

A Guide to Childcare in Birmingham

Produced by the Family Information Service



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The Family Information Service

Birmingham City Council's Family Information Service (FIS) has produced this guide to help you find out more about choosing the right childcare for you and your child.

The Family Information Service (FIS) helps parents and carers, childcare workers and childcare providers and those considering becoming childcare providers. The FIS advisers are information and childcare information specialists and will discuss childcare requirements. They can supply a comprehensive list of childcare providers close to the parent/carer's home or work. The team supply supporting information to help the enquirer make an informed choice about childcare. The FIS produces a range of publications, factsheets, guides and information including the Birmingham for Families Directory, and our Fun in Brum Guides. Our factsheets also cover a wide range of topics including family support, family mediation, bullying, and organisations that support children with disabilities.

Where parents are struggling to find suitable childcare, the FIS can help in a range of ways. We do in depth searches for a particular school or times, or we can help by searching wider or advising on other types of childcare that may suit the parent/carer circumstances.

The team also operate a telephone helpline service which is available from 8:45am-5:15pm Monday-Thursday, and 8:45am-4:15pm Friday. You can email the FIS on: familyinformation@birmingham.gov.uk or visit the website at: www.birmingham.gov.uk/fis





Choosing Childcare

Choosing childcare for your child can be quite complex. It involves practical considerations such as the age of the child, working hours of the parents, location of childcare provision, schools and also considerations about the welfare and development of your child while attending the childcare provision.

This booklet is intended to provide you with the information you need to know to help you make the most appropriate choice for your child.

What you need to know about Childcare

Childcare can be formal or informal. Formal childcare is usually where you have a financial arrangement with a childcare provider to care for your child on a regular basis. Informal childcare is where family or friends look after your child for no reward, i.e. for no payment, gift or favour. If you are hoping to access the free early entitlement or help towards childcare costs you must use formal childcare that appears on one of the Ofsted registers.

Ofsted

To ensure the quality of formal childcare, it is regulated by Ofsted, which has responsibility for the registration and inspection of childcare providers. By being registered with Ofsted, parents can expect that childcare providers are meeting government standards such as delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, suitability of premises and that staff have had appropriate safeguarding checks.

Ofsted keeps details of childcare providers on two registers (see next page). Ofsted makes these registers available through the Family Information Service.





The Early Years Register

All childcare providers who look after children from birth to the 31st August after the child's fifth birthday for two hours or more per day, must appear on this register. Prior to registration, an Ofsted inspector will ensure that a childcare provider meets the welfare standards of the Early Years Foundation Stage. One of these requirements is that the childcare provider undertakes a safeguarding check and has a current first aid certificate.

The Childcare Register

This register is made up of two parts, the compulsory part and the voluntary part. All providers who care for children between five and eight years old for more than two hours per day must be registered on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register.

Childcare providers who are otherwise exempt from registration can choose to be registered on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register. This would include home childcarers, nannies, out of school and holiday schemes for children over eight years old.

All childcare providers on the Childcare Register will have to provide proof of their eligibility to work with children (i.e. a safeguarding check and an identity check) and a first aid qualification. Ofsted will inspect ten per cent of childcare providers on the Childcare Register, plus any provider against whom a complaint has been made.

Childcare providers who work across the age range from birth to eight years must be registered on both the Early Years and Childcare registers.

Ofsted inspection reports are available for you to view online at www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports. All registered childcare providers are obliged to show their inspection reports to parents on request.





Age of Child	Reason for Childcare
Birth to Two	Working full or part time, studying, break for Parent/Carer
	Shift-working, evening or weekend working
	Socialisation of parent and child
Two to Five	Working/studying
	Working/studying part-time
	Shift-working, Evening or weekend working
	Socialisation of child
Three to Five	Free early learning
Fives to Eight	Before and After School care
	Holiday care
Over Eight	Before and After School care
	Holiday care





Providers on Early Years or Compulsory part of the Childcare Register	Providers on Voluntary part of Childcare Register or Unregistered Providers
Childminder or Day Nursery	Home-based childcare
Childminder	Home-based childcare
	Parent and Toddler Group
Childminder or Day Nursery	Home-based childcare
Some Pre-school Playgroups	Home-based childcare
Childminder	Home-based childcare
Some Pre-school Playgroups	Parent and Toddler Group
Accredited Childminder Day Nursery Pre-school Playgroup Nursery School or Class Nursery Units of Independent Schools	Not Applicable
Out of School Club Childminder	Home-based childcare School run activities
Holiday scheme Childminder	Home-based childcare
Out of School Club Childminder	Home-based childcare School run activities Out of School Club
Holiday scheme Childminder	Home-based childcare Holiday scheme





How to find childcare providers

All local authorities have a Family Information Service (FIS) which gathers and collates information about childcare providers. You can obtain a list of local providers by contacting the FIS.

How to choose childcare

The outcome of Ofsted inspections will give some indication of the quality of a childcare setting. Settings that are satisfactory are meeting all the necessary standards. Settings that are good or outstanding are exceeding the standards.

The best way to choose childcare is to visit a few settings and to talk to staff and other parents about the provision. The FIS provides a guide on what to look for and what to ask when visiting a childcare setting. This includes:

Things to look for

- paperwork including registration certificate, first aid certificate, policies and procedures
- environment – check all areas - is it a safe, clean pleasant place to be, is there enough space, do displays show positive images of different cultures and disability?
- equipment – is there a wide variety of good quality toys, is there any outside space or equipment?
- relationships – are staff enthusiastic and responding to the children's needs, do the children seem happy?





Things to ask about

- how they will help your child to settle in?
- what sort of activities do the children do?
- how will they update you on your child's day?
- what happens if your child is ill or has an accident?
- what happens if you are late picking up your child?
- the type of food provided?
- staff qualifications?
- if they pick up from your child's school?

Choosing childcare for disabled children

All registered childcare providers are expected to make provision for disabled children.

Also look out for

- how staff interact with your child
- how they react to your child's disability
- any physical adaptations to the building
- any adapted toys or utensils.

Also ask about

- your child's key worker?
- who has responsibility for special educational needs?
- what disability training has been undertaken?
- how they will ensure your child has the same play and learning opportunities as the other children?
- are staff trained to give medicines?





Paying for childcare

Childcare providers are usually private or voluntary businesses. They will have a contract with you which outlines the fees they charge. It is important that you understand what costs are included in the fees. Bear in mind that providers will also usually expect you to pay for contracted days on when your child is unable to attend. Many providers will charge an administrative/registration fee when your child starts. Ensure that the contract states what you are expected to pay for before signing it.

Help with childcare costs

There are a number of ways in which help is provided towards the cost of childcare. In every case below, parents must be using childcare that is registered with Ofsted.

Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit

Eligibility for this is dependent on your household income. If you are eligible, you will be able to claim a percentage of the childcare costs. Those families on lower incomes will receive a larger percentage of costs, up to a maximum of seventy per cent.

Free Early Entitlement

All children aged three or four years are eligible for 15 hours of free childcare/education. Childcare providers will be paid for this directly by the local authority so your fees should be reduced accordingly. If your child is only taking up the free entitlement then there should not be any additional costs (see page 9).

Employer Support Childcare – Voucher scheme

Some employers offer a childcare voucher scheme which allows parents to sacrifice part of their salary in return for childcare vouchers of the same value up to £55* per week (*correct at time of printing). The vouchers are exempt from tax





and national insurance contributions. Before joining such a scheme, parents should ensure that their childcare provider will accept childcare vouchers and they should check with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) to see whether the use of vouchers would affect their entitlement to tax credits.

Financial Support for Parents in Higher or Further Education

Parents attending full-time courses can sometimes obtain financial help from their college or university, although these funds are very limited. Please discuss with your college/university to ensure that you can afford childcare during your course.

Childcare providers must be registered with Ofsted in order to claim money towards childcare costs or Free Entitlement

Type of Childcare	Can claim childcare element of working tax credit	Can receive Free Entitlement	Employer Childcare Vouchers
Childminder	Yes	Only if accredited	Yes
Home-based Child Care	Yes	No	Yes
Day Nursery	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nursery School or Class	No	Yes	No
Pre-school Playgroup	Yes	Yes	Yes
Crèche	No	No	No
Parent & Toddler Group	No	No	No
Out of School Club	Yes	No	Yes
Play centre	Only when offering Out of School care	No	Only when offering Out of School care
Holiday Schemes	Yes	No	Yes





Types of Childcare

Childminders

What is a Childminder?

A registered childminder is a person who looks after one or more children under the age of eight for more than a total of two hours a day in their own home.

All the childminders in Birmingham are self employed. Childminders may also care for children over the age of eight.

Registration

Registered childminders must complete a training course on home based childcare including first aid and also pass the home inspection visit from the government inspector from Ofsted. All registered childminders, plus anyone over 16 living in the same house must have had a criminal record check.

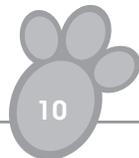
Childminders can be registered on the Ofsted Early Years, compulsory and voluntary part of the childcare register.

Services Provided

Childminders usually cover 8.00am to 6.00pm but many will often work outside these hours to meet the needs of parents. Some childminders will work weekends and some are registered to mind children overnight. Childminders often will pickup and collect from local schools. Childminders can mind up to six children, including their own.

Most childminders are registered to provide the following childcare places:

Age Range	Maximum
under 1	1
Birth to 5 (including any under 1)	3
5 to 8 Years	3
Maximum number of children at any one time	6





Home Child Carers (including Nannies)

What is a Home Child Carer?

A home child carer is a person aged 18 or over, who is employed by the parent/carer to provide care for children in the family home.

Registration

Home child carers can choose to register with Ofsted on the voluntary part of the childcare register.

Services Provided

Home child carers can mind children of any age and can work flexible hours. They can care for the children of up to two families, wholly or mainly at the home of one or both families at any one time, such as a nanny share.

Payment

As an employer, you will need to discuss hours, holiday pay, costs and other terms and conditions and ensure all are included in the contract that you have with your home child carer.

Day Nurseries

What is a Day Nursery?

A day nursery provides childcare and early years education for children aged six weeks to five years. Some also offer out-of-school care for five to eight year olds.

Registration

All day nurseries must be registered with Ofsted, ensuring the premises are suitable and safe to operate as a childcare facility.

Day Nurseries can be registered on the Ofsted early years register, compulsory and voluntary part of the childcare register.





Staffing

All staff must have safeguarding records checks done and at least fifty per cent of staff should hold a childcare qualification.

The staffing ratio for a day nursery is as follows:

Age of Child	No. of Children	Minimum Staff
0 - 2 years	3	1
2 - 3 years	4	1
3 - 5 years	8	1

Services Provided

A day nursery can be run by the council, the community, based in the work place or privately run. The premises could include converted properties to purpose built Sure Start children's centres.

Most day nurseries are open from 8.00am to 6.00pm though some open earlier. Some day nursery's also offer out-of-school care for five to 11 year olds such as out of school clubs and holiday play schemes.

Nursery Schools And Classes

What is a nursery school or class?

Nursery schools and classes provide nursery education to three and four year olds and are run by the local authority. Nursery classes are part of an infant or primary school and nursery schools are stand alone. Most nursery schools and classes offer part-time places (up to 15 hours per week) though a very limited number of full time places can be offered dependent on the circumstances of the family





Registration

Nursery schools and classes are registered and inspected by Ofsted in the same way as schools and are not included in the Early Years Register.

Services

Most nursery schools and classes offer part-time places (up to 15 hours per week) during school hours and term time only. If children attend a nursery school or class for 15 hours per week, they cannot claim free entitlement at any other childcare provision. A very limited number of full time places can be offered dependent on the circumstances of the family.

Places in a nursery school or class

Applying for a place at a nursery school or class is a different process from that of applying for a school place. Parents must apply directly to the school. Most schools have a waiting list and will only add a child's name to it once the child is two years old. The head teacher and board of governors of a nursery school or class set the admission criteria and use this to decide to whom they will offer a place. There is no appeal system for nursery places. Contact the FIS for a fact sheet that explains the process in more detail.





Pre-School Playgroups

What is a Pre-school?

Pre-schools are also known as playgroups and sometimes pre-school nurseries. They provide care and early education for children from two and a half years to five years. This includes learning and play opportunities through planned activities to visits and outings.

Registration

Pre-school playgroups have to be registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register.

Staffing

All staff need to have safeguarding checks. They should have a minimum of two staff on duty at all times, at least one of whom should have a childcare qualification.

The staffing ratio for a pre-school is as follows:

Age of Child	No. of Children	Minimum Staff
2 - 3 years	4	1
3 - 5 years	8	1

Services Provided

Pre-school playgroups offer term time care, in the morning, afternoon or both and run from two and a half to up to four hours. They offer learning and play opportunities through planned activities to visits and outings.





Crèches

What is a Crèche?

A crèche is a childcare facility which provides occasional, usually sessional care for children aged under eight years while parents are taking part in various activities such as at a leisure centre, studying or shopping. There are also mobile crèches, which are able to provide one-off care so parents are able to attend training or events.

Registration

Crèches can take many forms and need to be registered if

- they provide care to any individual child under eight years old for more than two hours a day
- they are open more than four hours a day
- if parents are not in the immediate local area
- if they run for more than 14 days a year.

Dependent on the above, crèches can appear on either the Early Years Register or Childcare Register. Crèches that are exempt from registration can choose to go on to the voluntary part of the childcare register.

Staffing

Staff must be qualified to work in childcare and have had safeguarding checks.





Parent and Toddler Groups

What is A Parent and Toddler Group?

Parent and toddler groups are also known as stay and play groups and they provide a place where parents or carers attend with their children. They offer an environment where parents and children from the earliest ages can socialise, learn and have fun. They are held at various venues such as community venues like church halls, children's centres and schools.

Registration

These groups do not have to register with Ofsted as the parents/carers stay with and are responsible for their children.

Out of School Clubs

What is an out of school club?

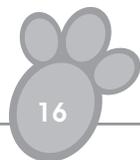
Out-of-school groups normally provide play care for school-age children, up to the age of 11. This can be in a variety of combinations: before school, after school, during the school holidays, holiday schemes and play centres.

Registration

Clubs that provide for children under eight years must be registered with Ofsted. Clubs that only cater for children aged over eight years can choose to register with Ofsted on the voluntary part of the childcare register. Clubs that are managed by the school are automatically registered under the schools registration.

Staffing

At least fifty per cent of staff in out-of-school groups must have a childcare or playcare qualification.





Services Provided

Before school clubs sometimes known as breakfast clubs operate from about 8.00am and after school clubs tend to finish at 6.00pm.

Out-of-school groups are usually held in schools, church halls, community centres and nurseries. Children should be escorted from the school to wherever the setting is based.

Play Centres

What is a play centre?

Play centres are run by the local authority and provide play opportunities for children aged four to 12 years after school and during school holidays.

Registration

They can be registered on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Ofsted childcare register.

Staffing

They are staffed by play workers qualified to work with children who have had safeguarding checks.

Services Provided

Most play centres are open access, which means that children are free to come and go as they please. Activities include arts and crafts, sports, outings and trips. There are 13 play centres across the city. Play centres usually run until 6.00pm and some are open on Saturdays during term time. During school holidays the standard opening times are from 10.00am to 4.00pm.

Some play centres offer out-of-school care at an additional charge.





Holiday Playschemes

What is a holiday playscheme?

Holiday schemes offer care and play opportunities for children during school holidays.

Registration

The registration of holiday playschemes varies depending on the age of the children, services offered and for how many hours it operates. Holiday playschemes can register on the compulsory and voluntary part of the Ofsted childcare register.

Services Provided

Holiday playschemes usually operate from 10.00am to 4.00pm but it can often vary. Some playschemes offer full day care between (8.00am to 6.00pm) at an additional charge. They can offer a variety of activities such as education support, sports, arts and crafts to outings and trips.

Children's Centres

Children's centres offer a range of services to families with children under five years old. These services can include day nurseries, pre-school playgroups and parent and toddler groups. Not all children's centres offer childcare provision on site but will have links with nearby childcare providers.





Free Entitlement Fund

The Free Entitlement Fund has been set up to provide all three and four year old children with a free entitlement of early learning for 15 hours per week for 38 weeks a year. This can be provided at any of the following

- a nursery school or class
- a day nursery
- a nursery unit at an independent school
- a pre-school playgroup
- an accredited childminder.

Children become eligible at the beginning of the term following their third birthday.

A child born between:	Free place from:
1st April to 31st August	September after their 3rd birthday
1st September to 31st December	January after their 3rd birthday
1st January to 31st March	April after their 3rd birthday

Parents can choose how to they would like to spread the hours, as long as it covers at least three days. The 15 hours can be split between a maximum of two settings where it suits the parents. Please note that if children are attending a nursery school or class, they will be using their free entitlement.

If parents would like their children to stay at a setting for more than 15 hours per week they will need to pay for the extra hours.





Notes





Notes



