



AK FOUNDATION CHARITY
Empowering Families, Enabling Futures:
Cerebral Palsy Support

CHILDCARE (SEND)



CHILDCARE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

Securing good childcare places poses a challenge for parents and caregivers who aim to or have to work while their children are young. Even as children mature, the typical school hours often clash with working schedules and unfortunately, after-school care facilities sometimes found on school premises are less accessible for children with disabilities.

Ensuring quality care that addresses a child's special needs is crucial. However, locating trained childcare providers can be difficult to find and costly; while au pairs, although highly enthusiastic, may lack specialised training and require additional space and funds.

Childminders offer a viable option, provided they demonstrate commitment to fostering a child's development in line with OFSTED regulations. Nurseries may prioritise children with disabilities, but parents must confirm their capability to accommodate their child's requirements. Inclusive care doesn't solely entail access to special toys or therapies; it hinges on commitment and positive inclusive attitude.

Skilled childcare providers adeptly integrate children by encouraging their peers to see beyond differences. Although specialised facilities for children with disabilities exist, securing placement and ensuring alignment with parental preferences isn't always guaranteed.

Help is available

Seeking guidance from local authorities, social services, or cerebral palsy charities and centres is advisable. Regardless of the chosen setting for your childcare arrangement, it is important to find providers who are enthusiastic, engaged, and familiar with the child's individual needs, interests, and communication methods.

Did you know...

You are entitled to receive childcare until your child is 18 years old and this can be helpful for both your child and your wider family?:

- It can help support the early learning of your child and boost their future life chances.
- It can support you to improve your confidence in supporting your children's learning, and also give you the time to access other opportunities - like work.

Your child's rights to childcare

Your child has rights regarding childcare. Here are a few things you should know about your rights:

- Children with a *learning disability* have the right to receive childcare.
- Childcare providers must not deny disabled children access to childcare because they are disabled.
- Providers must make sure they try their best to meet the needs of children with a learning disability.
- Local authorities must make sure they have services that are good enough in their local area to meet the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Local authorities must clearly set out what services families like yours can expect locally, and how you can access them as part of what is called a 'Local Offer'.

The 'Local Offer'

Every council must have a Local Offer of support it expects to be available in the local area for children and young people with SEND. The local offer will be available on the council's website. The local offer should have information about the following types of support for children and young people with SEND:

- Education support, including nurseries, schools and colleges
- Health support, including therapies available to children or young people
- Social care support, including short breaks
- Support to help young people to live independently
- Support to help young people to find *employment* opportunities
- Support to help young people find suitable accommodation

All councils must provide the opportunity for you to give feedback about your local offer, and they must publish how they intend to address any issues you raise.

Financial support is available

Childcare can be expensive, but there is plenty of financial support you can explore to help you cover the cost:

- 15 hours of free early years education for some 2-year-olds and all 3- and 4-year-olds
- An additional 15 hours of free childcare is also available for "working parents" of all 3- and 4-year-olds. This additional 15 hours also applies to carers of a disabled child if their partner is working.
- Tax-free childcare accounts being set up that can be paid into to cover the cost of childcare from a registered provider. *The government* will top up the account with 20% of childcare costs up to a total of £4,000 per year for a disabled child
- Additional financial support for families receiving tax credits and, in future, Universal Credit. These cover up to 70% and 85% respectively of the cost of care for parents with low incomes
- Employer-supported childcare vouchers which can be worth around £900 each year. Not all employers offer this scheme.
- (All figures correct at the time of writing but may be subject to change.)

The Government's Childcare Choices website is also available to help guide parents on the best way to find affordable childcare.

How to find the right childcare provider

1. Find free early years education or childcare in your area via the Government's online tool
2. The Family and Childcare Trust also provides some useful advice about looking for and choosing childcare
3. Family Information Services provide a range of information on all services available to parents, including helping parents of children with a learning disability to find childcare
4. Find your local Family Information Service.

Childcare for older children and young people

Some local authorities provide childcare for older children and young people including holiday clubs, after school clubs and Childminders. You can find out about childcare outside of school hours by visiting the Government website.

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All sources have been referenced.