

Childcare Choices

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

Solihull Family Information Service

We provide information about childcare places in your area, including details of costs, opening times, facilities, those that are registered to provide early education funding for under 5s and those with vacancies. If you are struggling to find suitable childcare we are able to offer more in-depth advice on how to choose childcare that meets your individual needs through our brokerage service. In addition, we provide information about activities for children and young people and events for families to attend together as well as signposting you to services that can help and support your family.

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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.

What are my options?

Childminders

Childminders provide care and early education for children of all ages in their own home. Some childminders will offer wraparound care and will drop off and collect children from schools or nursery sessions. They may be able to cater for irregular hours like shift patterns and occasional evenings or weekends and often provide care during school holidays. They can care for up to six children under the age of eight at any one time (including their own children). They can care for children over the age of eight; 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 3).

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-based childcarer outlining all costs and arrangements. Home childcarers can be registered voluntarily with Ofsted (see page 3) 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 5 & 6). You may find the following websites useful: [Become a Childminder or Nanny](#) [Au Pair information and employment law](#)

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 3).

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 3).

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 3).

Holiday Schemes

Holiday play schemes provide care and play opportunities for school aged children aged between three and eleven years old during the school holidays and are often held on school or community sites or at sports centres. They must be registered with Ofsted if they have a focus on care rather than activity (see page 3). Childminders also often provide holiday care.

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 3).

Wraparound

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, wraparound care is usually available to enable children to stay for the whole day. Wrap-around can be provided by Ofsted registered pre-school playgroups, nurseries, childminders or out of school clubs.

How is childcare inspected?

Childcare providers caring for children under the age of eight, including pre-school playgroups, day nurseries, wraparound sessions, holiday play schemes and out-of-school clubs, must be registered with Ofsted. Registration includes a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) which is 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. For more information, please visit: [Information for Parents about Ofsted's role in regulating childcare](#)

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, Au Pairs, Babysitters)

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: [To look at Ofsted reports, please visit their website.](#)

If you have a concern or a complaint you cannot resolve with your registered childcare provider, you can call Ofsted's compliance team on 0300 123 4666 or put your complaint in writing to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. Ofsted general enquiries line is 0300 123 1231. Ofsted does not usually become involved in complaints over fees and contractual arrangements.

Day nurseries, pre-school playgroups, crèches, out of school clubs and holiday play schemes must have;

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

How many children can a childminder care for?

A childminder can normally care for six children under the age of 8 if on the Early Years register. However the exact number of children will be stated on their Ofsted registration and can be checked with the Family Information Service. If a Childminder has an assistant then these numbers can change. The childminder's own children are included in these numbers. 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.

Childminder Agencies

Please note that some Childminders register with Ofsted via a private Childminder Agency. The childcare provider should let you know if this is the case. For more information, please see: [Childminder agencies guide](#)

Contract with your childcare provider

This is a legal and binding document between you and your childcare provider that sets out what is being agreed for your child's care. Before signing the contract, you should read it thoroughly and check that you are clear with what you are agreeing to, particularly around notice periods for changes to the care you are being offered and if you wish to cease the care as well as all charges relating to the care. For more information on childcare contracts please visit [PACEY](#).

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 (e.g. 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? Do they offer early education funding including the 30hrs extended childcare? Do they accept payment by childcare vouchers or through tax-free childcare?

The Staff

What training and experience do the 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 staff warm, caring and interacting with the children? Do the staff make you feel welcome and are they happy to answer your questions?

Your child

What activities 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 space 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, sinks 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, allergies 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

Solihull Local Offer website provides information about services and support for children and young people with disabilities or special educational needs in Solihull. [Please visit our website here.](#)

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 please contact us so that we can support and advise you further. [For more information, please see our factsheet.](#)

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?

Type of childcare	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Childminder			
Hourly Rate	£ 3.50	£ 7 .50	£ 5.18
Daily Rate	£30.00	£60.00	£44.59
Day Nursery			
Daily Rate	£41.00	£82.50	£57.48
Pre-School Playgroups			
2 ½ to 3 hour session	£12.00	£22.50	£16.80
Before School			
Per session	£2.50	£9.15	£ 5.89
After School			
Per session	£2.50	£18.74	£ 9.50
<i>Please note above costs are correct as of March 2025</i>			

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.

2 year old funding for families receiving additional government support

If your family are receiving certain benefits and are on a low income, you may qualify for 2 year old funding. You might also qualify if your child is Looked After by the local authority, has left care through special guardianship order, adoption or child arrangement order, or if your child receives Disability Living Allowance or has an Education, Health and Care Plan. You can apply online, and you will receive a decision within 5 working days. [For more information, please visit our website.](#) If you have any questions please contact the Family Information Service.

Under 5s funding for working families

Families of children 9 months and over who meet criteria relating to being in employment can access funded childcare of up to 15 hours per week. This new scheme is managed by the National Childcare Service and you will need to apply online with HMRC who will issue a code if eligible. [To find out more including the deadlines to apply by, please visit our website. From September 2025, this funding will increase from 15 hours to 30 hours funded childcare.](#)

Early Education Funding for 3 and 4 year olds – Universal and extended 30hrs entitlement

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to receive up to 15hrs free early education per week up to a maximum number of hours per term. Eligibility begins at the start of the term following their third birthday up until they start full time school; this can be for a maximum of 6 terms for a total of 570 hours per year.

Some children will be eligible for an additional 15 hours of early education funding per week, known as 30 hours extended entitlement. This funding is mainly aimed at working parents and those meeting specific criteria. You will need to complete an online application the term before the funding starts, and if you are eligible for the extended entitlement, you will be given a code by HMRC to give to your childcare provider. [For more information, please visit our website.](#)

Choosing Childcare and help with childcare costs

The Government has a website which contains information on all the current childcare schemes including early education funding for 2, 3 and 4yr olds, details on 30hrs extended childcare, tax free childcare, tax credits for childcare, universal credit for childcare and support while you study. [For more information, please visit their website.](#)

Childcare Calculator

The Government has a calculator to see what help you could get with childcare costs. [For more information, please visit their website.](#)

Flexible Working and Time Off

If you're a working parent, you are 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 [please visit this website.](#)

Contact Us:

Solihull Family Information Service is here to help. You can contact us via our Freephone helpline, by email or by visiting our website..

If you would like to receive regular information on activities and events in Solihull you can sign up to our parents' network by completing [the form here.](#)

Our contact details are:

Family Information Service
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Council House
Manor Square
Solihull
B91 3QB

Telephone: 0800 389 8667 (helpline available Monday-Friday 9am-2pm)
Minicom: 0121 704 8058
Email: familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk
Website: www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo