

Parents Guide to the At Home Childcare Service

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?

- Ofsted registration on the Voluntary Childcare Register.
- 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. You are advised to 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, including home childcare.

The childcare lists we send out provide profiles of all suitable matches. This includes information about childcare experience, availability, vacancies and costs.

If you are looking for childcare or services for families, visit our website where you can search online: www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk as well as our pages on the City Council website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/fis

**For extra help or to speak to the Childcare Brokerage Officer:
Email: familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk Telephone: (01273) 293545**

Twitter: [@bhccfamilyinfo](https://twitter.com/bhccfamilyinfo) Facebook: facebook.com/BHFamilies

Selecting an At Home Childcarer

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.

What matters to you and what does your child need?

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 and there are no additional fees or charges to the costs of their childcare.

They may be self employed or be employed by the family, depending on individual circumstances.

For further guidance on your circumstances for employment purposes, please go to the 'Employing someone to work in your home' page at www.gov.uk/au-pairs-employment-law

- 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.

Government schemes to support the cost of childcare

As the At Home Childcarers are registered with Ofsted, parents may be able to claim Tax Credits, Universal Credit or Tax Free Childcare. Details can be found at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

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 or adapt the written agreement template we have provided in the handbook mentioned above. You are welcome to request a copy from us, at any time.

- 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 Tax Credits or Universal Credit for your childcare costs, please be aware that you should ask for invoices from your childcarer to support your 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:

- Do you need to pay additional childcare-related expenses? (ie. entrance fees, snacks)
- Are there any late charges if you are delayed in coming home?
- What happens if you or the childcarer cancel a session? For example, 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.pacey.org.uk – Professional Association for Childcarers

www.nannytax.co.uk / www.nannypaye.co.uk – nanny payroll services

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. You are welcome to request a copy of our suggested risk assessment checklist, at any time.

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 offer to share themselves between 2 families, thus being paid a rate for each child. (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.)
- Childcarers may offer (or be more able to take on the job) 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;

- Plan spending in advance; put it in your agreement and then discuss before a specific period of time, ie. school holiday
- 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

For more serious concerns that a home childcarer is not delivering their service to the Ofsted requirements for home based childcarers, then please contact Ofsted.

The requirements of the Voluntary Childcare Register for home childcarers can be requested from the Family information Service or viewed at

www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-ofsted/registration-requirements#nannies

- The requirements cover child welfare and the suitability of the carer including training, health & safety, reporting incidents and insurance.
- For the full document of all the registration requirements relevant to childcarers working in the family home, go to www.ofsted.gov.uk or contact Ofsted on 0300 123 1231 or 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 Front Door For Families (FDFF) immediately;

FDFF (Office hours) 01273 290400 Out of hours 01273 335905

Or complete the online form, if you are worried about a child:

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/frontdoorforfamilies>

or call the Police on 101 (www.police.uk/contact/101)

You may also find our factsheet 'Home Based Childcare' useful – request it from us or view it at www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk