



Choose childcare



SURREY

**Information for families about choosing,
finding and paying for childcare**



Whatever your reason for wanting childcare, there are a number of options to meet your needs. We've created this booklet to tell you more about choosing, finding and paying for childcare, to help you make the right choice for your family.

If you have a question or need help finding a suitable childcare provider get in touch with us.

- Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/fis
- Email surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk
- Call 0300 200 1004 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)
- @SurreyFIS on Twitter
- SurreyFIS on Facebook

**Surrey Family
Information
Service**

We're a free, impartial information service for families with children aged 0 to 25.

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Choosing childcare

Types of childcare

The tables on the next few pages tell you about the different types of childcare available. For more information, go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/choosingchildcare

Childminders, nannies and au pairs (childcare on domestic premises)

Questions	Childminders	Nannies	Au pairs
How old are the children they look after?	Any age. They can look after up to six children under the age of eight. Three can be 0-5 years old and only one under one year old (an exception can be made for twins).	Any age. How many children a registered nanny can care for depends on their insurance. In most cases this must not be more than six children aged 0-17 years old.	Any age. Au pair's duties include childcare and light housework. Au pairs are not trained childcarers. They are not permitted to have continuous sole charge of children under the age of two years old.
Where is the childcare?	In the childminder's home. Depending on their childminding registration, they can also spend up to 50% of their time working on approved non-domestic premises.	Registered nannies can provide care in a child's own home and care for children from no more than two families at any one time. They can live-in or come to your home on a daily basis.	An au pair is entitled to free board and lodging at your home. The au pair must have their own private room with a window (and not be required to share with children) and they should be given facilities to study.
What hours do they work?	They offer full and part time hours, before and after school care and school holiday cover. Most are flexible, they might also work evenings, weekends and overnight.	You need to agree this between you. Most nannies are flexible to your needs, they can fit around unusual working hours.	25-30 hours per week. These hours can be spread over five days with two days off per week.
Are they registered by Ofsted?	Yes, if they look after one or more children they are not related to, on domestic premises (such as their house) for reward for more than two hours a day, then they must register with Ofsted.	Not all nannies are registered. To be a registered nanny they will need to apply to be on the voluntary part of the Ofsted Childcare Register. A registered nanny is called a home-childcarer.	No. You can find more information about employing someone to work in your own home at www.gov.uk/au-pairs-employment-law

Childminders, nannies and au pairs (childcare on domestic premises)

Questions	Childminders	Nannies	Au pairs
Will they have a criminal record check?	Yes, all registered childminders need an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check and must also have public liability insurance. And all adults aged 16 years and over, that live, work or is to work (whether as an employee or on a voluntary basis), on the premises where, and at the time when, childminding is provided will also need an enhanced DBS check. Find out more at www.gov.uk/dbs	A nanny agency will usually do an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check for an unregistered nanny. Ofsted will do an enhanced DBS check if they are on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register. Find out more at www.gov.uk/dbs	Maybe, but it's up to the parent to ask whether their au pair has an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check. Au pairs are usually from overseas so they will need to be checked in their own country too. Find out more at www.gov.uk/dbs
Do they have training?	Yes, all registered childminders need to complete training which helps them understand and implement the Early Years Foundation Stage. They also need paediatric first aid training.	Registered nannies must have a qualification at a minimum of a level 2 in an area of work relevant to childcare, or training in the core skills as set out in the document 'common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce', a paediatric first aid certificate (no more than three years old) and public liability insurance. Unregistered nannies may have basic training but they don't have to have public liability insurance.	Au pairs are not usually trained to work with children.
Who are they employed by?	Self employed, they decide their working hours, some work with registered assistants or other registered childminders in one premises.	Parent or a nanny agency. If you're employing a nanny, always remember to ask to see proof of identity, references, a full employment history, qualification certificates and their enhanced DBS check.	The parent. You can find out more about hiring an au pair at www.bapaa.org.uk

Nurseries and pre-schools/playgroups (childcare on non-domestic premises)

Questions	Day nurseries	Pre-schools/playgroups	Maintained nurseries
How old are the children they look after?	0-5 year olds.	Normally 2-5 year olds.	Normally 3 and 4 year olds, some have 2 year olds.
Where is the childcare?	In an Ofsted registered building. The premises and equipment must meet the needs of the children. There must be access to an outdoor play area, or if that's not possible, outdoor activities should be planned and taken daily.	In an Ofsted registered building. A variety of venues ranging from community buildings to ones that are purpose built, normally with access to an outside area.	Normally within school grounds.
When are they open?	It varies, depending on registration. Often 8am-6pm, check with the individual nursery.	It varies, depending on registration. Some only run mornings or afternoons.	Check with the individual maintained nursery.
Are they registered by Ofsted?	Yes. The certificate should be on display and you will be able to find them at www.gov.uk/ofsted	Yes. The certificate should be on display and you will be able to find them at www.gov.uk/ofsted	Yes, through the school.
What is the ratio of staff to children?	Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarechoices for up to date figures on staff ratios.	Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarechoices for up to date figures on staff ratios.	Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarechoices for up to date figures on staff ratios.

Nurseries and pre-schools/playgroups (childcare on non-domestic premises)

Questions	Day nurseries	Pre-schools/playgroups	Maintained nurseries
Will staff have a criminal record check?	Yes, all staff should have an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check. Find out more at www.gov.uk/dbs	Yes, all staff should have an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check. Find out more at www.gov.uk/dbs	Yes, all staff should have an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check. Find out more at www.gov.uk/dbs
Do staff have training?	Yes, all supervisors and managers must have full relevant level 3 qualifications and half of all the other staff must have a minimum of a level 2 qualification. Someone within the setting must have been on a child protection course and take lead responsibility for safeguarding children. At least one person must have a current paediatric first aid certificate. All staff involved in preparing and handling food must have training in food hygiene.	Yes, all supervisors and managers must have full relevant level 3 qualifications and half of all the other staff must have a minimum of a level 2 qualification. Someone within the setting must have been on a child protection course and take lead responsibility for safeguarding children. At least one person must have a current paediatric first aid certificate. All staff involved in preparing and handling food must have training in food hygiene.	Yes, a qualified teacher and a level 3 qualified member of staff for a 26 place maintained nursery. Someone within the setting must have been on a child protection training course. At least one person must have a current paediatric first aid certificate. All staff involved in preparing and handling food must have training in food hygiene.
Who runs them?	Varies from large chains to family run or day care in children's centres.	Varies from being run by a committee to a private business.	Depends on the school's set up, normally the school is under contract of the local authority.

Breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday playschemes (childcare on non-domestic premises)

Questions	Breakfast clubs	After school clubs	Holiday playschemes
How old are the children they look after?	It depends on their registration. Normally 4-12 year olds, but some take from 2 year olds.	It depends on their registration. Normally 4-12 year olds, but some take from 2 year olds.	It depends on their registration. Normally 4-12 year olds, but some take from 2 year olds.
Where is the childcare?	Normally on school sites but it may be in a nearby hall.	Can be in any type of venue including a school hall, classroom, local church hall, Scout or Guide hut or leisure centre.	Can be in any type of venue including a school hall, classroom, local church hall, Scout or Guide hut or leisure centre.
When are they open?	It varies, some start at 7.30am, others 7.45am or later. They finish when school starts. If the times don't meet your needs, it's worth talking to the manager.	It varies. Usually from the end of the school day but finish times vary, around 5.30pm to 6pm. Clubs that aren't on the school site may pick up from the school. If the times don't meet your needs, it's worth talking to the manager.	During the school holidays. Some start at 8am others at 10am. They may run until 4pm or 6pm. Different schemes offer different sessions. If the times don't meet your needs, it's worth talking to the manager.
Are they registered by Ofsted?	There are different types of registration dependent on age range and type of club. Find out more at www.gov.uk/ofsted	There are different types of registration dependent on age range and type of club. Find out more at www.gov.uk/ofsted	There are different types of registration dependent on age range and type of playscheme. Find out more at www.gov.uk/ofsted
What is the ratio of staff to children?	Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarechoices for up to date figures on staff ratios.	Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarechoices for up to date figures on staff ratios.	Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarechoices for up to date figures on staff ratios.

Breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday playschemes (childcare on non-domestic premises)

Questions	Breakfast clubs	After school clubs	Holiday playschemes
Will staff have a criminal record check?	Yes, all staff should have an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check. Find out more at www.gov.uk/dbs	Yes, all staff should have an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check. Find out more at www.gov.uk/dbs	Yes, all staff should have an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check. Find out more at www.gov.uk/dbs
Do staff have training?	It is best to ask what qualifications the staff have. Depending on how the club is registered will depend on what qualifications they will hold but the more certificates the better. Staff must have certificates in first aid, food hygiene and safeguarding/child protection.	It is best to ask what qualifications the staff have. Depending on how the club is registered will depend on what qualifications they will hold but the more certificates the better. Staff must have certificates in first aid, food hygiene and safeguarding/child protection.	It is best to ask what qualifications the staff have. Depending on how the playscheme is registered will depend on what qualifications they will hold but the more certificates the better. Staff must have certificates in first aid, food hygiene and safeguarding/child protection.
Who runs them?	It depends on how they are set up, they could be employed directly by the school, a private company or a voluntary organisation.	It depends on how they are set up, they could be employed directly by the school, a private company or a voluntary organisation.	It depends on how they are set up, they could be employed directly by the school, a private company or a voluntary organisation.

Quality childcare

Ofsted

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They register and inspect those who provide childcare or early education for children aged from birth up to their eighteenth birthday.

When Ofsted inspects a childcare provider, they produce a report. These reports give you information about what the inspector found on the day and include grades on the quality of provision and things the provider can do to improve. You can read these reports at reports.ofsted.gov.uk

Who doesn't need to register with Ofsted?

Some types of provider do not need to register with Ofsted. You can find details of these in Annex A of Ofsted's Early Years and childcare registration handbook, which is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted (search for Become a registered early years or childcare provider in England). It includes the 'friends' rule on three hours of care and the baby sitting hours from 6pm-2am.



Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Most childcare providers have a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) on their staff who will be able to talk to you about what's right for you and your child.

Childcare providers have a legal duty to offer extra support to meet the needs of a child with a disability under the Equality Act 2010. They are not allowed to discriminate against a child because of their disability and cannot charge more money for them to attend. If your child needs specialist equipment, staff or extra assistance so they can go to a childcare provider, then the childcare provider can apply to Surrey County Council for funding.

Childcare providers must also follow the government's Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, which requires them to meet the needs of children with special educational needs.

Speak to potential providers to find out more about their special educational needs provision, equipment and accessibility. They may also have policies around medication, medical appointments and other things you might be interested to know.

Find out more at www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk

Questions to ask childcare providers

At the end of this booklet we have tear-out checklists you can take with you when you visit childcare providers.

They include questions to ask and what to look out for to help you choose the right childcare provider for your family. You can also download these checklists and find out more information at www.surreycc.gov.uk/choosingchildcare



Finding childcare

You can search for childcare in Surrey using our Childcare Finder at www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarefinder You can filter by postcode, type of childcare provider or who offers free early education.

If you can't find what you're looking for or would like to speak to someone, contact Surrey Family Information Service:

- Email surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk
- Call **0300 200 1004** (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)
- **@SurreyFIS** on Twitter
- **SurreyFIS** on Facebook

Paying for childcare

Childcare can cost a lot but there are a number of ways to make it more affordable. Make sure you have a childcare contract before your child starts so you know exactly what you're expected to pay for (see page 15).

Free Early Education for Two year olds (FEET)

FEET is the offer of 15 hours of free childcare a week for families that meet the criteria. This is usually offered as 15 hours each week for 38 weeks a year. But some childcare providers may be able to stretch the hours throughout the year (rather than just during term time), so for example you could receive 10.96 hours per week for 52 weeks a year.

You can find the criteria and information about how and when to apply on our website at www.surreycc.gov.uk/feet or give us a call on **0300 200 1004**.



Free Early Education for 3 and 4 year olds

Every three and four year old child in England can get up to 15 hours of free early education a week. This is usually offered as 15 hours each week for 38 weeks a year. But some childcare providers may be able to stretch the hours throughout the year (rather than just during term time), so for example you could receive 10.96 hours per week for 52 weeks a year.

You can find out more at www.surreycc.gov.uk/fee or give us a call on **0300 200 1004**.

30 hours funded childcare for working parents

In addition to Free Early Education for 3 and 4 year olds, working families who meet the eligibility criteria can also claim an additional 15 hours of funded childcare a week. Find the criteria and more information about the funding at www.surreycc.gov.uk/30hourschildcare

Where can I take free early education?

You can find details of childcare providers who offer the free hours at www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarefinder

These include:

- childminders
- day nurseries
- maintained nursery schools and classes
- nursery units of independent schools
- pre-schools/playgroups.

Tax-Free Childcare

The Tax-Free Childcare scheme enables eligible working families to save 20% of their childcare costs. For every £8 you or someone else pays in to your childcare account the government will add another £2 up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year (or £4,000 for children with a disability). The scheme is available to parents with children under 12 (or under 17 for children with a disability).

You can find out more about the scheme and how to apply at www.surreycc.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare

Childcare element of Working Tax Credit and Universal Credit

These are aimed at working parents, who receive Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit, to help cover their childcare costs. The scheme is available for parents with children under 16 (or under 17 for children with a disability).

You can check your eligibility and find out how much you could save by using the online childcare calculator at www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator

More ways of paying for childcare

You can visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/payingforchildcare for details of other schemes that can help with your childcare costs.



Childcare contracts

Childcare with a childcare provider

Once you have chosen your childcare provider, they should ask you to sign a contract or agreement before your child starts with them. This is a safeguard for you and the childcare provider and it's very important that everyone clearly understands what is being agreed, including what you may be charged for.

For example a childcare contract may cover:

- the amount you pay and what it covers
- what you pay if the child or carer is sick
- the notice required before your child can leave and the charges for leaving without enough notice.

Signed childcare contracts and agreements are **legally binding**. Breaking a contract will normally mean there is a financial penalty.

Childcare with your family

Many parents use family members, particularly grandparents, for all or part of their childcare. As with formal childcare, talking about hours, food, equipment, holidays and who's expected to pay for things, at the beginning can help avoid problems and family tensions at a later date.

It's important that both you and the family member caring for your child are clear and happy about what each other's responsibilities are.



Early learning and development

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a document that sets out what all Ofsted registered childcare providers must do for children from birth to five years old. It promotes teaching and learning through play to make sure that all children have the skills to get them ready to progress through school and future life.

You can find out more about the EYFS at www.surreycc.gov.uk/earlylearning Here you'll also find free tips and activity ideas to do with your child at home to support their learning.

If English is not your child's first language, your childcare provider should give them the opportunity to play and learn in their own language as well as support them to develop and learn English.

Sure Start Children's Centres

Children's centres offer support and services to families from pregnancy right through until when their child starts school. They offer services for everyone, but especially for families at times when life is a bit of a struggle. Many of their services are free, but you may need to pay for some, such as childcare.

Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/childrenscentres for more information and to find your local children's centre.



Childminder checklist

You can use this tear-out checklist when you visit a childminder. If you're visiting more than one, we suggest that you stick to the same questions so you can compare their answers.

About the childminder

- How do they interact with the children?
- What training and experience do they have?
- Do they have experience of caring for children with a special educational need or disability?
- Can you have the phone numbers of other parents for references?
- Why do they like their job? How long do they intend to do it?
- How old are their own children and the other children that they look after? (Childminders can look after six children under eight years old, but no more than three under five years old, including their own).
- Do they have back up arrangements with another childminder to cover them if they are ill or need to take leave?
- Have they, their assistants and others in the house including family, got up to date enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks?

Registration and paperwork

- Can you see their Ofsted registration certificate?
- What records do they keep and how do they record accidents?
- Can you see a current public liability insurance certificate?
- Do they work with an assistant?

Money

- How much are the fees, what do they include and when and how should you pay?
- Do you have to pay for settling in time, when your child can get to know them before they start?
- Do you have to pay a deposit or retainer fee to secure the place?
- What charges are made for bank holidays, holidays and sickness?
- Who will need to supply things like nappies, baby food and milk?
- Do they offer Free Early Education for 2, 3 and 4 year olds? If you want extra hours how much will it cost?
- Do they accept payments from the Tax-Free Childcare scheme?

Caring for your child

- Do children take part in daily indoor and outdoor activities?
- Do they go to local childminding groups?
- If they will be using a car, do they have childminding insurance in place?
- Do they have car seats suitable for your child's height and weight?
- Do the children they are looking after seem to be happy and engaged in play?
- Will your child be offered varied and nutritious food? Can they provide for special diets?
- How do they discipline the children and how do they manage children's behaviour?
- How do they help the children when they are toilet training?
- What will your child need to bring every day?
- Do they undertake risk assessments on their premises and on outings?
- What would a typical day involve and how do the other children's routines fit in with your child's?
- Will they agree to a trial run (say a couple of mornings) to see how your child gets on?

The home

- Can they show you around their home and garden and tell you about hygiene and safety?
- How often do their family and friends visit?
- What is their pet policy around children?
- Does the childminder or another family member smoke?
- Ask to see where your child will sleep if they're tired and make sure it's quiet.

Nurseries and pre-schools/playgroups checklist

You can use this tear-out checklist when you visit a nursery or pre-school/playgroup. If you're visiting more than one, we suggest that you stick to the same questions so you can compare their answers.

First impressions count

- Did you get a warm welcome when you arrived?
- Do the children there seem to be happy and content?
- Are the staff happy to show you around?
- Is there plenty of space outside for the children to play?
- Do the staff interact with your child?
- Can you meet other staff members?

Vacancies and costs

- Are there any vacancies - if there is a waiting list, how long is it?
- Do you have to pay a deposit? If so, what's it for? Can you claim it back?
- How much do they charge per hour/day? Do you have to pay for holidays, meals, nappies and other activities?
- Do they offer Free Early Education for 2, 3 and 4 year olds? If you want extra hours how much will it cost?
- Do they accept payments from the Tax-Free Childcare scheme?
- Do they offer a settling in period, to see how your child gets on? If so, how long is it?

Staffing and premises

- What's the ratio of staff to children? How many children do they care for?
- Do they have a key (named) person system?
- What's the staff turnover like?
- How well qualified and experienced are the staff?
- Are all the enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks up to date?
- Can you see a copy of the registration certificates and inspection reports?

Activities and support

- What daily routines do they have and how can they build your child's routines and needs into their day?
- Where can your child have a sleep or rest?
- What happens if your child is unhappy? How would they be looked after?
- What's their policy on discipline, how do they manage children's behaviour?
- How will they cater for your child's dietary needs? What systems do they have in place if a child has a severe food allergy?
- How will your child's cultural background be reflected and respected? Are there staff from different backgrounds? Do they have books and activities that reflect all cultures? What about food, music and religious festivals?
- Will there be opportunities for you to get involved?
- How will they tell you about your child's progress? Will they give your child a record book or learning journey?
- Can they tell you about how they plan activities to meet individual children's interests and developmental needs?

Emergencies

- What happens if your child is unwell when they are there?
- What happens if you are late picking your child up at the end of the day?
- How will they get hold of you in an emergency?

Breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday playschemes checklist

You can use this tear-out checklist when you visit a breakfast club, after school club or holiday playscheme. If you're visiting more than one, we suggest that you stick to the same questions so you can compare their answers.

First impressions count

- Did you get a warm welcome when you arrived?
- Do the children there seem to be happy and content?
- Are the staff happy to show you around?
- Is there plenty of space outside for the children to play?
- Do the staff interact with your child?
- Can you meet other staff members?

Vacancies and costs

- Are there any vacancies - if there is a waiting list, how long is it?
- Do they open in the holidays, bank holidays or on inset days?
- Do you have to pay a deposit or retainer fee to secure a place?
- Do you have to pay for settling in time, when your child can get to know them before they start?
- How much are the fees, what do they include and when and how should you pay?
- Do they offer a discount if you pay for a whole week? Do they offer a sibling discount?
- Do you have to pay for holidays, meals, snacks and other activities?
- Do they accept payments from the Tax-Free Childcare scheme?

Staffing and premises

- How many children do they care for and what's the ratio of staff to children?
- Do they have a key (named) person system?
- What's the staff turnover like?
- How well qualified and experienced are the staff? Are staff qualified in playwork?
- Are all their enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks up to date?

Registration and paperwork

- Can you see a copy of their registration certificates and inspection reports?
- What records do they keep and how do they record accidents?

Activities and support

- Do children take part in daily indoor and outdoor activities? Is there direct access to the outside space?
- Are the resources easy for children to get too?
- What happens if your child is unhappy? How would they be looked after?
- How do they discipline the children and manage children's behaviour?
- How will your child's cultural background be reflected and respected? Are there staff from different backgrounds? Do they have books and activities that reflect all cultures? What about food, music and religious festivals?
- What will your child need to bring everyday?
- Do they undertake risk assessments on their premises and on outings?

Emergencies

- What happens if your child is unwell when they are there?
- What happens if you are late picking your child up at the end of the day?
- How will they get hold of you in an emergency?

