

Using Childcare services



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Information for parents and carers who use childcare services or childminders



In this leaflet you can find out about

- the Early Years Register
- the Childcare Register
- what we do
- how to tell us what you think
- how to get information about childcare services.

About us



We are called **Ofsted**.

Our job is to check

- places where children and young people are looked after
- people who look after children and young people
- schools and colleges
- adult learning and training
- how teachers are trained.

We check to make sure they are doing a really good job. If they're not, we help them to get better.

Using childcare services





The registers

We have **2 registers** for childcare providers.

The registers are lists of people or groups who have been checked to make sure they can look after children and young people up to the age of 18.

Some examples of childcare providers are



- childminders
- nurseries
- playgroups.

The Early Years Register

All childcare providers caring for children under 8 years old must be on the Early Years Register.

Registration includes

- a criminal records check – this is a check to make sure that each person who helps look after children is a safe person for children to be with
- a check of the building to make sure it is a safe place for children to be
- a check of what each child needs.

They must also use the Early Years Foundation Stage – this is a plan about how children should be supported to learn by doing different activities.

The Childcare Register

This is in 2 parts.

1. Compulsory part – most people who look after children aged 5 to 7 years **must** be on this part
2. Voluntary part – childcarers who do not **have** to register with us can **choose** to be on this part. These people usually look after children in their own home or care for older children aged from 8 to 18.



What we do

People ask us if they can go on the Early Years Register or the compulsory part of the Childcare Register.

We then **check** them, or ask the people who they work for to check them.



These checks are to make sure they are safe to work with children.

We also check the building where they care for children to make sure it is safe.



For everyone who is on 1 of the registers, we can

- register the childcare, stop registration for a time and cancel registration
- check the childcare, usually without saying we are coming. This is called an unannounced visit
- investigate those who do not keep to the standards and rules
- make people do things like change the way they are looking after children if it is not good enough.



We **inspect** the way childcare is being run.

When we do an inspection we



- talk to the people running the childcare
- make sure they are helping children to learn
- make sure they are looking after children well
- look at things like the building and toys they have to make sure they are safe.



We inspect childcare providers who are on the Early Years Register every 3 to 4 years.

More about what we do



Each year we inspect some of the people on the Childcare Register.



Sometimes we go to inspect people because parents have told us they are worried about the way their children are being cared for.



We check that childcare providers are using the Early Years Foundation Stage or are doing what they should be to stay on the Childcare Register (or both).



We write reports or letters about all our inspections.



You can look at the reports or letters on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

If things need to change



If we have found things on our inspections that need to change we can do several things.



We decide what providers or people need to change so they can carry on being on our registers.



We tell them what they need to change or get better at.



We decide if providers and people can carry on being on our registers.

If things do not change



If things do not get better we can send a special letter called a **notice to improve**.



If things do not get better after we have sent the notice to improve we can use the law to make things change.



What we do depends on the risk to children.

For example, we can send a legal notice.
This tells the childcare provider what they must do.

We can also cancel (stop) registration when the way the children are being cared for is really not good enough.

This prevents (stops) the childcare provider from looking after children.

How to tell us what you think



If we say we are coming to do an inspection your childcare provider should tell you that it is happening.

We often make inspection visits without telling anyone that we are coming.

This can make it difficult for you to tell us what you think.



You can telephone our helpline to tell us what you think.

The helpline number is 0300 123 1231.



If we are going to inspect someone who looks after your children in your home we will write to you before we come.



We will ask you if it is OK for us to come in to your home.

More about how to tell us what you think



If we are inspecting a nursery we will put a poster up while we are there. The poster will say that an inspection is going on.



If you see an inspection poster please come and find the people doing the inspection.

Tell them what you think about the way your child is being looked after.



You can also telephone our helpline to tell our inspectors what you think about the childcare service you use.

The helpline number is 0300 123 1231.

How to get information about the childcare you use

Certificates



Childminders must put their certificate of registration up so that you can see it.

This shows you that they are on our register.

If you use someone to look after your children in your home and they are registered with us they must show you their certificate. And you should ask to see it.

More about how to get information about the childcare you use

Reports



Providers on the Early Years Register (see page 2) or the compulsory part of the Childcare Register (see page 3) must give you a copy of our inspection report or letter if you ask for it.

Providers on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register must give you information about what they do.

They must also



- look into any written complaint about the Early Years Foundation Stage (see page 2) or their services
- keep a record of the complaints
- share the results of any investigation with the parents who made the complaint.

What do I do about things I am worried about?

It is always good to be able to talk to the people who are looking after your child.

If you are worried about something, talk to them first to see if it can be sorted out.

If you are worried about how your child is being looked after and you do not feel you can talk to the people looking after your child, please let us know. Our helpline is 0300 123 1231.



What do I do if I want to complain about inspections?



We take all complaints about inspections very seriously.

If you have a concern about inspections, please telephone our helpline on 0300 123 1231.



You can find our complaints procedure on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2473.

Contact us



Our website is

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Our email is

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



Our helpline is

0300 123 1231

Mencap helped to make this easy read.

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