The At Home Childcare Service
Parents Guide

The At Home Childcare Service aims to offer flexible, responsive and tailored childcare, to the needs of parents by providing a workforce of Ofsted registered childcarers who come to your home to look after your children.
Any parent or carer looking for childcare at home can use the service. This could be for a young baby, for after school or holiday care, evenings or weekends, or just to supervise older children so they're not home alone.
The service might particularly meet the needs of parents who work unusual hours, have a child with special needs or need more than one child cared for at a time.

What checks do the At Home Childcarers undergo?

All of our At Home Childcarers are registered with Ofsted on the Voluntary Childcare Register. This involves obtaining:

- A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (formerly known as CRB)
- Paediatric first aid training, a childcare qualification and public liability insurance

(Please note: FIS cannot confirm the ongoing renewals of each childcarer. Please check with your childcarer, before you agree to work with them.)

In addition the Family Information Service requires childcarers to complete:

- An initial interview and provision of two references
- Safeguarding Children training

Finding an At Home Childcarer

The Family information Service can discuss your childcare needs with you and offer all the possible types of childcare that meet those needs. The childcare lists we send out provide profiles of all suitable matches.
For At Home Childcarers this includes information about their background as well as their availability, vacancy details and costs.

If you are looking for childcare or services for families, visit our website where you can search online: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis Twitter: @bhccfamilyinfo

For extra help or to speak to the At Home co-ordinator:
Email: familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk Telephone: (01273) 293545

Arrange an appointment to see us in person at:
Tarner Children's Centre, Ivory Place, Brighton, BN2 9QE

You can also call the Family Information Service on 01273 293545 if you have any other queries that you don't feel are covered here.

Brighton & Hove City Council

You can contact as many childcarers as you are interested in, usually by phone or email, to outline your needs.
The general guidance in this pack should help you to think about what is important to you before you contact them.

Selecting an At Home Childcarer

If this is the first time you have interviewed someone about childcare, the following sections should help you to think about what matters to you and what your child needs.

Consider each childcarer's qualifications and how well they match your childcare needs. Those with a Playwork qualification are often experienced with older children, while an Early Years qualification may indicate more specific training around the needs of younger children and babies.

We suggest that you plan a short settling-in session, or a series of them before leaving your child with a new person.

How much does a childcarer cost?

At Home Childcarers are not employed by the Family Information Service.
They may be self employed or be employed by the family, depending on individual circumstances.

If you need further guidance on your individual circumstances for employment purposes, please contact HMRC;

HMRC enquiries: www.hmrc.gov.uk
Newly self employed helpline: 08459 154 515
Employer helpline: 08457 143 143

Although their costs will vary, as the Family Information Service is not an agency and does not employ the carers, there are no agency fees or additional costs.

As the At Home Childcarers are registered with Ofsted, parents may be able to claim the childcare element of working tax credit, if they are eligible. Employer supported childcare vouchers can also be used.

When you receive details of childcarers, they usually charge a standard per hour rate which relates to a single child. Additional children may cost a little more, as would non-standard times of the day or week. Some childcarers charge a higher rate if they provide a qualified special needs service, such as having a nursing background or specific skills.

As you would expect with other professional childcare, you should discuss other cost issues such as deposits, notice payments and expenses with the childcarer before they start working with you.

All childcarers are provided with an agreement template which you can use to clearly record your arrangements including times of work and charges.

Some hints and tips on getting the relationship right

At Home Childcarers are provided with a handbook of information and paperwork templates when they join the service and we recommend that they use this handbook to promote themselves, to organise their relationships with parents and to cover the main administrative aspects of their role.

You should ask to see the handbook in your initial discussions with the At Home Childcarer, as this will help you both gain an understanding of what your arrangements should include.

The handbook sets out our expectations for good quality, professional childcare provision:

- personal contact details, including a place to record training, qualifications and Ofsted registration number
- the Ofsted standards which apply under the Voluntary Childcare Registration
- agreement templates to establish the working relationship
- templates of recording sheets for accidents and incidents, daily routines, risk assessment and household instruction checklists and a copy of a 'permission to collect' template letter
- timesheet templates

Coming to an agreement

- It is the responsibility of the childcarer and the parent/carer to come to an agreement about their needs and how childcare will be provided.

- We **strongly recommend** that you use the written agreement template we have provided in the handbook mentioned above. All of our At Home Childcarers have been provided with this template which you can both adapt. A copy is attached with this guide.

- As well as covering many practical details, the agreement should also cover discussing and planning activities, boundaries and preferences.
- Your arrangement is for childcare (including childcare related duties such as feeding and tidying) and for not general household duties.
- Agree a probationary period and a review date to discuss how things are going and if any changes need to be made. (Refer back to your initial discussions – are boundaries being followed ?, is enough time allocated for certain plans ?, and so on.)

Money matters

FIS does not employ the childcarers and it is up to the childcarer and family to discuss and agree the charges for childcare.

- When and how will you pay the childcarer? We **strongly recommend** you use timesheets to plan and record childcare payments
- If timesheets are not used, ensure receipts are given for payments.

If you claim Working Tax Credit for your childcare costs, please be aware that you should ask for invoices from your childcarer to support your WTC application, and that you may need to keep this paperwork even after your claim is initially assessed.
For more information, go to www.gov.uk

Other issues to discuss and negotiate:

- Are you happy to pay additional expenses? If so, what for?
- Are there any late charges if you are delayed in coming home?
- What happens if you or the carer cancel a session?
  (Remember that childcare is provided for a 'well' child – you should discuss your definition of this with the childcarer)
- What is the notice period on either side? What about holidays for you and the childcarer?
- Are there additional charges for evenings/weekends/bank holidays?

When agreeing the fee and the days and hours of work, don't feel shy or embarrassed. This is the starting point for the relationship and it's best to be very clear and up front.

Useful related websites for researching the terms of your agreement:

www.gov.uk – government information
www.pacey.org.uk – Professional Association for Childcarers
www.nannytax.co.uk – nanny payroll service

Brighton & Hove City Council

Keeping safe

- Make sure you have exchanged all the contact details you need, and think about where emergency contacts and numbers can be put for ease of access
- If your child or young person needs medication during the childcare, make sure you've talked this through carefully, double checked your understanding with each other and put the agreement in writing
- Is there any time when a child or young person is allowed to play/do homework unsupervised within the home?
- Ofsted require the childcarer to undertake a risk assessment of the home where the childcare takes place. All of our At Home Childcarers receive training in doing this through the At Home Childcare Service

Your responsibilities

In any relationship, both parties have to consider the other. We suggest that many issues can be avoided if you adhere to the arrangements you have agreed in writing, such as;

Communication

It works both ways and we understand is not always possible, but please try to respond to potential childcarers where you can, even to say 'no, thank you'. *We will ask childcarers to do the same, in following up after meetings and interviews with you, regarding work.*

School run jobs

To make school run requests viable, we suggest;

- Childcarers may charge a minimum fee, such as 2 hours worth or £20, to cover a short taking-a-child-to-school job
- Childcarers may share themself between 2 families, thus being paid a rate for each child
- Childcarers may offer (or be more able to take on the job, if you request them) to provide daycare for a pre-school sibling (ie. rather than using a childminder or nursery) as well as the school run, to provide a complete day of work
- Childcarers may agree to a school run job if it fits in with another job they are en-route to or from

Floats/expenses

Consider discussing with your childcarer, how to get reimbursed by you for entry fees/ activities/refreshments, etc;

- Put it in your agreement?
- Discuss specifically before a period of work, ie. school holiday
- Plan spending with parents in advance

One childcarer is paid a 'bank' of hours by the parent and then they just negotiate a 'draw-down' of those paid hours, as and when… Perhaps this could work with expenses as well as paid work hours…

Who do I contact if something goes wrong?

In most instances where your child is not at risk of harm, we would suggest you talk to your home childcarer and explain both, what is working for you and your child, and what you would like to change.

The Family Information Service can always offer advice and information but will not advocate for either party.
Both parties are expected to honour the written agreement they made, even if this is challenging due to a change of circumstances or in the relationship.

If the relationship is not able to continue, we can help you find another At Home Childcarer or a different type of childcare, such as a childminder.

Ofsted

If you are concerned that a home childcarer is not delivering their service to the Ofsted requirements for home based childcarers, then please contact Ofsted in writing, by email or by telephone.

- The requirements of the Voluntary Childcare Register for home childcarers can be requested from the Family information Service or viewed in section 2 of your childcarers handbook.
- The requirements cover child welfare and the suitability of the carer including training, health & safety, reporting incidents and insurance.
- You may share a home childcarer with children from only one other family, at any one time. If children are being cared for from three or more families, the carer must be registered as a childminder.
- For the full document of all the registration requirements that are relevant to childcarers working in the family home and registered under the Voluntary Childcare Register, go to www.ofsted.gov.uk and search Childcare Register for the 'Guide to Registration on the Childcare Register'.

Ofsted Contact details: National Business Unit, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
General enquiries: 0300 123 1231 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

If you think that a child is in danger or there is a possibility of harm, you should phone Brighton & Hove Multi-AgencySafeguarding Hub (MASH) or the police, immediately;

MASH	01273 290400	
Out of hours	01273 335905 / 335906	mash@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk
Police	101	

Brighton & Hove City Council