

Childcare while you study

If you have young children and want to find time to study, satisfactory childcare arrangements will be important.

College childcare facilities

Most colleges and universities have childcare provision for which they charge. Places are allocated on a first-come-first-served basis.

Government provision for children of three years and older

The government funds all local authorities to ensure part-time early education is available for all pre-school children above the age of three. This means that all three- and four-year-olds are entitled to up to two years' free early education before reaching the statutory school age (that is, the first term following their fifth birthday).

Provision could be with a registered child minder, a preschool or playgroup, a day nursery or nursery school, a nursery class within a primary school, or, for a 4-year-old, a reception class within a primary school. Additional hours for childcare over and above government provision are charged at the usual rate for that provider.

Younger children

Help with childcare costs is available from a range of different sources.

- **Child Tax Credit** is a means-tested allowance for parents and carers of children. Nine out of ten families with children qualify for Child Tax Credit. Select the section **Parents** for more information at:
www.direct.gov.uk
- **Working Tax Credit** is for those working more than 16 hours per week and on a low income. This could cover 80 per cent of your eligible childcare costs, but there are upper limits of £175 per week for one child and £300 for two or more children. Select the section **Money, tax and benefits** or **Parents/childcare** at:
www.direct.gov.uk or telephone the Tax Credit Helpline: 0845 300 3900
or textphone 0845 300 3909
- **Care to Learn** gives information on childcare support for young parents. For more information select **Money to learn** and then **Care to learn** at
www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning
- Information about childcare support for students and lone parents is available from
www.surestart.gov.uk
- You have the right to request flexible working hours from your employer. Search for flexible working on the **business link** website at:
www.businesslink.gov.uk

Deciding about your child's care

- look at several local options
- work out the exact cost before committing yourself
- check what government help is available locally
- check the carer is trained and experienced
- speak with parents who have used the carer you have in mind
- do both you and your child feel the carer relates well with you?
- check the carer is willing to reinforce routines you have in place
- check the environment. Is it safe, clean and well equipped, with access to an outside play area?
- will your child feel happy and confident in terms of ability, race, culture, language and gender?

Where else to go for help

Contact your local education authority or try the websites below:

- www.childcarefinder.direct.gov.uk/childcarefinder Search by full or partial postcode, or town to find childcare and nurseries in England. Also includes out of school care and holiday schemes, playgroups, preschools and toddler groups.
- www.direct.gov.uk Select the **Parents** section for information on childcare
- www.hmrc.gov.uk/childcare Information about tax, national insurance contributions and childcare voucher schemes
- www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment Select **Choosing a School**
- www.surestart.gov.uk A government programme which aims to support parents and increase the availability of childcare
- www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/childcare What to look for when choosing a childminder