. The childcare element is intended to help working parents with the cost of registered childcare and can cover up to 70 per cent of eligible childcare costs. Maximum eligible childcare costs are set at £175 (£122.50) per week for 1 child and £300 (£210) per week for 2 or more children.

The amount of the childcare element that you receive will depend on your family income and circumstances. To be eligible for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit:

- You must be in paid work of 16 hours or more per week. If you are a lone parent, you must work 16 hours or more per week. If you have a partner, you must both work 16 hours or more per week; or 1 of you must work 16 hours or more per week and the other is incapacitated, in hospital or in prison.
- You can work for more than one employer, be self-employed or work as a director of a limited company. If you are on maternity leave or sick leave from your normal paid work, you are considered as being in paid work. For more information about this, see our factsheet 'Childcare during maternity leave'.
- You must have the main responsibility for caring for a child or children. You can claim the childcare element up to the 1st Saturday in September after your child's 15th birthday, or up to the 1st Saturday in September after your child's 16th birthday if they are registered blind (or have been taken off the blind register within the last 28 weeks) or receive Disability Living Allowance.
- You must use registered childcare.
- You must usually live in the UK, however, there are exceptions. For more information, see the immigration/residency information on the HM Revenue and Customs website: www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits/arrivals-uk.htm.

If you know you are going to be using childcare over the holidays, you should include these costs in your tax credit application. This will be included in your award for your average weekly childcare costs.

If you only use childcare for the holidays, you need to inform the Tax Credit Office when you start paying holiday childcare and when you stop. You will be paid an award for this specific time. You can do this by contacting Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900 or by visiting www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits.

Employer-supported childcare

Employer-supported childcare describes the help that can be offered by employers to employees to help with childcare costs.

Employers may offer this assistance through directly-contracted childcare, childcare vouchers or by providing childcare.

Directly-contracted childcare is when your employer pays your childcare provider directly for some or all of your childcare.

Childcare vouchers may be administered by the employer themselves, or run with the help of a childcare voucher company and can be used to pay or part pay for your childcare.

Directly-contracted childcare and childcare vouchers are usually offered as a salary sacrifice scheme.

The benefit of employer-supported childcare is that you save money by not paying tax and National Insurance Contributions on some/all of the amount you receive for childcare and your employer saves by not paying National Insurance Contributions on the same amount.

If your employer provides childcare such as an out-of-school club or a holiday playscheme, all of costs for using this childcare are exempt from tax and National Insurance Contributions.

For more information about employer-supported childcare, please see our factsheet, 'Help with childcare costs for working parents'.

If you are a student or moving into work please see our parent factsheets, 'Help with childcare costs for students' and 'Help with childcare costs for parents moving into work' available on our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk.

What about childcare for my child with a disability or special educational need?

Finding childcare for a child with a disability or special educational needs, may be difficult.

Each local authority has a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who you can contact to discuss your childcare needs and any additional support your child may require. They should be able to advise you about any funding available for equipment, training and childcare support.

To speak to your area SENCO, contact the Early Years Team or Children's Services at your local authority - their details should be in your local phone directory or search for them on www.direct.gov.uk. Many larger childcare settings and schools will have a SENCO based on the premises who you can speak to about your child's needs.

For further information about finding and accessing childcare for disabled children, see our booklet, 'A guide to childcare for disabled children'.

All of the booklets and factsheets referred to in this factsheet are available to download from the 'Parent Information' section of our website: www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation.

Daycare Trust is the National Childcare Campaign. We have been working since 1986 to promote high quality affordable childcare for all.

If you have any questions about the information provided in this factsheet, or other questions about childcare, email us at info@daycaretrust.org.uk. You can also access information on our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk or www.payingforchildcare.org.uk.

The information in this factsheet relates to both England and Wales. Some information may vary between countries and this will be clearly highlighted in the relevant sections. However, much of the information will be relevant throughout the UK. For further information specific to Northern Ireland or Scotland contact your local information service. You can find contact details for your FIS by visiting www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation.

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.