

Family Information Service

# Childcare Choices

The essential guide to finding the right childcare for you and your child in Brighton & Hove



**NHS**



Brighton & Hove  
City Council

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## Choosing childcare checklist

Enclosed with this booklet you will find a handy checklist to use when you contact and visit childcare providers

Welcome to Childcare Choices, brought to you by the Family Information Service (FIS). This booklet aims to give you a better understanding of the types of childcare available, to help you make the right childcare choices, both for you and your child.

### How can the Family Information Service help you?

If you are a family living in Brighton & Hove, or a professional working with families, our website and online directory contain lots of useful information and advice, you can:

- Search for Ofsted registered childcare
- Find services to support your family
- Check out fun activities for children
- Get help with applying for a school place
- Find out about free early learning for three & four year olds

Our information is impartial and we aim to ensure that it is accurate and up to date.

### Need extra help?

We appreciate that some families need more help and support than others for a variety of reasons. If you can't find the information or services you need online and feel that you would benefit from speaking to an adviser, then please contact us.

### Contact details

#### Website and directory

[www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis)

**Call** 01273 293545

**Email** [familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

**@BHCCFamilyInfo**

We are based at Turner Children's Centre,  
Ivory Place Brighton BN2 9QE

# Safe and sound

The key concern on most people's minds when choosing childcare is "will my child be safe?" There are a range of safeguards in place to ensure that your child will be well looked after, in a secure environment, by people who have been through a range of checks.

## Ofsted registration

Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education) is the government body that inspects all registered childcare to ensure that children get quality care in a safe environment. There are minimum standards for childcare that are set by Ofsted, which no registered provider may fall below.

There are two types of register:

### Early Years Register

Childcare providers must join this register and deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) if they care for children from birth until the 31st August following their fifth birthday.

### Childcare Register

#### Compulsory part

Childcare providers must join this register if they care for children who are older than those on the Early Years Register, but are under eight.

**Providers who work with children from birth to eight years old, must join both the Early Years Register and the Childcare Register.**

#### Voluntary part

Some types of childcare provider do not have to register, but may choose to do so. This includes people who provide care in the child's own home, crèches and care for children aged eight and over. Activity groups that your child goes to can also register, ask your provider if they are registered or intend to do so.

**In order for you to claim most types of financial help towards the cost of childcare, the provider must be registered with Ofsted.**

## Ofsted reports

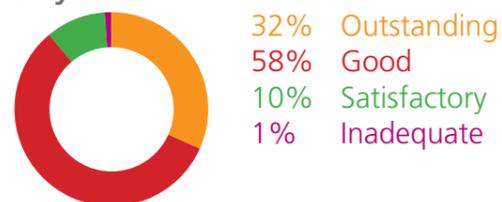
When Ofsted register a childcare provider, they issue a registration certificate that outlines the number and ages of children they are allowed to care for. They will then inspect the provider every 3-5 years and publish a report that summarises their findings. You can view registration certificates and reports by asking the childcare provider to show you a copy. You can also view this information online on the Ofsted website. To view registered childminders' reports online, you will need their unique reference number (URN), which you can get from the Family Services Directory by visiting [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis).

You may find it particularly useful to look at the summary table at the end of the report. This breaks down Ofsted gradings for the individual areas that have been inspected.

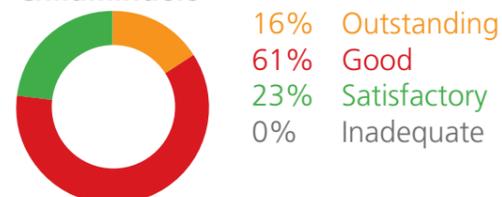
## Local gradings

After inspection, childcare providers are given one of four gradings. The charts below demonstrate the gradings given in Brighton & Hove.\* A childcare providers current grading will be indicated on their latest report.

### Daycare



### Childminders



\*Based on care inspections between September 2008 – December 2010

## Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Checks

By law, providers must ensure that adults looking after children, or having unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so and must obtain a CRB check. The check will show current and spent convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings held on the Police National Computer as well as any relevant information held by the local police force. Visit [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk)

## Staff ratios

Ofsted has laid down the minimum number of childcare professionals that should be responsible for the care and welfare of your child at any one time. These are:

- One carer for every three children under the age of two
- One carer for every four children aged two
- One carer for every eight children aged three and over

Childminders can be registered to care for up to six children, of these only three may be under five years of age and only one or two aged under one. These figures include the childminder's own children.

## What training do childcare professionals undertake?

People working in a childcare setting must have appropriate professional qualifications, training, skills and knowledge. All managers and supervisors must hold a full and relevant level three qualification, and at least half of the staff in a setting must hold a full and relevant level two qualification. There is a drive to increase the number of childcare workers with higher qualifications and for more early years settings to be led by a graduate Early Years Professional. It is a legal requirement for group settings to have sufficient staff trained in paediatric first aid.

**For more information, or if you have concerns about a childcare provider visit: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) or phone Ofsted: 0300 1231231**

Childminders must hold a paediatric first aid certificate and must undertake Local Authority approved training to complete their registration. Many childminders go on to complete level three qualifications, such as the Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce.

City Early Years & Childcare (CEYC) offers a wide programme of training and development courses for all childcare professionals to update their skills and knowledge in areas such as child protection, equalities and specific training for those working with the birth to five age group and with school aged children. CEYC provides financial support for childcare staff to gain relevant qualifications and encourages providers to improve the level of qualifications in their setting.

## Quality assurance schemes

Many childcare providers in Brighton & Hove work towards gaining the Quilt quality award. This indicates that they are committed to continuous improvement.



## What type of childcare is best suited to your needs?

This table is a guide to the types of childcare available depending on the age of your child and your needs. Don't forget, you can use more than one type of care, for example, you might use a pre-school/playgroup for part of the day and get a childminder to pick up your child and look after them for the rest of the day.

Age of child	Reason for childcare	Options
<b>Birth to two</b> 	Working full or part-time Studying Break for parent/carer	Full & part-time childcare settings Childminder Home based childcare
	Shift working Evening or weekend working	Childminder Home based childcare
<b>Two to five</b> 	Working/studying full or part-time	Full & part-time childcare settings Childminder Home based childcare
	Shift working Evening or weekend working	Childminder Home based childcare
	Break for parent/carer Stimulation for child	Part-time childcare settings
<b>Three to five</b> 	<b>Free early learning</b> From the term after their third birthday all children are entitled to free early learning sessions. See page 9	Full & part-time childcare settings School nurseries & classes Private & independent nursery schools Some network childminders
<b>Five and over</b> 	Before and after school care Holiday care	Breakfast/After school club School run activities Childminder Childminder nursery Home based childcare Holiday playscheme

## Childcare for under fives

Once you have looked at the table on page 6, you can start thinking about what type of childcare will meet your needs. On the following pages, you will find a brief overview of the different types of childcare. Remember though, that childcare providers of the same type can vary widely, so take a look at our online directory at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis) to compare what each provider can offer.

### Full-time childcare settings

Settings offering full-time care can use different names to describe themselves including:

- Day Nurseries
- Nurseries
- Childminder Nurseries
- Pre-schools or playgroups (extended day)
- Nursery Schools

Home based childcare can also be used for full-time care. See page 12.

**Opening hours:** These settings are particularly suited to parents who work full time as they are open for at least 49 weeks of the year and their day must run from 8.30am-5.30pm as a minimum, however, some open as early as 7am and close at 6pm.

**Age range:** Most full time settings take children from three months to five years of age, however there are some that only take older children from one or two years of age.

**Cost:** Costs vary widely between settings, from around £28 - £60 per day. It's important that you don't just look at the daily rate when looking at costs. You need to find out exactly what is included and what you will need to pay extra for to make an informed decision. Use our parents' checklist when you speak to childcare providers to help you work out the final cost.

### Part-time childcare settings

These settings are usually called:

- Pre-schools
- Playgroups
- Pre-schools or playgroups (extended day)

Home based childcare can also be used for part-time care. See page 12.

**Opening hours:** Part-time settings are most suited to parents who don't have full-time commitments all year round, or are just looking for a place for their child to socialise and prepare for school. Opening hours vary, but they may be open less than 49 weeks per year, or less than 8 hours per day, or less than 5 days per week, or a combination of these. If you work or study part-time, term time only, or can be flexible with your working hours, you may find part-time childcare settings could work for you.

**Age range:** The vast majority take children from the age of two to five years of age, however some will only take children once they reach two and a half.

**Cost:** Although the lowest cost in the city works out at £7 per session, and the highest amount is £48 per session, it is important to remember that the length of sessions varies widely. There are other factors that you need to take into account as well, such as the age of your child and what is included in the price. Use our parents' checklist when you speak to childcare providers to help you work out the final cost.

## School based early learning and childcare

These settings are usually known as:

- School nurseries and classes run by the local authority
- Private and independent nursery schools

**Opening hours:** These settings are open term-time only with the exception of one private nursery school that is open year round. Most local authority nurseries are open for mornings or afternoons only, although some now offer longer days. Private and independent nursery schools are usually open for a school day.

**Age range:** Mainly from three years of age. Some private nurseries may take younger children

**Cost:** Local authority nursery schools are free if you are only using the 15 hours per week allocated to free early learning (see page 9), they will charge for any additional hours. Private and independent nursery schools open varying hours from shorter sessions to longer days and costs vary between £18 per session to £48.18 per day.

## Groups for babies and children

Groups that you attend with your baby or toddler are not classified as childcare and are not registered with Ofsted. There are a huge variety of groups where you can meet other parents and your child can have fun or learn new skills. Our online directory has details of a wide range of activities in the city and we are constantly adding new groups for you and your child to enjoy.

Visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis) and take a look!

## Childminders

Childminders can offer full and part-time care for under 5's and before/after school and holiday care for older children. They are self employed and provide flexible care from their own homes.

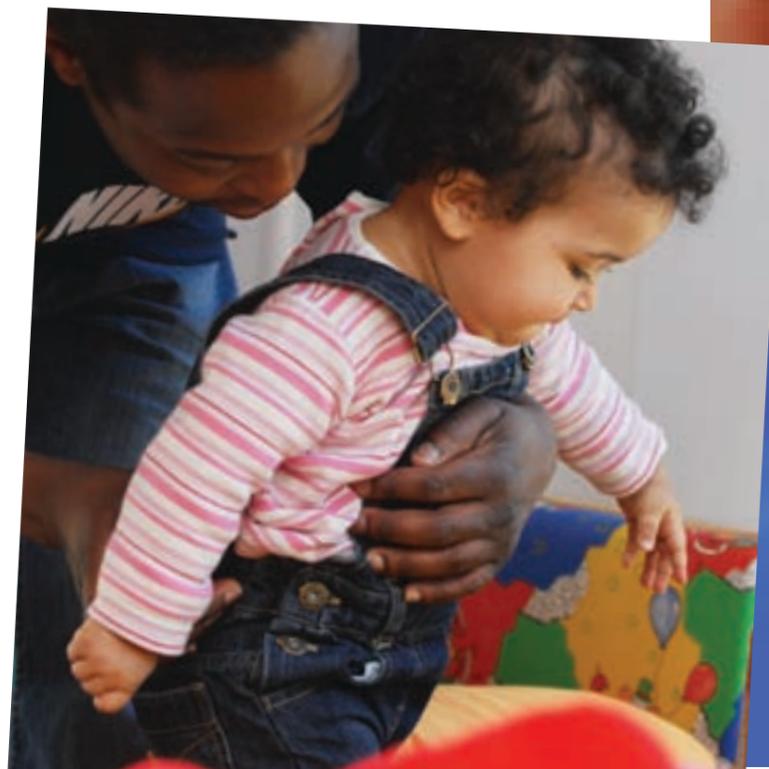
**Opening hours:** Most work weekdays from 8am-6pm, but they are usually flexible and most can offer care outside of these times. A few are also registered to offer overnight care. Childminders can also pick up and drop off children at other childcare settings.

**Age range:** All ages

**Cost:** The average cost is £4.71 per hour

## Creches

Creches are different to other types of childcare in that they are for occasional sessions, usually when the parent is on site. They can be permanently based at places like sports centres, or temporary for example at conferences or training sessions.



## Free early learning for all three & four year olds

Children are entitled to a maximum of 570 hours of free early learning over 12 months. This is equivalent to 15 hours per week over 38 weeks equating to term-time. In Brighton & Hove, we offer all parents the choice of:

- 3 hours a day over 5 days of the week for 38 weeks
- 5 hours a day over 3 days of the week for 38 weeks

Early years providers can decide how to offer free early learning, and some will offer different patterns. For example; 6 hours or longer a day, or less than 15 hours a week over more than 38 weeks.

Providers can charge for extra hours and can decide how much to charge. Make sure you understand how much you will have to pay before taking up a place.

The table below shows when your child will become eligible for free sessions.

Date of 3rd birthday	Free early learning can start
1 January – 31 March	Summer (1 April)
1 April – 31 August	Autumn (1 September)
1 September – 31 December	Spring (1 January)

Free early learning is offered by most early years settings in the city and some network childminders. Visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis) to download our free early learning factsheet.



### Problems with finding childcare?

#### Then let us know!

Most parents are able to find the childcare or early learning place that they need on our Family Services Directory, but we appreciate that some parents may need extra help and support.

We treat each enquiry as unique, and will work with you to help you find childcare to meet your needs. Please let us know if you need any additional help particularly if you:

- Have a child with a disability or special needs
- Speak English as an additional language
- Are a teenage parent
- Need emergency care
- Are a jobseeker
- Have had a multiple birth

For more information about the additional help we can offer, speak to one of our advisers on **01273 293545**.

### Holiday fun for school aged children

The Family Information Service produce bulletins throughout the year packed full of activities for children to enjoy during their school holidays. They also publish their Summer Fun booklet in June that includes details of summer playschemes, sports activities and fun things to do for children and young people.

You can find details of both holiday and year round activities at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis)

## Childcare for school aged children

Once your child starts school, your childcare needs will change. If you are working, or looking to return to work or training, you may need childcare that fits around the school day and holidays. Remember though, that childcare providers of the same type can vary widely, so take a look at our online directory at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis) to compare what each provider can offer. See page 12 for home based childcare.

### After school clubs

These are usually based in or near schools and are mostly run by private businesses or voluntary organisations. Your child will play, learn, relax and have fun. Some clubs pick up children from schools in their local area and some schools run provision of their own.

**Age range:** Usually 4 to 11 year olds, although some cater for older children as well

**Opening hours:** Usually from the end of the school day to 5.30 or 6pm, term-time only, although many clubs provide a holiday scheme.

**Cost:** From £4.50 - £13 per session

### Holiday playschemes

These cater for school aged children and are usually based in schools or leisure centres. Some are run by private businesses and others are run by voluntary or community organisations. The emphasis is on having fun with other children.

**Age range:** Mostly from 4 to 11, although a few take younger and older children.

**Opening hours:** All or part of the summer holidays, and some may open over Easter and half terms. A few open over the Christmas break. Some schemes open all day and others only part of the day

**Cost:** From £9 for a morning session up to £40 for a full day

### Childminders and FIS At Home Childcarers

Many Childminders (see page 8) and At Home Childcarers (see page 12) pick up and drop children off at schools as well as offering holiday care.

### Breakfast clubs

Many schools have breakfast clubs, where your child can have a healthy breakfast before they start the school day.

**Age range:** For all school aged children

**Opening hours:** Usually from 8am until school starts

**Cost:** Varies between schools. Ask your child's school for details

### School run activities

Many schools provide a range of activities for children after the school day, such as homework clubs and drama groups.

**Opening hours:** These activities may change frequently and only extend the school day for an hour or so

**Age range:** All school aged children

**Cost:** Varies widely depending on activity

### Other activities

There are a wide range of activities for children in the city such as sports and performing arts. These groups do not have to register with Ofsted, but can choose to do so. Check out our online directory to find out what's available at

[www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis)

## Childcare based in your home

This can be a good option for people who need flexible childcare, for example, if parents work unsociable hours. Families with several children may also find that home based childcare is more economical than paying for more than one place at other childcare settings. Parents of children with special needs who need one to one care in their home may also find this a good option.

### FIS At Home Childcarers

The FIS has developed this scheme for parents who want their children looked after by qualified and experienced carers in their own home. All At Home Childcarers are interviewed, go through a range of checks and undertake further training before they are accepted onto the scheme. They are not required to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. FIS At Home Childcarers are registered with Ofsted on the voluntary part of the childcare register.

**Age range:** From birth upwards

**Time available:** Very flexible

**Cost:** The average cost is £7.75 per hour

### Nannies

A nanny is employed by you directly, and can either live in your home or live out. Many are qualified childcarers and their duties are directly concerned with the care of your child. They can choose whether or not to register with Ofsted on the voluntary part of the childcare register.

**Age range:** From birth upwards

**Time available:** You employ the nanny for the hours you require

**Cost:** Varies greatly. Remember you will be responsible for tax and national insurance and if your nanny lives in, you will need to provide a self-contained room along with food

**Finding a nanny:** Through a nanny agency, or you could advertise in local or specialist publications, or on the internet.

### Au pairs

These are usually young people from other countries who live with a family and provide childcare whilst they learn English. They are not generally trained in childcare. Au Pairs are not registered with Ofsted.

**Age range:** They can help with young children when the parent is present, but are more appropriate for school aged children

**Time available:** They usually work a maximum of five hours per day and babysit for two evenings per week. They must have at least two full days off per week

**Cost:** You would pay a weekly allowance and provide them with their own room and food

**Finding an au pair:** Usually through an au pair or nanny agency

### Babysitters

Babysitters come to your home to look after your child on an ad-hoc basis. There are no specific legal regulations covering babysitters, although the NSPCC recommends that they should be over 16. Babysitters are not registered with Ofsted.

**Age range:** Any

**Time available:** Flexible

**Costs:** Varies. Expect to pay around £10 per hour through an agency and a registration fee

**Finding a babysitter:** If you use childcare ask your childcare provider, as many staff offer babysitting services. You could also contact a college that runs childcare courses and ask for a student, or use a babysitting agency.

## Disabled children and children with special educational needs

Anyone providing childcare, is required to consider how they will provide for disabled children and/or those with special educational needs (SEN). They should have an inclusion policy that sets out how they will ensure that every child is included and involved in activities.

### Finding suitable childcare for a disabled child

The impression you get from the first contact with a childcare provider is a useful indication of how welcoming and inclusive their setting is. When talking to the provider, you might find the enclosed checklist for parents useful as we've included some specific questions about childcare for disabled children. It should help you find out more about their experience and any training they have done that will be relevant to providing for your child.

**“It was important that the staff had a good awareness of my son’s needs, particularly his physical needs”**

If you feel that you need some more help when looking for childcare, ask the Family Information Service. Our advisers can talk you through some of the steps you might take to ensure that you find suitable childcare. This could include making appointments for you to visit childcare settings or linking with professionals who can give training or support to the childcare provider.

### For children under five involving your health visitor

You should also talk to your health visitor about choosing childcare. They will be able to help you consider your child's needs and what should be in place for your child to attend a childcare setting. This is very important if your child has any medical or physical needs. Your health visitor can also offer you advice on any concerns you may have once your child is at the setting.





**It is important to remember that the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) applies to ALL childcare providers.**

**This means that they must:**

- Not treat a child with a disability 'less favourably' than other children
- Make 'reasonable adjustments' for a disabled child

To read more about the DDA in childcare settings visit [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk) and search *early years and the Disability and Discrimination Act*

## General advice and support for families with disabled children

**Amaze offers support, advice and information to any parent who has a child with special needs. They produce a factsheet all about finding childcare for children with special needs and can advise you about the funding you may be entitled to. You can contact their helpline on 01273 772289 or visit their website [www.amazebrighton.org.uk](http://www.amazebrighton.org.uk)**

**“It made me feel very comfortable to see other children with special needs attending the setting. Although we thought we would prefer a smaller setting, the one she ended up in is quite big but she is really happy there”**

## Talking to the special educational needs co-ordinator

Every early years setting has a specially trained and experienced **special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO)**. They are responsible for ensuring that the care your child receives at their setting meets their individual needs. They should also be able to tell you how they would plan for your child, show you suitable resources that they could use and explain how they might adapt activities to ensure your child is included.

## PreSENS

The Pre-school Special Educational Needs Service (PreSENS) has advisers who go into early years settings in the city to ensure that disabled children and those with SEN receive the right support. Their team of teachers and nursery nurses can offer more intensive support to children who may need extra help with their learning and development. Talk to your childcare provider if you think your child would benefit from more support or contact PreSENS on 01273 294944.

## For school aged children

All playworkers at after school clubs and holiday schemes must ensure that the play activities offered are accessible to all children. Talk to the co-ordinator about how the club or playscheme runs and what help your child might need to enjoy play activities and make friends.

## Additional support for your child

**Childcare Inclusion Funding** may be available to help disabled children who need extra support in childcare. It cannot pay for childcare fees, but it can contribute towards the cost of making the childcare place possible, such as a one to one worker, specialist equipment or toys that might be suitable for your child. It can be used for early years childcare, after school and holiday provision or with a childminder.

There is a short application form for you and the childcare provider to complete. If you think your child might benefit from inclusion funding talk to your childcare provider or contact the Family Information Service.

## Ongoing support

Once your child is settled in a childcare setting, it is vital that you continue to communicate with your childcare provider and that you are listened to. You should feel involved and informed about your child's time at the setting. It's also important to agree on how relevant information will be passed onto other professionals involved with your child. If you have any concerns about your childcare contact the Family Information Service for advice.

## Top tips for choosing childcare

**“Start looking early, good childcare can get booked up quickly. You also need to make sure that you allow time for your child to settle in before you have to go back to work.”**

The Family Information Service asked parents who had used childcare before to tell us about their experiences and if they had any tips to pass on. Read through this section and look at the checklist enclosed with this booklet before you contact or visit a setting.

### Opening hours/availability

**“You have to factor in that you have to drop children off and then go to work. Some nurseries may close earlier which may mean that you’re struggling to fit in your hours at work”**

- Think about how flexible you need the setting to be. If you have a long commute to work, or work shifts you may not always be able to stick to strict timescales
- Will you need childcare over the school holidays?
- Is there any back-up if the childcare is not available for a period? For example if your childminder is ill?
- Many childcare providers have waiting lists. Don’t leave looking for childcare till the last minute
- You could combine different types of childcare, for example a childminder could pick up your child from a pre-school session and look after them for the rest of the day
- Have a back-up plan in place in case your child doesn’t settle or you are unhappy with the setting

### Location

**“The location is important so you can relax at work knowing your child is safe and happy”**

- Remember you will be doing this journey on a regular basis with your child at different times of day
- If you will be dropping off on the way to work, and picking up on the way home, think about the time involved. It could take longer than you anticipate!
- Can you walk, drive or get the bus there?
- Consider different areas, they could be easier to get to than you think, especially if you are going against the traffic, they have parking available or are on a frequent bus route

### Costs

**“There are limits to what you can afford but you want to make sure that staff are well paid and looked after”**

- Remember that cost is not necessarily an indication of quality
- You may need to pay a deposit or a retainer to keep your place open. You should also budget for up to a month’s fees in advance
- Check the terms and conditions carefully, in particular what would happen to your deposit if you decided not to take up the place
- Check additional costs for early starts and late finishes carefully. The cost quoted for a day may not cover all of the hours that you need
- Find out well in advance what you will need to pay, and when, and budget for this, particularly in the first few weeks
- The cost quoted may increase significantly if things like food and nappies are not included. Make sure you ask about any extra charges you may be expected to pay.
- There is financial help available. See page 19 and speak to a Family Information Service adviser to find out what you may be entitled to
- Your child is entitled to free early learning sessions from the term after their third birthday. See page 9



## Quality

“Visit at a time when you can speak face to face with other parents. Never be afraid to ask lots of questions and pay return visits until you are absolutely happy”

- Look at a range of Ofsted reports by visiting [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) or ask to view a copy when you visit settings
- Many people say that ‘gut feeling’ is important when choosing childcare. Trust your instinct but make sure that it is backed up with hard facts
- Ask lots of questions and visit several times both with and without your child
- Visit more than one setting so that you are able to compare
- Speak to other people using the setting and ask for references
- Ask childminders if they belong to a network (See page 7) and other childcare providers if they have or are working towards a quality award

## Environment

“The feeling of a place is important when you go in and specifically the way the staff interact with the children. Make sure the place is right for your child, don’t assume your child will take to the place just because your friends’ children do”

- If you receive a warm welcome and feel comfortable, your child is likely to feel the same
- Think about your child’s needs; would they prefer to be in a small homely environment, or a larger setting with more children?
- Look at the environment and make sure that it’s clean and safe
- Are there separate areas for different activities such as sleeping and noisy play?
- Find out what food and drink is provided, whether it’s prepared on site and if they can cater for your child’s dietary requirements
- Outdoor play is essential for your child’s development. Look carefully at what’s available

## Staff

“The stability of staff is important don’t be put off by the appearance of a building, it can contain excellent caring staff”

- Remember that at least half of the staff in each childcare setting need to be qualified
- All childminders who care for children under eight will have undertaken training and been inspected by Ofsted
- All childcarers should have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. See page 5
- Try and speak to as many of the staff as you can at the setting and observe how they interact with the children
- Ask about the qualification levels of staff

# Tax credits and help towards childcare costs

This is a brief overview of the types of help that are available.

To find out more about eligibility criteria and how much money you might be entitled to, visit [www.directgov.uk](http://www.directgov.uk). You can also find lots of other useful tips and advice about money at [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com).

The Family Information Service also produces a family finance factsheet. To download a copy, visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis)

## What are tax credits?

Tax credits are payouts made regularly into your bank account from the government to support those with children or in work but with a low income. They’re paid via the tax office and anyone aged over 16 who normally lives in the UK can apply to get them.

## Child Tax Credit

Child Tax Credit is for those who take care of any children eligible for Child Benefit (under the age of 16 or up to 20 if they’re in full time education or registered with the Careers Service). Importantly, you *don’t* need to be working.

It’s made up of a series of different and separate elements, and the total you get is the sum of all those different parts.

The income limit in order for you to receive Child Tax Credit depends on your own individual circumstances. But as a very rough guide, you might not get Child Tax Credit if:

- you have one child, and your annual income is more than around £26,000
- you have two children, and your annual income is more than around £32,200

You could still qualify if your income is above these amounts. For example, if you pay for registered or approved childcare, have more than one or two children, are disabled, or your child has a disability.

## Working Tax Credit

The aim of Working Tax Credit is to give extra help to those in work on lower pay. To qualify you need to:

- Work over 16 hours per week if you are a lone parent, or your partner is in hospital or prison.
- Work at least 24 hours per week between you if you are part of a couple (if you are claiming for childcare costs, both partners need to work at least 16 hours per week)
- Work over 30 hours per week, are aged over 25 and meet the income criteria

If your household income is £6,420 or below, you’ll get the maximum amount otherwise the amounts will be reduced depending on your income. As with Child Tax Credit, it’s made up of a series of different and separate elements, and the total you get is the sum of all those different parts.

## Childcare Element of Working Tax Credit

If you work, you could get extra tax credits to help with your childcare costs. You can claim as soon as you start paying for childcare and get help with up to 70 per cent of your childcare costs - up to certain limits.

To qualify, you must work at least 16 hours per week if you are a lone parent and if you are part of a couple, generally both of you must work 16 hours per week (some exemptions apply).

For one child, the maximum amount of childcare cost that you can claim for is £175 per week, and for two or more children, the maximum cost you can claim for is £300 per week. The actual amount you get will depend on your income. The lower your income, the more tax credits you can get.

### For more information about Tax Credits

Call the Tax Credits helpline on 0845 300 3900, or visit [www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits). You can also go along in person to the Tax Enquiry Centre at 11 Regents Hill, Upper North Street, Brighton.

## Employer supported childcare/ salary sacrifice scheme

Some employers support their employees with childcare costs by offering childcare voucher schemes. This works by replacing part of your salary with vouchers that you then use to pay for childcare. The benefit of this is that the amount taken as a voucher is exempt from tax and National Insurance Contributions (NIC). Your partner can also take advantage of childcare vouchers if their employer runs a scheme.

There is a limit on the value of the voucher you take which is exempt from tax and NIC. Basic rate tax payers can take £55 per week (£243 per month), higher rate tax payers can take £28 per week (£124 per month) and additional rate tax payers can take £22 per week (£97 per month).

Joining a salary sacrifice scheme and taking childcare vouchers may affect the amount of tax credits you can get. There is an online calculator which can be used to help you decide whether - overall - you would be better off taking the childcare vouchers or not. Visit [www.hmrc.gov.uk/calcs/ccin.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/calcs/ccin.htm)

Speak directly to your employer / HR department to find out if they offer a salary sacrifice scheme and for more information.

## Flexible working and work life balance

Many employees who have parental responsibility can now ask their employer for a flexible working pattern. Legally, your employer must seriously consider your application and only reject it if there are good business reasons for doing so.

Visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) for more information.

## Grants and allowances for students

### Care to Learn

If you are under 20 and a parent or carer undertaking learning or training, you may be eligible to receive up to £160 per week to pay for registered childcare and travel costs to and from the childcare. For more information call the Learner Support Helpline on 0800 121 8989.

### The Childcare Grant

The Childcare Grant could cover as much as 85% of your childcare costs during term time and holidays. If you are eligible, the amount you will get depends on your income, the number of children that you have and the cost of your childcare.

### Parents Learning Allowance

This allowance helps towards course costs such as books, materials and travel. You could get between £50 and £1,508 for 2012/2013 depending on your income.

You can apply for the Childcare Grant and/or the Parents Learning Allowance when you apply for student finance. Contact Student Finance England on 0845 300 5090.



## Services for children under five

Services for children under five and their families have been brought together into Sure Start Children's Centre teams. Led by health visitors and supported by nursery staff and early years visitors, the teams work from a network of children's centres throughout the city. The teams, with you, will assess your family's needs and offer you support wherever you live in the city.

### Sure Start Children's Centres

There are six 'hub' children's centres that offer advice and information, health and family support and childcare. You might visit your local centre for an appointment with your midwife, to meet up with other parents at a parenting group, or to find out about help and support to take up training or job opportunities.

There are also smaller 'gateway' children's centres based in schools and other community venues in the city. These centres can offer you advice and information, as well as hosting some services.

### Childcare and activities for children

All of the 'hub' children's centres offer good quality early learning and childcare for children aged birth to five. All children's centres offer activities for children such as play sessions and parent and toddler groups.

### To find out more

See the back of this booklet for contact details of your local children's centre or visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/childscenres](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/childscenres)



# Schools

This is just an overview of how to apply for a school place. You can find all of the information you need online at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/schooladmissions). You can also speak to the School Admissions Team on 01273 293653.

## At what age should my child start school?

Your child can now start school full or part-time in the school year that they turn five. Check the table below for more details.

Child's birthday	When child can attend school
1st September to 31st December	Start in September full-time or defer admission until January
1st January to 30th April	Start in September full-or part-time or defer admission until January or Easter. Will need to be full-time by the summer term
1st May to 31st August	Start in September full - or part-time, or defer admission until January or Easter - can legally delay admission until September 2013 but will need to apply for a year 1 place at that point.

## When should I start looking for a school?

It is now easy and straightforward to apply for a school place online. From September in the year before your child is due to start school, visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/schooladmissions) where you can view the infant and primary schools admissions booklet. From October onwards, you will have the chance to visit schools and individual schools publish their own prospectuses. You will need to return your preference form, outlining your preferred schools by mid January, and at the beginning of May you will receive details of your allocated place.

If you are unable to apply online, call the School Admission Team on 01273 293653.

## What are the options?

### Reception class at infant school

Infant schools cater for children aged from four to seven. Children then usually go on to a junior school, although some may transfer to a primary school.

### Reception class at primary school

Primary schools cater for children aged from four to 11. Your child can stay at primary school until they transfer to a secondary school.

### Independent schools

These are fee paying privately owned schools who have their own admissions procedures. To find out more about independent schools in the city visit [www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk](http://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk)

### Special schools

There are a small number of schools in the city that cater for children with a range of special educational needs, although many children with additional needs attend mainstream schools. For further information, contact the Special Educational Needs Team on 01273 293552.

### Don't forget!

Your childcare needs will change once your child starts school. Visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis) to search online for before and after school care and activities and childcare for the school holidays

## Do you need extra help in applying for a school place?

The School Preference Service can help parents and carers who need extra help in applying for a primary or secondary school place for their child, for example if:

- You need extra help completing the application forms
- English is not your first language
- You have recently moved to the city or are new to the UK
- You move home frequently
- You are just feeling a little confused by the system and need a helping hand

The service is impartial and separate from the School Admissions Team.

Contact the Family Information Service on 01273 293545 for more information.

### Comments and complaints

If you have a comment or complaint about a service offered by Brighton & Hove City Council visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/complaints) Alternatively, you can phone the council's complaints advice line on Freephone 0500 291229.

# Sure Start Children's Centres in Brighton & Hove

For more information you can telephone or drop-in to your local centre or visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/childrenscentres](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/childrenscentres)

**Tarner Children's Centre in partnership with Tarnerland Nursery**  
Ivory Place, Brighton, BN2 9QE  
**01273 296700**

**Cornerstone Community & Children's Centre**  
Church Road, Hove, BN3 2FL  
**01273 327757**

**Hollingbury & Patcham Gateway Children's Centre**  
Carden School, County Oak Avenue, Brighton BN1 8LU  
**01273 293311**

**Hollingdean Children's Centre & Cherry Tree Nursery**  
Brentwood Road, Brighton BN1 7DY  
**01273 295623**

**City View Gateway Children's Centre**  
Brighton General Hospital, Elm Grove, Brighton, BN2 3EW  
**01273 265890**

**North Portslade Children's Centre & Acorn Nursery**  
The Rise, Portslade, BN41 2PY  
**01273 294062**

**South Portslade Children's Centre & Library**  
223 Old Shoreham Road, Portslade, BN41 1XR  
**01273 296895**

**Goldstone Gateway Children's Centre**  
Goldstone School, Laburnum Avenue, Hove, BN3 7JW  
**01273 294851**

**Conway Court Children's Centre in partnership with Honeycroft Preschool**  
Clarendon Road, Hove, BN3 3WR  
**01273 266011**

**West Hove Gateway Children's Centre**  
West Hove Infants School Portland Road, Hove, BN3 5JA  
**01273 733386**

**Hangleton Park Gateway Children's Centre**  
Harmsworth Crescent, Hangleton, BN3 8BW  
**01273 295272**

**Moulsecomb Children's Centre & Jump Start Nursery**  
Hodshrove Lane, Brighton, BN2 4SE  
**01273 294040**

**Bevendean Gateway Children's Centre**  
Bevendean Primary School, Heath Hill Avenue, Brighton, BN2 4JP  
**01273 696347**

**Coldean Gateway Children's Centre**  
Coldean Primary School, Kenwards, Brighton, BN1 9EN  
**01273 294917**

**Roundabout Children's Centre and Nursery**  
Whitehawk Road, Brighton, BN2 5FL  
**01273 290300**

**The Deans Gateway Children's Centre**  
Rudyard Kipling School, Chalkland Rise, Woodingdean, Brighton, BN2 6RH  
**01273 306387**

**Saltdean Gateway Children's Centre**  
Boomerang Kids Nursery, Saltdean Barn, Arundel Drive West, Saltdean, Brighton, BN2 8SJ  
**01273 309851**

**Westdene Gateway Children's Centre**  
Westdene Primary School, Bankside, Brighton, BN1 5GN  
**01273 294904**

**Fairlight Gateway Children's Centre**  
Fairlight Primary & Nursery School, St Leonards Road, Brighton, BN2 3AJ  
**01273 265890**

**Preston Park Gateway Children's Centre**  
At Fiveways Play Centre, between 8-10 Florence Road, Brighton, BN1 6DJ  
**01273 500257**