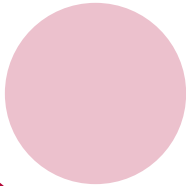




Central Bedfordshire Family and Youth Information Service



Help with choosing the
right childcare



Parents and Carers



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Who we are...

The Family and Youth Information Service is part of Central Bedfordshire Council's commitment to supporting all children and young people aged from 0 to 19 and their families. The service is available 24/7 via telephone, face to face, online via the Family Information Directory www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/fyis and www.direct.gov.uk and at information points including Sure Start Children's Centres.

We provide a one stop shop for information on childcare, financial support for parents and carers, working parent rights, activities for children and young people, careers information for young people and support groups offering help with issues such as bullying, drug misuse, parenting and bereavement. We also offer a Childcare Brokerage service, please contact us if you need our help.





Contact: Family and Youth information Service

 **Telephone:** 0300 300 8119
Fax: 0300 300 8208

Opening times:

Mon-Thurs 8:30am – 5:15pm
Fri 8:30am – 4:45pm - answer phone outside these hours

 **Email:**
fyis@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

 **Website:**
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/fyis
Or find us on Facebook and Twitter

Disclaimer

While every care has been taken in the compilation of this information, Central Bedfordshire Council will not be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused as a result of any inaccuracy or error within our information.

The information provided is only intended to be a general summary. It does not constitute legal or other professional advice and does not seek to describe your rights in full. Before any action is taken, individual advice should be sought.

Types of childcare

Day nursery

Day nurseries are run by a team of professionally trained staff and offer care and education for children under five years old (not all nurseries have the facility to take babies). They provide fun and learning opportunities on a full or part-time basis and are usually open all year. There are different kinds of day nurseries - private, community, local authority or workplace. The size and facilities they provide may vary. A nursery is open for a full day enabling parents to work.



Pre-school and playgroups

Pre-school and playgroups are for young children to learn and play in small groups, often close to their homes. They provide care for children aged 2½- 5 years (some pre-schools take from 2 years). Sessions are about two and half hours in a morning or afternoon during term time. Some pre-schools offer extended sessions enabling parents to work.

Pre-school and playgroups are run by qualified playgroup leaders who may provide free nursery education. They are often held on school sites, in church halls or community centres. This is a good opportunity for you to meet and get to know parents in your area.



Types of childcare

Registered childminder

A childminder is a person who is registered with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to care for children. Childminders are self-employed and they provide full or part time care; this might be day care, before/after school, and/or holiday care and overnight care (a childminder must have permission from Ofsted for overnight care). Childminders are often prepared to take and collect your child from pre-school, nursery or school. They can offer a flexible childcare service in a home environment and if you have children of different ages, they may be able to care for them all together.

Home childcarer

A home childcarer is a person aged 18 or over who cares for the children in their own home. They may be a nanny, au pair or unregistered childminder. They do not have to register with Ofsted but may choose to register on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register. They may be residential, in which case they will live with you, or daily, where they will come in each day to work.

Nannies work with all age groups from babies through to school age children and often care for more than one child in any family. They are usually qualified to work with children and / or have a number of years work experience with young children.

Although some may have childcare experience, au pairs are not usually trained to work with children and therefore are not generally considered as being suited to look after pre-school children while you are at work. Generally they will not look after children for more than five hours a day.

Breakfast clubs, after school clubs & holiday play schemes

These offer childcare provision for school age children outside of normal school hours. Children can play, relax, have fun in groups and enjoy a wide range of activities which they may not have the opportunity to carry out at home. The exact provision will vary from one facility to the next.

Breakfast clubs open during term time before school and often provide breakfast. They open from about 8am for parents who need to start work before school hours.

After school clubs usually open between 3pm and 6pm during term time.

Holiday play schemes operate at varying times between 8 am and 6pm during school holidays.

Points to consider and questions to ask

It is important to plan ahead - often popular care providers have waiting lists.

Searching for the right childcare setting will take some time and thought. Try to give yourself plenty of time to visit and choose a childcare setting.

Try to take notes as you go along for reference later. You must be your own judge of what is best for you and your child, but the lists below may help guide you on points to look for and what to ask.

- visit the care provider with your child. Are you made welcome? Is the carer well presented, happy, calm and confident? Do the children look happy and well occupied?
- ask if they provide a variety of learning experiences e.g. quiet times, messy play, outdoor activities etc. When considering a nanny, ask if they will be willing to take your children swimming, to a local toddler group etc.
- in group care, all children need to receive some individual attention. Ask whether children will have their own key worker. Will they give you feedback on your child's day?
- are different cultures positively represented in the toys, books and wall displays?



- you should sign an agreement with the childcare provider, but be certain you are happy with its contents. Take time to talk about any issue that is important to you before starting the arrangement. Maybe you can use the provision for a trial period before making permanent arrangements? If you need further information on drawing up a contract with a childminder please contact the **National Childminding Association** on **01234 242818** for advice.
- discuss policies on such things as behaviour management, sleep, potty training and diet.
- ask about qualifications, experience and first aid knowledge. Ask to see the Ofsted registration or Criminal Records Bureau check, insurance certificates and first aid certificates.

- are the premises clean and well organised? Is there a safe outside play area? Is the equipment of good quality, safe and appropriate? What are the emergency procedures?
- do you have to pay if your child is absent through sickness or family holidays?
- when considering a childminder or nanny, find out what happens if they are ill.
- if visiting a childminder, ask if they use a car. Are car restraints or seat belts used?
- when considering a childminder or home childcarer, ask them to give you the name of another parent who will give a reference.
- when considering a home childcarer, ask if they will be willing to do extra hours if needed? If so, ask about whether you need to pay overtime and at what rate?
- are there reductions for regular or block bookings or siblings? Are there any additional charges for extra activities?
- do they provide snacks / meals and cater for any special dietary requirements?

If there are other things you want to know, do not be afraid to ask. Good childcare providers expect you to ask questions and will be happy to answer them.

What to do if you are not happy with your childcare

If you are not happy with the care that your child is receiving speak with your carer. If you are still not satisfied then you can phone the **Ofsted Complaints Line on 08456 404040**. Ofsted will investigate any complaints about providers and take enforcement action if providers do not meet the national standards set.

Please note that this does not apply to unregistered carers such as home childcarers. If they belong to an agency, the agency may have a complaints procedure.



Settling in your child

Once you have made your decision, settling in will be easier for both you and your child if it is done gradually. Ask the childcare provider about their settling in policy. Most will have a lot of experience in settling children. Some children can be upset at first - this is only natural - but with gentle reassurance this phase will pass.



Do you have a child with a disability or additional need?



Choosing childcare can be a daunting prospect for any parent but may be even more complex if your child has an additional need or disability. Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to ensuring that all childcare settings in Central Bedfordshire provide a service that includes all children. For more information please see our leaflet **“Services for Parents and Carers of Children with an Additional Need or Disabilities”**

Childcare and the law

Most childcare providers caring for children aged under eight must register with Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) and their registration certificate must be prominently displayed on the premises. You can view an Ofsted report at www.ofsted.gov.uk/childcare or ask the childcare provider. Ofsted registration requirements will specify the number of children that are allowed to be on the premises at any time and the ratio of staff to children.

Home childcarers do not need to be formally registered.

Generally though most nannies would register with an agency. If you are employing a nanny through an agency, you need to find out about what checks they will have carried out. If employing someone directly you may need to consider organising your own security checks. Some home childcarers may choose to join the voluntary part of the Ofsted Childcare Register.

The nursery and pre-school staff, nannies, childminders and any other adults in their home are subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check.



Fees and conditions

Nursery fees vary. However, a full time place is in the region of £140 - £180 a week. Most nurseries will expect payment in advance. You may also be asked to pay a registration fee for your child.

Pre-school/playgroup fees vary. However, a 2½ hour session is somewhere in the region of £7.50 - £8.00.

Childminders usually charge by the hour and set their own fees. The average rate is approximately between £3.50 - £4.00 per hour.

The cost of home childcarers will vary depending on such things as whether they are qualified and if they live in or out of your home. Remember that as their employer you will have to pay tax and national insurance contributions.



All pairs must be provided with meals, an allowance and their own room and at least two full days off per week.

Breakfast, after school and holiday schemes usually charge by the session.

Costs may vary depending on hours and activities provided. Holiday schemes can cost from £50 - £150 per week.

In all cases you will need to ask if any extras are included in the fees e.g. meals, nappies, outings. You will also need to enquire about holiday and sickness retainers.

You may be entitled to some help with your childcare costs, please refer to our leaflet '**Financial Support for Parents and Carers**'.



Other leaflets you may want to look at:

- Services for Parents and Carers of Children with an Additional Need or Disabilities
- Financial Support for Parents and Carers
- Working and Families: Your Rights

Contact

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Website:

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Or find us on Facebook and Twitter



Central Bedfordshire in contact



on the telephone...

0300 300 8000



by email...

customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



on the web...

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Alternatively you can write to:

Central Bedfordshire Council Priory House, Monks Walk,
Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

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Please recycle me!

When you have finished, please put me in your recycling bin or bag

**Central
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