

Different types of Childcare

Childminders are professional daycarers who look after children in their own homes. They offer a flexible service, caring for children aged from birth to sixteen years. The service offered is unique to each family's needs and many childminders provide evening, weekend and school holiday cover.

Childminding Networks are groups of childminders who have joined together to provide a high quality care and education service that is regularly monitored and assessed by a designated co-ordinator. Accredited childminders belonging to the network can provide funded early years education places, offering parents greater choice.

Day Nurseries can be run by private individuals, community groups, Montessori organisations, commercial businesses or by employers. They can care for children aged from 3 months to five years and usually offer day care from 8 am to 6 pm for most of the year.

LEA Nursery Schools offer full and part-time early years education places between the hours of 9 am and 3.30 pm. A session lasts for two-and-a-half hours and can be in the morning or afternoon. Nursery schools may also offer childcare.

Pre-schools and playgroups offer care to children in their local community, either as a morning or afternoon session or as extended sessions including lunch. They are often run by voluntary management committees. They care for children aged from three to five years [some groups may accept younger children] and are usually open during term time.

Private Nursery Schools are owned privately and can offer sessional or full day care to children aged two to five. Some schools can offer a particular educational approach, for example Steiner or Montessori. They may operate only during term-time or open all year.

Independent Schools are owned privately and care for children aged from three to sixteen. The schools are registered with the Department for Education and skills, but make their own arrangements concerning staff numbers qualifications and curriculum.

If the school participates in the Early Years Education Funding Scheme, it will offer the Foundation Stage and will be inspected by Ofsted. Opening times are decided by the school.

Out of School Clubs provide safe and stimulating play opportunities for school age children at times when schools are not open. They can operate before school in the mornings, from the end of the school day and at the end of the working day, throughout the school holidays, or a combination of all three. They cater for children aged four to eleven attending primary school.

Clubs for young people [aged eleven to fourteen years] are open before and after school and during school holidays, to provide opportunities to socialise with friends, work on projects, homework or IT in a safe environment.

Activity Clubs offer a range of activities for school-aged children. They are usually not registered as childcare but often run at the end of the school day.