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CHILDCARE SERVICES

There is a fantastic range of childcare services in and around London to suit everyone's needs. Outlined below is a very brief overview to give you some familiarity with the choices.

A *Nanny* is a dedicated individual who is employed to have sole (when both parents are working/out of the house) or shared charge (with the at-home parent) of your children in your home. Many have nursery nurse training or childcare qualifications, but this is not a legal requirement. Most nannies will be tasked with preparing meals, helping with household work (dishes, laundry, etc.), driving the children to and from activities and assisting with homework. Many nannies have their own place of residence (and are called live-out nannies), but there are some nannies who live with the family (called live-in nannies). Wages and salaries vary according to location (Central London is more expensive than most counties), experience of employee, number of children and responsibilities. Qualified nannies are the most expensive option.

Mother's Helps are generally unqualified nannies working alongside a mother, rather than having sole charge of the children. Mother's Helps may work well for parents who work from home or parents who work part-time and want housework and childcare combined.

Au pairs generally have no formal training in caring for children but will assist with light housework, help in the kitchen and care for school age children. They are generally in the UK to learn the language and assimilate the culture. Most will have some hours off per day in order to attend English language lessons. They should also be available for babysitting one or two evenings per week. Au pairs earn board and lodging and a small amount of money each week in return for childcare and light housework. There are many ways to find a good au pair. The agency route is usually the fastest but it can be expensive. Not going through an agency will save you money but it will usually take much more time. Local libraries, community centres, children's stores, friends, schools and playgroups are good places for putting your ad. You must ask for several references to assure you are hiring someone reliable, professional, etc.

A *Maternity Nurse* is someone who is qualified or experienced in dealing with newborns. The primary responsibilities of the maternity nurse are to care for the baby including feeding (if necessary), nappy changing, bathing, baby laundry, and organising all items related to the baby. She will also assist you in breast-feeding and provide the emotional and physical support to start feeding in the best manner. They can be employed to work on a daily/nightly basis and on average are booked for 2-6

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weeks following the birth. They are very useful for mums and dads with sleep deprivation.

Registered Childminders are professional day carers who work in their own homes to provide care and education for other people's children by creating a home away from home. All childminders are required by law to register with Ofsted. Police and Social Services record checks are carried out on the childminder and all persons over 16 living in the house. The childminder's home is also checked for hygiene and safety.

Day Nurseries care for children and babies from three or four months old up to school age. They offer long days and short holidays. They are usually more expensive than regular nurseries.

Nursery schools (or just nurseries) care for children from 2 - 2½ year-old up to school age. They usually have the same term dates as schools and sessions last from 3 to 6 hours per day.

Both Nurseries and Day Nurseries have to be registered with Ofsted who will make regular inspections to ensure that health and safety, number of trained staff members, class sizes and child to adult ratio regulations are being maintained.

Children over 3 years old are entitled to 15 hours of free early education for 38 weeks of the year. This applies until they reach compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday). Parents do not contribute towards this minimum entitlement but may be charged fees for any services or childcare that is additional to the free place. The service is provided by a number of pre-schools (playgroups), private day nurseries and independent schools with nurseries, which are part of the Nursery Education Grant (NEG) scheme. You need to contact your [local council](#) to get a list of participating providers. In addition, around 260,000 free places became available to the least advantaged 2-year-olds in September 2014.

Sure Start Children's Centre is a national programme sponsored by the government (i.e., state funded) that provides activities for young children as well as access to a range of early childhood services. Sure Start Children's Centres are open to all parents and children and many of the services are free. Children's Centres services are also offered at other sites and your local main Children's Centre will be able to tell you about these. You can contact your [local council](#) to find out what's offered at your local Sure Start Centre.

There are also many classes and activities for children including music, sports and art lessons. Check FOCUS website for more information and ideas.

It is worth checking your local council's website as it usually lists all available nurseries, childminders and schools in the area. Listed below are some websites that

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can help you understand childcare options in the UK and assist you with making informed decisions when choosing childcare services.

Childcare information websites

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting>

Government website providing information on all aspects of life in the UK. Detailed information on childcare options and schools.

<https://www.nct.org.uk/>

The UK's largest charity for parents. They support parents by giving them accurate, impartial information so that they can decide what's best for their family. They also introduce them to a network of local parents to gain practical and emotional support.

www.familiesonline.co.uk

Families magazines website provides reviews by mums, many features, listing of events and local information.

www.netmums.com

UK's most popular parenting website with unique local information, expert parenting advice, chats and much more.

www.babydirectory.com

Guides covering pregnancy and life with children under 5.

www.gumtree.com

Online website where you can search for domestic help and post employee advertisements.

www.aupair-world.com

Virtual agency for host families and au pairs. Requires a small registration fee. Gives you access to a worldwide database of candidates.

Domestic and childcare agencies

Greycoat Lumleys

www.greycoatlumleys.co.uk

Professional service in the placement of housekeepers, handyman, drivers, household managers, nannies, including emergency nannies, and a wide range of domestic staff.

FOCUS members are entitled to a 10% discount on all Greycoat Lumleys services.

Tel: 020 7233 9950

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Kensington Nannies

www.kensington-nannies.com

Offer all types of services from nannies to maternity nurses. Handle live-in/live-out positions in Central London, live-in only in other areas.

Maternally Yours

www.maternallyyours.co.uk

All Maternity Nurses are personally interviewed, are of the highest calibre, with verified references. Placement throughout UK and overseas for daily, night time or full-time maternity nurses.

Night Nannies

<http://www.nightnannies.com/>

Night nannies and maternity nurses that can often find what you need within 24-hours.

Top Notch Nannies

www.topnotchnannies.com

Nannies, maternity nurses, night nurses, babysitters, mother's help and doulas.

The International Au Pair Association

www.iapa.org

International community and trade association for experienced and qualified au pair organizations that specialize in providing culture exchange services.

Au Pair Network Agency

www.apni.co.uk

The London Au Pair & Nanny Agency

www.londonaupair.co.uk

The National Childminding Association

www.ncma.org.uk

Association providing quality home-based childcare.

Little Ones

www.littleoneslondon.co.uk

Bilingual nannies and domestic staff.

Eden Childcare

www.eden-nannies.co.uk

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International childcare recruitment organisation. Specializing in the placement of nannies and maternity nurses on a live-in/live-out, temporary, full or part-time basis. London, UK and overseas.

Sitters

www.sitters.co.uk

Sitters provides local babysitters for families throughout London and SE England. Agency fees are made up of a quarterly membership and booking fees.

Contracts and Taxes

All domestic employees have the right to a written contract that details hours, pay, holidays, babysitting rate, family holiday/overnight rate (if nanny is staying with you) and other obligations. The annual holiday entitlement is 5.6 weeks (28 days), including 8 UK bank holidays. There is a qualification period of 13 weeks continuous work.

As soon as an employer pays the minimum wage or above to a nanny they must, by law, organise the nanny's income tax and National Insurance (NI).

The nanny's employer also has to contribute to his/her employee's total National Insurance payment. This is a bit less than the amount the nanny has to pay in for.

A nanny employer must pay the State's National Insurance Contributions in case the nanny should go on sick leave (Statutory Maternity Pay) or fall pregnant (Statutory Maternity Pay). Her employer can reclaim the pay with HRMC while deducting the amount from the nanny's weekly gross pay.

It is important to understand the difference between 'gross' and 'net' pay. 'Gross' is before tax and NI's deduction and 'net' is after the deduction. In the nanny world there is a tendency to talk 'net' salaries. But this can be rather deceptive as most other jobs talk in terms of 'gross' pay. Just make sure that you know exactly what your take home is and be aware of everything that is deducted and why.

Furthermore, in 2012 the government introduced the Pensions Act. This is a piece of legislation that makes it a requirement for all employers including those who employ domestic staff – to automatically enroll qualifying employees into a workplace pension scheme.

Nanny Tax Companies

The Nanny Payroll Service (The Nationwide Payroll Company)

www.nannypayroll.co.uk

This service provides information and services about revenue requirements, payment of income tax and national insurance.

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Nanny tax

www.nannytax.co.uk

This service provides complete payment administration as well as detailed employment contracts and extensive employment law support. Offers also Public Liability Insurance Policy for nannies.