

Factsheet for parents

Childcare for children with disabilities and special educational needs

Quality childcare is good for all children and families. It can be particularly important for children with disabilities and special educational needs, and good quality childcare may reduce the need for special educational needs intervention later on. Often children with disabilities do not have as many opportunities to play with other children and they can feel very isolated. Like other parents, many parents of children with disabilities want to work, especially as it can cost three times as much to raise a child in this situation. Sometimes parents need a break from their caring duties. Quality childcare can help with all these needs.

This factsheet gives information about finding childcare for children with disabilities and looks at the different sources of financial help available for the costs of this type of childcare. It also gives some suggestions about where to go for more advice.

What sort of childcare is available?

For general information about childcare options, see our factsheet *What are my childcare options?*

There is a range of childcare options available for your child, and what you decide to use will be based on your child's and your own needs. However, as a parent of a child with a disability or special educational needs, you may find that your options locally are more limited.

Some childcare providers may have childcare services specifically tailored for children with special needs. Other may have inclusive childcare which offers care for children with disabilities and other children.

Financial help for childcare costs is generally restricted to paying for childcare services that are registered. Registered childcare may be any of the following:

- day nurseries (private, community local authority or workplace);
- children's centres;
- childminders;
- nursery schools;
- extended schools;
- pre-schools/playgroups;
- out-of-school and holiday clubs; and
- registered home-based carers/nannies.

Any unregistered care you can use – which might be provided by a friend or family member – will not qualify for any financial help from the Government. You will also not be able to claim financial help for any care provided by a relative in your own home even if a relative is registered.

Sure Start's booklet *Looking for Childcare*, has information and advice about different childcare options. You can get a free copy from the Department for Children, Schools and Families publications line on 0845 60 222 60, Textphone: 0845 6055560 or email: dfes@prolog.uk.com quoting ref 00332-2007BKT-EN

It is also available to download from Sure Start's website:
www.surestart.gov.uk/aboutsurestart/parents/lookingforchildcare

Finding childcare for children with disabilities

Your local Family Information Service holds details about registered childcare providers in your area. This includes lists of childminders, nurseries, out-of-school and holiday clubs, pre-school/playgroups and children's leisure activities. Some Family Information Services may also be able to provide you with information about unregistered childcare, such as nannies or parent and toddler groups.

There is a Family Information Service in every local authority area. For details of your local service, contact ChildcareLink on **0800 234 6346** or **www.childcarelink.gov.uk**

Talk to potential childcare providers about any special needs your child has, such as dietary requirements or any medical assistance needed, and discuss how and whether they will be able to meet those needs. Think about whether your carer will need special training to care for your child.

Discrimination

Childcare services should state whether they have the facilities to cater for children with special needs when they register with Ofsted. Unfortunately, whilst most providers say that they can cater for special needs at the time of registration with Ofsted, there may not be spaces available when parents contact the setting. This may be because they have long waiting lists or they cannot provide the necessary staffing levels.

Childcare providers are not allowed to treat a child with special needs less favourably than other children. This means that they cannot stop a child with disabilities from going on an outing or charge a parent of a child with a disability more for a childcare place without a good financial reason, for example. The childcare provider must also make 'reasonable adjustments' to their services so children with special needs can use the facilities. This might include adapting the premises to make them wheelchair accessible, training staff to use special equipment or setting up special meal arrangements for a child with a severe food allergy, for example.

Help with childcare costs

In addition to the general forms of support available to all parents, parents of children with disabilities may have access to other financial help.

For information about the financial help you can get for your childcare costs depending on your individual situation, visit our website www.payingforchildcare.org.uk

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Disability Living Allowance is the main source of financial support available to cover the additional costs of your child living with a disability. Your child may qualify for the Disability Living Allowance if s/he has a physical and/or mental disability and requires more help or supervision than other children of the same age. Disability Living Allowance has two components: care and mobility. Generally, you can claim for the care component when your child is aged three months and for the mobility component when they are aged three (although in some circumstances you can claim earlier). The care component of Disability Living Allowance, which ranges from £18.65 per week to £70.35 per week depending on the level of care your child needs, can be used to pay for childcare costs.

You can get a claim pack for Disability Living Allowance by contacting the Benefit Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00 (textphone 0800 24 33 55) or by contacting your local Jobcentre Plus office; details are available on their website:
www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Application forms can be complicated, the amount awarded to you can often be set at a lower rate than you should be getting and asking for a review or an appeal is often necessary. To have the best chance of getting Disability Living Allowance calculated correctly, you might want to get independent help to complete the application forms. If you have one, you could ask your support worker for help. Alternatively, you could try contacting one of the organisations listed in *Other sources of advice* below.

Disabled child element of Child Tax Credit

If you are claiming Disability Living Allowance for your child you may be able to claim additional support through the disabled child element of Child Tax Credit. There are two elements available:

- the disabled child element (£2,670 per year) - for each child in the family claiming Disability Living Allowance or who is registered blind; and
- the severely disabled child element (£1,075 per year) - for each child in the family claiming the highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance.

To apply for Child Tax Credit, contact the Tax Credit helpline on 0845 300 3900 (in England, Scotland and Wales) or 0845 603 2000 (in Northern Ireland)

For more information about Child Tax Credit, see our factsheet, '*General help with childcare costs*'

Other sources of financial help

Early Years or Children's Services Team at your local authority

You or your childcare provider should speak to the local Early Years or Children's Services team at your local authority. Many providers who have a childcare place available cannot offer it because they lack the facilities, staff or assistance that might be required to provide a quality place for a child with special needs. Some local authorities have specific funding to assist with childcare for children with disabilities or special needs. This funding can often be used to pay for additional staff or specific equipment.

Direct Payments

If you have parental responsibility for a child with a disability, you may be able to receive money to pay for services and equipment, instead of having them arranged by the local authority. Direct Payments can be provided by social services after an assessment process. Getting money in place of social care services means you have greater choice and control over your life and are able to make your own decisions about how care is delivered. Direct Payments can be very useful in allowing you to shape your own childcare package, including services and support that is not routinely provided by community care services. Some local authorities may also offer specific childcare support.

For more information about direct payments see *A Parent's Guide to Direct Payments* which can be downloaded from the Department of Health website www.dh.gov.uk

Contact the social services department at your local authority for information. You will find their contact details in your local phone directory or on your local authority's website.

Family Fund

The Family Fund is a registered charity which gives grants to lower income families with severely disabled children for things that make life easier and more enjoyable. The Fund helps with things to meet the additional needs of caring for a severely disabled child such as holidays, washing machines, driving lessons, computers and hospital visiting costs.

For more information about the Family Fund, including who can apply and how, contact them on **0845 130 4542**
Textphone 01904 658 085
E-mail info@familyfund.org.uk or visit their website www.familyfund.org.uk

Other sources of advice

Special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs)

Early years' area SENCOs (sometimes called inclusion officers) can give you advice and support if your child has special needs. Area SENCOs give training, offer advice and can liaise with schools and nurseries.

A SENCO may be a member of staff at a school who has responsibility for coordinating SEN provision within that school or could be the headteacher or deputy. Speak to your local education authority to find out how to get in contact with a SENCO in your area.

<p>Benefits Enquiry Line Government information service for disabled people and carers; can advise on the range of benefits available.</p> <p>Tel: 0800 88 22 00</p> <p>Textphone 0800 24 33 55</p>	<p>Contact-a-Family Provides information, advice and support to families of children with disabilities.</p> <p>Tel: 0808 808 3555</p> <p>Website: www.cafamily.org.uk E-mail: helpline@cafamily.org.uk Textphone: 0808 808 3556</p>
<p>Disabled Information and Advice Line (DIAL UK) National network of advice agencies for people with disabilities. Their website includes useful factsheets and a search facility to find your local office.</p> <p>Tel: 01302 310123 Textphone 01302 310123 E-mail informationenquiries@dialuk.org.uk Website: www.dialuk.info</p>	<p>Early Support Programme A government programme which aims to ensure that families of young children with disabilities receive effective support. Provides Early Support Family Packs.</p> <p>Tel: 0845 60 222 60 Textphone: 0845 605 5560 Website: www.earlysupport.org.uk</p>
<p>Kids Works with disabled children, young people and their families, to enable them to develop their skills and abilities and to fulfil their potential. Guides disabled children towards mainstream inclusion in their communities and gives their parents respite, guidance and support.</p> <p>Tel: 020 7359 3073 Website: www.kids.org.uk</p>	<p>'Waving not drowning' network A network of parents of children with disabilities who work or want to work, run by Working Families. Working Families have free useful factsheets and information available about parents' rights, flexible working options, etc.</p> <p>Waving not drowning helpline: 020 7253 7243 Working Families helpline 0800 013 0313 Website: www.workingfamilies.org.uk</p>

Daycare Trust is the National Childcare Campaign. We have been working since 1986 to promote high quality affordable childcare for all.

If you have any questions about the information provided in this factsheet, or other questions about childcare, Daycare Trust's Information Line is available on **0845 872 6251**, alternatively you can email info@daycaretrust.org.uk. You can also access information on our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk or www.payingforchildcare.org.uk.

The information in this factsheet refers to childcare in England. However, much of the information will be relevant throughout the UK. For further information specific to your area, contact your local information service in Northern Ireland, Scotland, or Wales via ChildcareLink on 0800 234 6346, www.childcarelink.gov.uk.