

Information for Parents

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

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.
- Childcare can give children the chance to play and interact with other children.

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.
- Childcare can also provide parents with a break from their caring responsibilities.

What is my child entitled to?

- All parents should be able to find childcare that meets their child's needs.
- All children are entitled to be included and supported in a childcare setting.
- Children should be supported in a way that is appropriate to their needs and this should be agreed with their parents or carers.

What types of Childcare are available?

Childcare settings may include childminders, home childcarers, day nurseries, pre-school playgroups, out of school clubs, holiday playschemes, crèches and wrap around care.

How do I choose a suitable childcare place?

The **Family Information Service** can tell you about your childcare options and give you details about what is available in your local area.

The Family Information Service (FIS) provides free and impartial information, advice and assistance to families with children aged 0-19yrs and 0-25yrs with additional needs.

We can provide information on a range of topics including registered childcare, help with childcare costs, free early education places for two, three and four year olds, things to do and places to go, as well as people and support services that can help you.

Please contact **Solihull Family Information Service** if you would like further support finding a childcare place that is suitable for your child.

We can;

- Make you aware of your childcare options
- Inform you about some of the financial support available to you
- Advise you on the support available to settings to meet your child's individual needs.
- Let you know about other support available for you and your family
- Contact settings on your behalf to find out if they have a suitable vacancy

What should I look for?

If you have a child with an additional need and/or disability there may be things you want to look for or talk to the childcare setting about before you make your choice.

This may include things like;

- Are you and your child made to feel welcome?
- How will the childcare setting meet your child's particular needs?
- Is the space appropriate – layout of the setting, size of the rooms, door openings, lighting?
- How many children use the setting?
- Is car parking and access to the building suitable?
- What about surrounding roads and open spaces?
- Are there suitable changing facilities?
- Are the activities and experiences on offer appropriate for your child?

Solihull Family Information Service

Call: 0800 389 8667

Email: familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk

Web: www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo



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What things should I talk about when I visit?

It is important that staff know as much about your child's needs as possible. It will help prepare the childcare setting and will help your child to settle and enjoy the experience.

You may want to talk about;

- What your child is good at and where they might need help
- What your child likes to eat and any specific dietary requirements
- What your child likes and dislikes
- How to comfort your child if they are distressed
- Other information about your child's routines
- Any behaviour patterns your child displays
- Any communication difficulties, including signing
- Any physical needs of your child
- Any specialist equipment used by your child or needed for your child
- The involvement of other professionals
- Any medical conditions your child has
- Any training the staff may need to meet your child's needs.

Some childcare settings have a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) and it may be helpful to meet with this person and with the person who is going to be your child's main carer to discuss your child's needs and how they are going to be met.

For families who are already working with a group of professionals and / or have a 'Team around the Family' it may be useful to invite someone from the childcare setting to these meetings.

Childcare settings can get information and advice about how to best support and include a child with additional needs and/or disabilities by contacting the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Early Years Team.

Additional Funding for Childcare settings

In some circumstances when a child with additional needs accesses an early education funded childcare place, the childcare setting can apply for a higher rate of funding to ensure they have the capacity to meet a child's individual needs – this is known as inclusion funding. The childcare provider will need to complete a referral form to the inclusion fund panel that sits twice a term. Childcare Providers can contact the early education funding administrators at the Family Information Service if they require more information about how to apply.

Children who are attending an early education funded place and are in receipt of disability living allowance can nominate the childcare setting so that they receive an annual payment from the Disability Access Fund (DAF). Childcare providers can put in a claim for DAF during their usual headcount claim for early education funding.

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Paying for childcare

The **Family Information Service** can provide you with information about childcare costs in Solihull.

We can tell you about:

- Early Education Funding for some two year olds (up to 15 hours per week),
- Early Education Funding for three and four year olds (up to 15 hours per week for all families and up to 30 hours per week for some)
- Tax Free Childcare
- Tax Credits for Childcare
- Universal Credit for Childcare
- Support while you study
- Flexible working and time off

Information about help with childcare costs is also available on our webpages at <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Resident/children/childcare> and on the national childcare choices website at <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

In addition to the help available to all families, you may be able to access additional financial help if you are the parent of a disabled child. This will depend upon your individual circumstances.

- You may be able to access Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to help with the additional costs of your child living with a disability. More information is available online at www.gov.uk , you can contact your nearest Jobcentre or social security office or you can call the DLA Helpline on 0345 712 3456.
- If you are claiming Disability Living Allowance you may also be able to access additional financial support through the disabled child element of Child Tax Credit. More information is available online at www.gov.uk or you can telephone the Tax Credit Helpline on 0345 300 3900.

Waving Not Drowning is a project for parents who work, want to work, and who have children with disabilities. They offer free advice on tax credits, flexible working and rights at work on their free helpline 0300 012 0312 or via their website www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Would you like to know what's happening in Solihull for children and families? Then join our Parent's Network for regular information at www.solihull.gov.uk/parentsnetwork

For any further information or advice please contact: Solihull Family Information Service

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