



Childcare Choices

Solihull
Family
Information Service



Welcome!

There are lots of childcare options available and choosing the right one is a big decision. We hope that the information in this booklet will help you to choose childcare that suits both you and your child.

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Solihull Family Information Service

We can give you information about childcare in your area, including details of cost, facilities, opening hours and vacancies. We can also give you more advice on how to choose childcare that meets your individual needs.

In addition, we provide information about activities for children and young people and things for families to do together. Information about services that can help and support your family is also available. Our contact details are on the back page.

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Why use childcare?

There are a number of benefits of using childcare, both for yourself and your child.

Benefits for your child

High quality childcare and early education gives your child a good start in life. Research shows that it improves communication skills and emotional and social development.

Benefits for you

Childcare can support you to go back to work, study or training.

Some types of childcare also provide an opportunity to meet and socialise with other parents.



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What are my options?

There are a number of different types of childcare. We refer to these as childcare providers or childcare settings.

Childminders

Childminders provide care in their own home for children of all ages. Some childminders will drop off and collect children from school or nursery and are able to cater for irregular hours including shift patterns and occasional evenings or weekends.

They can usually care for up to six children under the age of eight at any one time, (this includes their own children). They can also care for children over the age of eight, although the care they give to these children must not adversely affect the care provided to children under eight. Childminders must be registered with Ofsted (see page 6).

Home childcarers

Home childcarers such as nannies, au-pairs and babysitters provide care for children of all ages in the child's own home and may be flexible regarding your needs. You will need to draw up a contract with your home-base childcarer outlining all costs and arrangements.

Home childcarers can be registered voluntarily with Ofsted (see page 6) although they do not have to do so. They must be registered if you want to claim tax credits or use childcare vouchers to help with your childcare costs (see page 11).

Day nurseries

Day Nurseries provide care and early education for children aged between six weeks and five years old, either full or part time and are usually open five days a week, all year round. Day nurseries must be registered with Ofsted (see page 6).

Pre-school playgroups

Pre-school playgroups provide care and early education for children aged between two and five years old. They usually offer part-time sessions during school term time only. They must be registered with Ofsted (see page 6).

Out of school clubs

Out of school clubs provide care and play opportunities for school-aged children usually on school sites. The care is provided before and after the school day usually for an hour before school and for up to three hours after school during term time. They must be registered with Ofsted (see page 6).

Holiday playschemes

Holiday playschemes provide care and play opportunities for school-aged children aged between three and eleven years old during the school holidays and are usually held either on school sites or at sports centres. They must be registered with Ofsted if they have a focus on care rather than activity (see page 6).

Crèches

Crèches offer care on an occasional basis and will normally be found at venues such as shopping centres and leisure centres. Crèches must be registered with Ofsted (see page 6).

Wrap-around

If you need full time care for your child, you may be able to combine a number of options. For example, for three and four year olds attending a free part-time early education place on a school site, wrap-around care is usually available to enable children to stay for the whole day. Wrap-around can be provided by pre-school playgroups, nurseries, childminders or out of school clubs.

How is childcare inspected?

Childcare providers caring for young children under eight, including pre-school playgroups, day nurseries, holiday playschemes and out-of-school clubs, must be registered by Ofsted. Registration includes a criminal records check on anyone involved in providing childcare and an inspection of the premises to look at health and safety issues.

We can tell you whether the childcare provider is registered, or you can ask to see their registration certificate. All registered childcare must display their registration certificate and insurance details on the premises.

The following types of care do not have to be registered with Ofsted:

- care for children aged eight and over
- care where children stay for less than two hours
- activity based groups
- care that is provided in the child's home (e.g. nannies)

However, if the provider meets Ofsted's requirements and wishes to register Voluntarily, they can do so, unless the childcare is provided directly by a school.

Childcare is inspected by Ofsted regularly (before registration and at least every three years after that). Inspection reports for all childcare providers are available on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

If you have a concern or a complaint you cannot resolve with your registered childcare provider, you can call Ofsted's Early Years Complaints Helpline on 0845 601 4772. Ofsted does not usually become involved in complaints over fees and contractual arrangements.



Day nurseries, playgroups, crèches, out of school clubs and holiday playschemes must have;

- one member of staff for every three children under two years old
- one member of staff for every four children aged two years old
- one member of staff for every eight children aged three to eight years old.

Asking to see inspection certificates and reports may help you make a decision about a childcare provider but is no substitute for visiting yourself and using your own judgement.



What should I look for when I visit?

It is important to visit childcare settings and ask lots of questions before you make your choice. Childcare providers should be willing to show you around and answer your questions.

Here are some things that you may want to ask and look out for when you visit.

Costs

What will you have to pay? Is there a retainer fee or deposit? When and how do you pay? What do the costs cover (eg. nappies/food/days out)? Are there any additional costs? What will happen if you are late picking up your child? What will happen if your child can't attend due to sickness or holidays?

The Staff

What training and experience do staff have?

Will your child have a main carer (or key worker) and who will this be?

What is the staff-to-child ratio?

Are the staff warm, caring and interacting with the children?



Your child

What will your child do – what is the daily routine? How will you find out what your child has done? Where will your child play/sleep/eat? How will they settle your child in? How many other children are there and of what ages? How do they promote positive behaviour?

The environment

Does the building feel comfortable, warm and safe? Is there enough space, including outdoor spaces to run and play? What are the health and safety procedures? What food do they provide? Do they serve fresh fruit and vegetables? Is there easy access to drinking water?

Is there a good variety of books, toys and equipment and are they clean and in good condition? Are the toilets, basins and changing facilities clean and appropriate? Are there different rooms for babies and toddlers or for different activities? Do the other children appear happy and confident?

Things to tell the childcare provider

Your working hours and times you will need to drop off/collect. Any additional needs your child may have, including dietary requirements or medications. Your child's normal sleep patterns, likes and dislikes or fears. How to contact you in an emergency. Who else cares for your child and who can collect your child on your behalf.

Children with additional needs and/or disabilities

If you need help finding a childcare place for a child with additional needs and/or disabilities, or if your child needs extra support to attend a childcare setting, we can help. Contact us to find out more.

It is important to ask questions and visit a second or third time if you need to. The childcare you choose has to be right for you and your child!

Paying for childcare

How much will a childcare place cost?

The current average costs for childcare places in Solihull are:

Childminder	£2.00 - £5.00 per hour*
Day Nursery	£27 - £46 per day for a child under two years old*
Pre-schools	£5.00 - £8.00 per 2½ hour session*
Before School	£2.50 - £4.00 per session*
After School	£5.00 - £9.00 per session*

*As at March 09

Is there any help with childcare costs?

Whatever your financial position, there are a number of options available to help with the cost of childcare.

Early Education Funding

If your child is three or four years old they are entitled to a free part-time early education place (according to set dates following the child's third birthday). This place is made up of five 2½ hour sessions at a registered childcare setting. From **September 2009**, this will rise to 15 hours in certain childcare settings in the North of the Solihull borough. All areas will offer 15 hours by **September 2010**.

To find out more, contact the Family Information Service



Child Tax Credit

Child Tax Credit is an income-related allowance for parents and carers of children or young people who are still in full-time education. Nine out of ten families with children qualify for Child Tax Credit.

Working Tax Credit

If you're working more than 16 hours a week and you're on a low income, you may be able to get Working Tax Credit too. Working Tax Credit includes a specific element to support the cost of registered childcare for working parents. The childcare element can help with up to 80 per cent of your eligible childcare costs.

To find out if you are eligible for Tax Credits, contact the Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900, textphone 0845 300 3909 or go to www.direct.gov.uk (parents section)

Employer Supported Childcare – Childcare Vouchers

Working parents can benefit significantly from tax and National Insurance savings using Childcare Vouchers.

For more information contact your employer or go to www.direct.gov.uk (parents section)

Flexible Working and Time Off

If you're a working parent, you're entitled to request to work flexibly and take time off for caring responsibilities. Your employer has to consider your request carefully. For more information, talk to your employer or go to: www.direct.gov.uk (parents section)

Solihull Family Information Service:

Telephone 0800 389 8667
Text message 07740 046 045
Minicom 0121 704 8058
Email familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk
Website www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo
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You can also meet us at groups and events across the Borough.
Contact us to find out when we're visiting an area near you!

Areas we cover:

We cover the whole borough
of Solihull.

