



Activities for  
children and  
young people



Top tips for  
choosing  
childcare

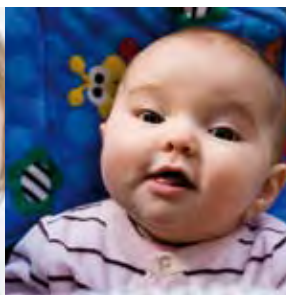
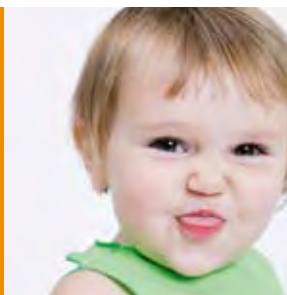
**Calderdale**  
**families'** information service 

# CHILDCARE CHOICES

A guide to help you make the  
right childcare choice for  
**YOUR CHILDREN!**

**Calderdale**  
Council 

What if my  
child has  
special  
needs?



**EVERYONE DIFFERENT  
EVERYONE MATTERS**





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# Welcome



**to Childcare Choices, written by the Calderdale Families' Information Service. We know it can be difficult to make decisions about childcare when so much choice is available. This booklet explains some of the information you need when choosing childcare and also offers advice on other related issues.**

The Calderdale Families' Information Service has a wide range of information on services for families in the local area. Our friendly and experienced advisors can answer your questions via our helpline, face to face at drop in sessions, or by email, fax or text. We also have a variety of useful information available on the Council website at [www.calderdale.gov.uk](http://www.calderdale.gov.uk).

## **Contact us to find out more about:**

- childcare in your area(s)
- help with paying for the cost of childcare
- free early education places for three and four year olds
- support services for families, children and young people
- activities for children and young people
- working in childcare or becoming a childminder

If we don't know the answer, we'll find someone who does!

Telephone: 01422 253053

Email: [fis@calderdale.gov.uk](mailto:fis@calderdale.gov.uk)

Text: 07624 803657

Drop in: Northgate House, Halifax, HX1 1UN, any Children's Centre in Calderdale or at other local venues - call us to check.

# What type of childcare is best suited to your child's needs?

Age of child	Reason for childcare	Options
0-2 years	Working full time or part time Studying Break for parent	Day Nursery Children's Centre Childminder Home-based childcare
	Shift working Evening or weekend working	Childminder Home-based childcare
Age of child	Reason for childcare	Options
2-5 years	Working/studying full time	Day Nursery Children's Centre Childminder Home-based childcare Pre-school (if hours are sufficient to meet needs)
	Shift working Evening or weekend working	Childminder Home-based childcare
	Working/studying part time Break for parent Stimulation for child	All above options



Age of child	Reason for childcare	Options
3-5 years	Early education (All children are entitled to free early education sessions, starting the term after the third birthday)	Day Nursery Children's Centre Pre-School Childminder (if accredited to provide early education) Nursery Class/ School Nursery Units at Independent School
Age of child	Reason for childcare	Options
5 and over	Before and after school care Holiday care	Breakfast club After school club Childminder Home-based childcare Holiday playscheme Extended school activities

# Types of childcare

**This is a brief guide to the different types of childcare in Calderdale. The Families' Information Service is available to help you with any questions, so please contact us for more information and advice.**

## Day Nurseries

A day nursery provides care and early learning for children aged between six weeks and five years (some nurseries only take children aged from two upwards). Many also provide out of school care for five to eleven year olds. Your child will learn and play by following the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines. Nurseries can be run by the Council, by the community, be based in a workplace, or privately run. Opening times vary but they tend to be between 8.00am and 6.00pm, although some will open earlier and stay open later. Most close for a week at Christmas and on Bank Holidays. You can send your child full or part time. Children are usually grouped together by age and cared for according to staff/child ratios. Most offer funded early education sessions for 3 and 4 year olds. Fees vary and some nurseries include items such as nappies and infant milk; others do not. Most require one month's fees in advance.

Childminders  
can offer  
flexible  
hours.



Your child will learn  
and play  
by following  
the Early Years  
Foundation Stage  
guidelines.

## Childminders

Childminders are self employed and look after children in the childminder's home. Your child will learn and play by following the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines. Childminders usually offer a wide range of activities and outings and may also attend local groups with your child. Some childminders have received extra training to become part of a quality assured childminding network. The FIS has details of Calderdale network childminders, some of whom can also provide funded early education sessions for 3 and 4 year old children. Childminders can offer flexible hours and some offer evening, overnight, and weekend care too. They can also collect from and drop off at local schools. Costs vary, as do the services included in the basic charge. Most require one month's fees in advance. Some childminders work together, as a group, in one place and this is known as 'childcare on domestic premises'.

## Crèches

Crèches are for occasional use only and are usually based at places like sports centres, shopping centres and conferences, where a temporary crèche may be available. They are not required to be registered by Ofsted and usually offer care for children aged 8 and under. Opening hours vary, as do costs. Most crèches offer sessions of about two hours in length.

# Types of childcare

## Children's Centres

Children's Centres provide a wide range of easily accessible and flexibly tailored services for families and children. The services include early years provision, health services for children, parenting support and links with Job Centre Plus and the Families' Information Service. They provide services for a minimum of 48 weeks a year and usually open for around 10 hours a day. Most Children's Centres are registered by Ofsted and offer a variety of childcare sessions on a full or part time basis. Your child will learn and play by following the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines. Most offer funded early education sessions for 3 and 4 year old children. For more information on Calderdale's local Children's Centres, call the Families' Information Service on 01422 253053 or look on [www.calderdale.gov.uk/education/childcare/childrenscentres](http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/education/childcare/childrenscentres).



Children's Centres provide a wide range of easily accessible and flexibly tailored services.



Pre-schools can offer a cheaper option for part-time childcare

## Pre-Schools

Pre-schools, or playgroups, are often located in community venues such as church halls and community centres. They are usually run by voluntary groups and encourage parental involvement. Your child will learn and play by following the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines. They take children aged between two and five years, although some only offer care to children aged two and a half and above. They tend to run morning or afternoon sessions but some do offer care for longer periods. They tend to run during school term time only. The cost can be relatively low and most offer funded early education sessions for 3 and 4 year old children

## Nursery schools and classes

Nursery schools and classes are usually attached to an infant or primary school and offer free early education sessions. They are sometimes called maintained nurseries. Attendance at one of these classes does not guarantee a place at the school when your child is ready to join the Reception Year. It is best to call the school to find out about their admission policy. They are inspected by Ofsted as part of the school's inspection process. Your child usually starts in the September after their third birthday. There is no cost for these sessions but most schools only offer morning or afternoon sessions. Your child will usually be required to wear a school uniform.

# Types of childcare

## Holiday Playschemes

These provide care for school-aged children during school holidays. They are usually based in or near schools or community centres. Some are run by private businesses; some are run by voluntary groups. The emphasis is on having fun with other children of a similar age and there is usually a good choice of activities. Some will also offer outings to local parks, museums and sports venues etc. They usually offer care during the Summer holiday period and some also open for half term holidays, Easter and Christmas. There can be a wide variation in costs and the more popular clubs can get fully booked very quickly.

Calderdale Council also runs some unregistered Summer Playschemes for children aged five to fourteen years. These are free and the locations vary each Summer. To check if there is a scheme running in your area, call the Families' Information Service on 01422 253053.

The Council also organises various activities in sports centres, libraries and museums each Summer. Full details of what's available can be found in the 'Do Something ...' guide published each year. These are available from the Families' Information Service, your child's school, local libraries and other community venues.



Most out of school clubs open term time only but some also run holiday playschemes

## Nursery Units of Independent Schools

These are independently run by the private sector and children usually join the Reception Class in the same school. Most offer funded early education sessions for 3 and 4 year olds. They offer morning, afternoon or all day sessions and some also operate holiday clubs, allowing your child to attend all year round. They are fee paying and you should check what services are included in the charge. Your child will usually be required to wear a school uniform.

## Out of School Clubs

These are based in or near schools and are run by private or voluntary groups. Some schools run their own on the school's premises. Your child will be able to play, learn and have fun before, and after school. Some clubs also offer breakfast and a light tea to children. They usually take children aged between four and eleven years old, although some do collect from secondary schools. Most open term time only but some also run holiday playschemes.

# Types of childcare

## Extended Schools Activities

Many Calderdale schools offer activities beyond the school day as part of the 'Extended Schools' agenda. Typically, these might include study support, sport and music clubs and can be combined with registered childcare in primary schools. All schools will be offering this by 2010 and it may be a solution to part, or all, of your childcare needs. Schools may make a small charge for these activities but you may be able to claim Working Tax Credit to help pay for this.

## Childcare based in your home

### Nannies

Nannies and other home-based childcarers are employed by you to provide care for your child, usually in your own home. They can offer flexible, or unusual, working hours and some may even live in. With prior agreement, some may agree to do additional tasks around the home (e.g. cooking). Some nannies and home-based childcarers may have a recognised childcare qualification or training, but this isn't compulsory. If your nanny, or home childcarer, is registered on the voluntary Ofsted Childcare Register, you may be entitled to claim Working Tax Credit to help pay for the costs.

Some nannies and home-based childcare workers may have a recognised childcare qualification



Wages vary depending on hours, their experience, where you live and whether they live in. You will also have to pay their tax and National Insurance contributions. Other costs include holiday and sick pay and including them on your car insurance if you want them to drive the family car. You should provide your nanny with a written contract of employment. When choosing a nanny you could approach a reputable nanny agency and should always seek references. Always ask to see their current first aid certificate. It is possible to nanny-share with another family.

## Au Pairs

Au pairs are usually single people from overseas. They come to the UK to study English and live in with a family, providing childcare and helping with light household duties. They are usually provided with a small weekly allowance, meals and their own room. Au pairs are not registered or usually trained to work with children but can be a good option when it comes to providing after school care. You can find an au pair through nanny agencies or your local college. They tend to be a short term childcare option (usually around six months to one year).

# Types of childcare

## Babysitters

Babysitters come to your home to look after your child. There are no specific legal guidelines covering babysitters although the NSPCC recommends that they should be aged 16 years and over. They are not Ofsted registered but can offer flexible hours. Costs vary and should be negotiated between yourself and the babysitter. You may also want to consider whether your babysitter is allowed to have a friend to visit whilst caring for your child. It is usual to allow them access to food and tea/coffee whilst you are out, and to ensure they have a safe means of getting home afterwards. If you have a local college that runs childcare courses, it could be worth enquiring if any students would be interested in a babysitting job. There are also several national babysitting agencies available.

## Extra Support

If you are unsure where to start looking for childcare, or need additional help, ask for our free 'Extra Support' service available from the Families' Information Service on **01422 253053**. We can help by finding childcare to cater for a child with additional needs, assist parents whose first language is not English, or even call



If you are unsure where to start looking for childcare or need additional help, ask for our free 'Extra Support' service available from the Families' Information Service on 01422 253053



childcare providers on your behalf. If are not able to find suitable childcare, we also need to hear from you so we can record any demand in an area and work with our partners to try and fill the gap.

**TIP:** To be sure of good quality care, always check a registered provider's latest Ofsted inspection and ask for our 'Choosing Childcare' leaflet to help you pick the right one for your child.



# Tips for choosing childcare

Finding the right type of care for your child is crucial and there can be a lot to consider before making the final decision. Give yourself plenty of time to research all your options and seek further advice where necessary. Try not to leave it to the last minute, as you may find the most popular childcare providers are already fully booked and have long waiting lists. Start by requesting a list of registered childcare providers from the Families' Information Service on 01422 253053. Call the providers on the list and decide which you would like to visit. Think what your basic requirements are, and have a list of questions ready for your visits. Detailed below are some points you might want to include.

- Think about your child's age and personality. Would they prefer a small, homely childcare setting or somewhere larger with more children? Advice from other parents can be useful, but don't assume just because your friend's child has settled with a particular provider, your child will do so too.
- Don't rule out combining two different childcare providers to meet your needs. For example, you might want to use a nursery in the morning and find a childminder who can collect your child and provide care in the afternoon.
- Do ask for and check references. Most childcare providers will be happy for you to talk to other parents, so take advantage of this. Go back for a second, or even a third visit when you have narrowed your choices. This will give you peace of mind that



you have chosen the right care for your child. Some childcare providers offer a trial run before you commit to a formal agreement, to see how things might work out.

- Ask for a formal contract and check it carefully before signing. If you are not sure you have understood it completely, ask the provider to explain. Pay particular attention to the fee arrangements, especially for days when you wish to take holiday or when your child is sick and unable to attend. Check which days the childcare will be closed and ensure you have alternative cover available for these.

## Opening hours and availability

Think about how flexible you need the childcare to be. If you often face traffic problems or work shifts, can you get there on time? (There are usually extra charges if you regularly fail to collect your child on time). Does the provider offer care all year round if you need this? If not, can you find alternative care to fill the gap? Do you have any alternative if your childcare is unavailable for any reason?

# Tips for choosing childcare

## Location and transport links

The location is key and should be carefully considered. For example, if you drive to work, do you want the care near your home or near your place of work? There are advantages to both so think carefully about this. Is there somewhere to park making it easy to drop off and pick up your child? If you don't drive you will need to choose a provider which has good transport links.

## Costs

Remember that cost is not necessarily an indication of quality. You may need to pay a deposit to secure a place for child. Find out in advance what you will need to pay and budget for this. Establish what is included in the basic charge – for example, are nappies and meals included or do you have to pay more for these? Remember to claim Working Tax Credit, if you are entitled to do so. Call HM Revenue and Customs on 0845 300 3900 or go online at [www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits) for more details of how to claim.



## Quality/Ofsted

Ofsted are the legal body responsible for regulating and inspecting services for children, young adults and learners. This includes childcare settings, schools and colleges. When they inspect childcare for children (aged from birth to 17 years) they are checking to make sure your children are cared for by suitable people, on safe premises.

From September 2008, there are two different registers of people caring for children:

The **EARLY YEARS REGISTER** is for those childcare providers caring for children aged from birth until they reach the end of the Reception Year in school.

The **OFSTED CHILDCARE REGISTER** is in two parts:

- The compulsory part is for children from the start of school age to the age of 7.
- The voluntary part is for children aged 8 and over and for childcare for children of any age that is not required to be registered. (For example, a crèche operating for less than two hours per day).

Any childcare provider who is registered by Ofsted receives a registration number and this is the number you need to claim tax credits for using childcare.

# Tips for choosing childcare

Look at the latest Ofsted report for each provider and discuss any areas of concern with the manager. Ask lots of questions and make notes of the responses. Visit with, and without, your child. Ask childminders if they are approved members of a local childminding network. Check the staff-to-child ratio. Call the Families' Information Service for more details of the legal staff-to-child ratios or check online at [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs). Look under 'requirements' section - details can be found in the 'suitable people' link. Ask what happens in an emergency and what safety procedures the provider has in place. Some providers choose to undertake a recognised and approved quality assurance scheme. You could ask the manager or the childminder if they hold any quality awards.

## Staff/Training/Qualifications/ Keyworker

Bear in mind, at least half the staff in a childcare setting need to be qualified. All childcarers should have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. When asking a manager about staff turnover, remember the national average for staff leaving childcare is 18% each year. Try and speak to as many staff as you can and observe how the staff interact with children. Ask about the qualification levels of staff, ask about the setting's keyworker procedure to find out which member of staff will have specific responsibility for letting you know how your child is getting on.

A warm welcome for you and your child is a good place to start!



## Environment

A warm welcome for you and your child is a good place to start! Look for the facilities that you are most interested in for your child. All children should have access to outdoor play opportunities and these need not be on the same site as the main childcare provision. For example, many childcare providers offer visits to local parks.

Look at the environment – is it clean and safe?

Are there separate areas for different activities such as resting and noisy play?

Are you happy with the variety and quality of food available?

Can the provider cater for your child's special dietary needs if appropriate?

Check for pets if your child has any allergies.

Do you and your family feel welcomed?

Can your child choose what they would like to do each day?



# Tips for choosing childcare

## Settling them in

Leaving your child with their new carer is a big step for everyone. Visit the new provider a couple of times beforehand, with your child, and ask for a trial settling-in period. On the first occasion, leave your child for 30 minutes whilst you stay in the background; later try 30 minutes whilst you walk round the block and increase the time you leave your child. Consider starting your care mid-week so your child doesn't have to start with a full week. Some providers expect a longer visit for the first couple of times and request that the parent stays and plays with their child. Let your carer take charge so your child gets used to them. Prepare toddlers and older children for what to expect. Check whether the childcare provider will expect your child to be able to do certain things, for example tying their own shoelaces or going to the toilet on their own.

Your baby or child might want to take a special comforting toy or blanket from home. (Don't forget to take it home again after the session!)

Don't look sad when you leave your child. Keep your mood upbeat and tell your child what time you will be back to pick them up. Ask your childminder, or your child's keyworker, about the sort of day your child has had, what activities they have done and how they are settling in. It may take some time for your child to settle in, so be patient.



Parents can help with their child's learning by talking to your carer



## Learning as they grow

The Government has developed a new framework for early years and education called the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will ensure the learning and development experiences children receive are high quality and consistent in all settings. All settings should meet children's individual needs, from birth to the end of the academic year in which they turn five. Parents can help support their child by talking to the carer about what their child likes to do. It is important to build a positive relationship between the child, the family and the setting.



# Financial help for parents

**The cost of childcare can seem expensive to many parents but there is help available that you may be entitled to. Some of the main ways to help pay for the costs of childcare are explained below.**

## Child Tax Credit

This is paid into the bank account of the main carer - the person who is mainly responsible for looking after the children. Families on incomes of up to £58,000 a year (or £66,000 a year if there is at least one child who is less than a year old) can benefit from the new Child Tax Credit whether they are working or not. There is also extra help if you have a child with a disability. Child Tax Credit is paid by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

## Working Tax Credit

Working Tax Credit is an in-work tax credit for families. If you work at least 16 hours a week the Working Tax Credit can 'top up' your earnings. There is extra help for disabled people and those working more than 30 hours a week. Working Tax Credit is paid by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).



If you work and pay for childcare you may be able to get tax credits to help with the costs.

## Childcare Element of Working Tax Credit

If you work and pay for childcare you may be able to get tax credits to help with the costs. You have to work at least 16 hours a week to qualify. You may still qualify if you worked 16 hours or more before going on maternity, paternity, adoption or sick leave. You can get up to 80% of what you pay in childcare fees, to a maximum of:

- £175 per week for one child
- £300 per week for two or more children

The amount you get depends on your income. The lower your income, the more tax credits you can get. You must use registered childcare to qualify for the Childcare element of Working Tax Credit. It is paid by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

For more information on Tax Credits, call HMRC on 0845 300 3900 or check online at [www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits).

# Financial help for parents

## New Deal

If you are registered on a JobCentre Plus New Deal programme you may be entitled to help with childcare costs to support you back into work. For more information call 0845 6060 234 and ask to speak to a local advisor.

## Care to Learn

If you are a young parent aged under 20, Care to Learn can help pay for your childcare and travel costs while you're learning. Care to Learn pays up to £160 per child per week towards your childcare and travel costs. For more information call the Learner Support Service (Care to Learn) on 0800 121 8989.

## Learner Support Funds

If you are a student, you may be eligible for help with your childcare costs through your college. You have to use Ofsted registered childcare and be aged 16 or over. Colleges usually prioritise the limited funding they have, so check the application criteria carefully.



The amount you get depends on other income you may have.



## Students in Higher Education

The amount you get depends on other income you may have. The Childcare part of the grant is paid according to the estimate of costs given by the student at the start of the academic year; three times a year the student provides evidence of actual costs for the last term and holiday period and this is used to re-assess the payment. Students aged 18 or over in Higher Education should contact the Council's Student Support Team on 01422 392524 for more information on help with the costs of childcare.

## Employer supported childcare

Childcare vouchers are one of the ways in which employers can support employees with the costs of childcare. Vouchers, which are usually administered by a voucher provider, can help make childcare more affordable and all registered childcare providers can take the vouchers as payment. Childcare vouchers can affect the amount of tax credits you are entitled to.

As an employee, National Insurance contributions and tax do not apply to the first £55.00 a week or £243.00 a month of childcare costs. Each employed parent can claim these exemptions.

# Financial help for parents

## Early Education Funding

From the term following your child's third birthday, they are eligible to receive up to six terms of free early education places. Your child is entitled to claim up to 5 sessions, of 2.5 hours each per week, during term time. By September 2010, this is due to increase to 15 hours per week. The length of each term may vary according to school holidays. The sessions are available in day nurseries, pre-schools, Children's Centres, with some childminders as well as at Nursery Units of Independent Schools, providing they are accredited by the Local Authority for early education. It is possible to combine these free sessions with paid-for childcare to meet your working or family commitments. For more information about these early education places, call the Families' Information Service on 01422 253053.

# Activities for children and young people



The Council's Play Service and Young People's Service offer a variety of positive activities for children and young people. Details are available in the summer 'Do Something' booklet and the 'Places to go, things to do' brochure, available from the Families' Information Service. Advice on local play opportunities can be obtained from The Play Service on 01422 380995.

The Families' Information Service publishes the Directory of Services, which contains details of local clubs and groups. You can find it online at [www.calderdale.gov.uk/advice/parents/familiesdirectory](http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/advice/parents/familiesdirectory) or call the FIS who will search it for you.

The Council website ([www.calderdale.gov.uk](http://www.calderdale.gov.uk)) also publishes details of local activities suitable for families.

# What if my child has special needs?



**All childcare providers have to abide by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled children, and the SEN Code of Practice to meet the needs of children with disabilities. All childcare providers have to ensure they do not treat a child 'less favourably' for reasons related to the child's disability or special needs.**

When looking for childcare you will find some providers have more experience and training than others to meet your child's needs. Your first impression can be a useful indication of how inclusive the provider is. Start by asking the staff about their approach to inclusion of disabled children, and children with special educational needs, and what experience they have. Ask about their training and how recent it is. Ask them how they will plan for your child and how they might adapt activities. Once you have chosen a provider, it is important that you continue to communicate with them and you are listened to. Check the involvement of other professionals who may already be working with your child. Ensure that the setting you choose enables your child to fully participate to the best of their ability.

A parent of a disabled child can also get additional financial help from:

- Direct Payments, which are cash payments from the Council.
- Child Tax Credit, which can include additional amounts for disabled children (Disabled Child's Premium).

Your first impression can be a useful indication of how inclusive the provider is.



- Working Tax Credit, for childcare provided in the child's own home, providing the childcare is Ofsted registered.

The Families' Information Services has details of which childcare providers can offer support for children with particular special needs or whether a provider has wheelchair access etc.

Other useful contacts are listed below:

- The Calderdale Parent and Carer's Council works with families of children and young people who have special educational/ additional needs, are disabled, have emotional and behavioural difficulties, or are experiencing difficulties fitting with school or community life for any reason. Contact them on 01422 343090.
- The Parent Partnership Service provides support and advice for parents and carers of children with special educational needs. Contact them on 01422 392695.

If you require further copies of this booklet, please contact the Families' Information Service on 01422 253053 or email us at [fis@calderdale.gov.uk](mailto:fis@calderdale.gov.uk).

All information in this booklet is correct at the time of going to press (November 2008). For up to date information, call the Families' Information Service.





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Families' Information Service  
Children and Young People's Services  
Northgate House  
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Tel.: 01422 253053  
Email: [fis@calderdale.gov.uk](mailto:fis@calderdale.gov.uk)  
Text: 07624 803657

If you would like this information in another format (eg. Braille, large print audio type or computer file), or another language, please contact: Tel: 01422 252053

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دوسری زبان  
یا شکل میں چاہیے تو رابطہ کریں:

Tel: 01422 252053

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য অন্য কোন মাধ্যম অথবা ভাষায় চান  
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