

# Tinies

The Childcare Experts

## Childcare Options & When to Start Looking



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## Introduction

If you are looking for childcare for the first time or you are changing your current childcare arrangements here are some useful tips to help you decide on the right childcare for you and some tips on when to start looking.

There are various types of childcare, as described below. The availability and costs of childcare options do vary in different parts of the country, and prices vary as well. Contact your local Tinies branch for advice on costs of childcare. Deciding which is best for you and your child(ren) may depend on many factors: what can you afford, your job and the hours that you do, where you live, the location of your childcare in relation to your home or workplace and what you think will suit your child(ren) best.

When to start looking is an important question because different types of care require different periods of notice. For example there can be long waiting periods and lists for places at popular Nurseries and finding a permanent nanny can take up to 2 months.

Additionally if you are expecting your first baby, you may want a maternity nanny. See below for guidance on employing maternity nannies. Thereafter, it is advisable to start researching and searching for childcare in good time.

Finally if you want local information on what is available in your area, your local authority runs a Family Information Service who'll be happy to send you a pack. Or you can look up nurseries in your area: [www.daynurseries.co.uk](http://www.daynurseries.co.uk)

## Childcare in the home

### Nannies

Nannies look after your children in your own home, offering individual care. You can sometimes share a nanny with another family and reduce costs. Nannies offer a complete care package as they also clean up after the children and cook for the children. They may live in or live out.

**Live in nannies:** normally work an 11 hour day, Monday to Friday, together with 2 nights babysitting included. They can be in sole charge of the children and they perform "nursery duties", i.e. doing the children's washing and ironing, keeping their rooms tidy, clearing away the toys, cooking for the children and clearing up in the kitchen afterwards. Most nannies will not do extra domestic duties, as they are primarily childcare workers.

**Live Out Nannies:** normally work a 10 hour day, Monday to Friday. They don't normally do babysitting unless this is agreed in advance, and they would need to be paid extra. They can be in sole charge of the children and they perform "nursery duties" i.e. doing the children's washing and ironing, keeping their rooms tidy, clearing away the toys, cooking for the children and clearing up in the kitchen afterwards.

Nannies may hold a childcare qualification, or have previous experience of being a nanny. They look after babies and children of all ages. Rough price guide: salaries vary enormously according to the type of job and the region. Full time nannies are paid between £350 and £600 per week NET depending on where you live, whether the job is live in (which is often cheaper but you are providing accommodation) or live out, and the hours you require. The net figure is what the nanny will actually receive. You will also have to pay tax and National Insurance. Check with Tinies as to what the total GROSS figure would be.

### **Mother's helps**

A Mother's help can be live in or live out, but they normally live in. They do the same sort of hours as a nanny. The difference between a mother's help and a nanny is that a mother's help does not yet have enough experience to be left in constant sole charge of children. They normally work alongside the mother, caring for the children. She is not a cleaner, and so is not expected to do household duties, but she may do light duties such as the family shopping, or loading and unloading the family washing. These duties should be discussed in advance with the childcarer. Rough price guide: this varies according to the region, whether it is live in or live out and the hours and duties. Expect to pay between £300 and £400 per week NET depending on the hours required. Again, check with Tinies as to what the GROSS figure would be.

### **Nanny shares**

If you are looking for a "Nannyshare" then you can either get together with a friend or neighbour and share a nanny, or you can go to [www.nannyshare.co.uk](http://www.nannyshare.co.uk), to find a match with another local family looking to share childcare.

### **Emergency nannies**

Emergency nannies are nannies that can be obtained at very short notice to cover a breakdown in your existing childcare arrangements or for ad hoc childcare. These are normally highly experienced childcarers so that they can immediately step in and take over the care of your children. See [www.emergencychildcare.co.uk](http://www.emergencychildcare.co.uk) for more information.

### **Au pairs**

An au pair is someone who is a national from either the EU or from other Western European countries. She is normally aged 17-27 and comes over to England primarily to learn English.

An au pair lives with a family and in return for board and lodging and a small allowance she does a mixture of childcare and light housework. She must be given the opportunity to study and should only work a maximum of 25 hours a week. She should be paid an allowance in the region of £50-100. She must not be left in sole charge of children for long periods of time. Au pairs should only look after children of school age, or at the most 3yrs upwards.

Most au pairs are very young and have little experience as childcarers. Au pairs can be obtained through au pair agencies. Sometimes it takes longer to find an au pair, particularly if she is still in her home country.

### **Maternity nannies**

Maternity nannies look after you and your new baby from birth until about six weeks after the baby is born. They can help you get your baby into a routine and teach you how to care for a newborn. Maternity nurses offer a 24-hour service, usually for six days out of seven. Rough price guide: expect to pay £750+ per week, more if you have twins. (Maternity nannies are often self-employed and so are responsible for their own tax and National Insurance.)

## **Childcare outside the home**

### **Day nurseries**

A day nursery (as opposed to a nursery school) is normally a privately run nursery for children aged 3mths to 5 yrs. However there are also local authority nurseries and community nurseries. A day nursery is run for childcare purposes, but normally follows a curriculum the 3-5 yr olds. Normal hours are from 8am to 6pm, normally all year round except for public holidays. Some nurseries will provide 3 meals a day whereas at others you may be asked to provide a packed lunch or tea. Day nurseries are strictly regulated and inspected by OFSTED and they have to adhere to certain ratio levels of staffing. Most nurseries have a waiting list, so ensure you sign up to a nursery early on. Information about nurseries can be obtained from OFSTED'S government site: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Places at nurseries can be limited. In particular, nurseries that take babies may have long waiting lists. If you subsequently decide not to take up the place then you can inform the nursery, however you may lose the deposit. For toddlers and older children there are usually more vacancies but the popular nurseries tend to be oversubscribed, so again it is best to contact the nursery early. For lists of nurseries in your area, you can contact your local Family Information Service, which is part of your local authority, or go to [www.daynurseries.co.uk](http://www.daynurseries.co.uk).

### **Childminders**

A childminder is a self-employed carer who cares for children in her own home. Normally they are parents themselves and will care for small groups of children. They are registered with OFSTED, who inspect their homes and carry out a police check against the childminder's name and anyone else in the house over 16 yrs of age.

They do not have to be qualified, although some local authorities require childminders to carry out training prior to registration. They can look after children and babies of all ages, but are limited to the amount of children they can have in their home. They normally work a 10-11 hour day. They are often used for before and after school. Lists of childminders can be obtained from your local authority or from the National Childminding Association (NCMA).



### **Pre-school**

Pre-schools offer part-time care to children between the ages of three and five years. They may offer places to two-year-olds also. They normally offer sessions lasting about two and a half hours but, of course, timings will vary from place to place. At pre-school children will prepare for their start at school through a combination of learning and play. These places are often term time only.

### **Nursery schools**

These may be run by the Local Authority or privately, and places might be part-time or full-time. Nursery schools offer a variety of educational as well as play activities, such as painting, outdoor play, pet care, cooking, water and sand play, dressing up and story-time. They take children from two, or three, to five years. These places are often term time only and may be part time places only as well.

### **Before and after school**

This is one of the hardest forms of childcare to secure. You can either hire a nanny or mother's help to work the specific hours you need in the morning and the afternoon, but it is extremely hard to find a childcarer willing to do such odd hours. Many families hire au pairs to cover the mornings and afternoons. Childminders offer a good service, as they will often pick up your children from school and take them to their home until you are able to pick them up in the evening. In addition, a number of nurseries now offer before and after school services, and they too will arrange to pick your children up from school if it is local and give them tea, but they often close at 6pm. Finally there are out of school clubs, the details of which can be found from your local authority Family Information Service.



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