

Are you ready for your inspection?

A guide to inspections of provision on Ofsted's Early Years and Childcare Registers

Are you ready for your inspection? is designed to help you to think about some of the implications for you as a provider when we inspect you. In reality, you do not need to do anything to prepare for inspection. All you need to do is provide high-quality care and early education for the children with whom you work.

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Introduction

1. This guidance is for childminders and childcare providers registered on the Early Years Register, the Childcare Register or both registers.¹ It explains how provision will be inspected from September 2012 and what you can do to be ready for, and get the most out of, your inspection.
2. Section 1 covers provision on the Early Years Register and on both the Early Years and Childcare Registers. Section 2 covers provision on the Childcare Register only.
3. You do not need to make any special preparations for inspection but we do expect every provider to be striving to achieve or maintain the best possible outcomes for the children in their care. This means continuing to reflect on what works well and what needs improving and having plans in place to bring about continuous improvement. The very best providers use their evaluations to strengthen and build on the most effective practice and they seek out good practice across the sector and beyond. If this is what you do, you are already very well prepared for inspection.
4. You may wish to read this guidance alongside that used by inspectors when they carry out inspections.² An explanation of the terms used in this booklet can be found in the *Framework for the regulation of those on the Early Years Register*.³

About inspections

5. Inspection provides an impartial, external evaluation of the effectiveness of your provision, and is designed to help you to improve its quality.
6. Inspections are carried out by inspectors who work for us, or on our behalf, and who are trained to inspect childcare and early years provision. Inspectors carry identification cards that they must show you before entering your premises. The cards have photographs of the inspectors. You should always check cards before allowing inspectors access to your premises.
7. All inspectors must adhere to a code of conduct to ensure that inspections are of the highest professional standard.⁴ We expect our inspectors to act

¹ This guidance does not apply to any early years provision made directly by a maintained or independent school or academy where such provision is not registered with Ofsted.

² This is available on our website at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/for-inspectors>

³ *Framework for the regulation of those on the Early Years Register*, www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-regulation-of-those-early-years-and-childcare-registers.

⁴ The code of conduct is in the document *Framework for the regulation of those on the Early Years Register*.

courteously and professionally at all times and ask that you treat them with the same respect.

8. An inspector may contact you by telephone prior to the inspection to ask about your availability and whether you are caring for children. We do not do this in all cases. If you are worried about the identity of the inspector you can check this by ringing our helpline on 0300 123 1231. Inspectors never ask for names or personal details about the children who attend your setting over the telephone.
9. We aim to make our inspections positive and helpful. In the vast majority of cases, providers tell us they are. However, there are occasions when, for whatever reason, inspections do not go as well as they should. If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of your inspection, you should contact our inspection service providers (ISPs) as soon as possible to try to resolve matters.
10. You may also call our helpline staff on 0300 123 1231 and ask for advice on making a formal written complaint if you are unable to resolve matters with the inspector during the inspection. Our helpline staff will provide you with a leaflet setting out the complaints procedure. This leaflet also gives the contact details of our complaints adjudicator, an independent organisation that considers your complaint if you remain dissatisfied with our final response. You can find more information about making complaints on our website.

Section 1. Inspections of provision on the Early Years Register

What is the purpose of the inspection?

11. The purpose of the inspection is to evaluate the quality and standards of children's care, learning and development, and the progress children make towards the early learning goals in line with the principles and requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
12. Where you are also registered on the Childcare Register, the inspection will check whether you meet the requirements of the register.⁵ It will not evaluate the quality of your provision in respect of this register.

⁵ The requirements of the Childcare Register are available in *Factsheet: childcare – requirements for the Childcare Register: childminders and home childcarers* (reference no: 080161), Ofsted 2010; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/factsheet-childcare-requirements-for-childcare-register-childminders-and-home-childcarers>; and in *Factsheet: childcare – requirements for the Childcare Register: childcare providers on non-domestic or domestic premises* (reference no: 080143), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/factsheet-childcare-requirements-for-childcare-register-childcare-providers-non-domestic-or-domestic.

When will the inspection take place?

We will inspect your provision at least once within the inspection cycle. The next inspection cycle will end on 31 July 2016. Newly registered early years providers are normally inspected about six to seven months after registration, if they have children on roll.

13. We will prioritise inspections where:

- the last inspection concluded that the quality of care and education was inadequate
- the provider has been judged as satisfactory at the previous two inspections and has shown no evidence of improvement
- we receive information that suggests a provider is not meeting the requirements of the EYFS
- we receive information that suggests a significant change to the provision such as: the appointment of a new manager; a high turnover of staff; or, in the case of childminders, a change of premises
- we have concluded an investigation into potential non-compliance.

How long do inspections take?

14. This varies depending on the size and characteristics of your provision. In general, childminding inspections take about two to three hours and group provision may take up to six hours or more.

Before the inspection

Notice of inspection

15. We give most providers no notice of inspection, so that inspectors can see settings running normally. We telephone childminders and temporary provision like holiday play schemes a few days before we intend to inspect, to check children are attending or the provision is operating that day. Inspectors do not give any provider the actual date of inspection.

Preparing for inspection

16. You do not need to make any special preparation. However, there are a number of things you may wish to consider that will help you make the best possible provision for the children you care for and will also help you at inspection.

Self-evaluation

17. Inspection will consider how well you evaluate the impact of what you do on children's care, learning and development, and use that evaluation to bring about improvement. You may capture the outcome of your evaluation using

any tool you wish, including the Ofsted self-evaluation form, any forms or tools provided by your local authority and any quality assurance scheme you are part of. You do not need to complete multiple self-evaluation forms but the inspector will always check what evaluation you carry out and how effective this is.

18. There is no fixed time when you should complete your self-evaluation. You should do so when it best suits you and normally as part of your cycle of review and planning. Make sure you have identified any changes or improvements identified in your last Ofsted inspection report, if your provision has been inspected before, and consider how these have had a positive effect on children's care, learning and development.
19. The Ofsted self-evaluation form, and guidance on completing and submitting it, is available online⁶. If you require any further help, ring our helpline on 0300 123 1231. If you complete the Ofsted form and submit it to Ofsted, the inspector will use it to plan your inspection.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

20. You need to know, understand and implement the principles and requirements of the EYFS,⁷ including the learning and development, and safeguarding and welfare requirements so that children receive a high standard of care and early education.
21. Think about how you will identify and explain the rate of progress that children are making towards the early learning goals. Monitoring the progress that all children make relative to their starting points is vital to ensure that action is taken to make sure they have the best possible opportunities to learn effectively at all times and interventions that are needed are identified. It will help to ensure that gaps are narrowing for groups of children or individual children identified as being in need of support. It can also help you to identify whether your educational programmes have sufficient depth, breadth and challenge, and fully meet the needs, aptitudes and interests of children.
22. Remember that the EYFS requires you to do the following.
 - Notify us of any significant changes to your provision. There are certain changes and events in relation to your registered provision that you must tell us about (EYFS paragraphs 3.76 – 3.77). It is an offence not to let us

⁶ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/early-years-online-self-evaluation-form-sef-and-guidance-for-settings-delivering-early-years-foundat>

⁷ These are available in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*, Department for Education, 2012, available at: www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-00023-2012.

know about these changes and events unless you have a reasonable excuse, so make sure that you know what they are.

- Keep certain documents which you should be ready to show to the inspector if asked, including any policies, procedures and records the EYFS requires you to keep. The inspector will not expect to see all of these in writing unless the EYFS specifically requires you to do so (EYFS paragraphs 3.67 - 3.68).

Working with parents, other providers and professionals

23. Close working between early years providers, parents and professionals from other agencies, such as local and community health services, is vital for the identification of children's learning needs. Shared knowledge and advice will enable you to provide children with the best possible learning opportunities and environment.
24. If the children who attend your provision also receive the EYFS in other provision, including school, you should be able to show how you work with other providers to complement the activities they offer and provide a good programme overall for the children. Think about the evidence you have to demonstrate this.
25. You should seek information from parents about what their children can do when they first start with you and continue to work with parents to support children's learning at home. Where children need additional help and support you should work with parents and other professionals to make sure children receive the interventions they need. Consider what you might show or tell the inspector to demonstrate this.

Systems for performance management

26. Group providers should have effective performance management systems to ensure that any trainees or students are monitored, coached, mentored and supported and any under-performance is tackled. Childminders may wish to work with their local network of childminders or their children's centre or local authority support service to help to identify their needs. All providers, including childminders, should have a programme of professional development that builds on their skills and expertise and meets any identified needs. Training, which might take several forms, should help you to improve children's learning and their all-round well-being.

During the inspection⁸

27. The inspector will arrive and introduce themselves. Once the inspector arrives, please carry on with your normal routine; we want to keep disruption to a minimum. At the beginning of the inspection, the inspector will discuss with you how he or she will carry out the inspection, agree convenient times to talk to you and any staff or assistants about your provision, and make arrangements for the feedback meeting at the end of the inspection. Please tell the inspector about any special events that may be happening on the day, or any particular times you or staff may not be available.
28. The inspector will want to talk to parents using your provision and may need to do this very soon after arriving if parents are dropping children off. He or she will also ask you to display a notice to tell parents the inspector is available to listen to their views.
29. The inspector will ask for evidence of your self-evaluation at the start of the inspection if you have not submitted the Ofsted self-evaluation form. If you are not working directly with children the inspector will arrange to have an interview with you or your manager. If you are working directly with children the inspector will fit this discussion around your activities. The purpose of this interview is to establish how well you:
 - understand and meet the requirements of the EYFS
 - monitor the delivery of the educational programmes, planning and assessment, and the extent to which children's needs are identified and met through timely intervention
 - have effective systems for performance management, training and ongoing professional development
 - use self-evaluation to inform priorities and set challenging targets for improvement
 - have effective partnerships with parents and others, especially where needed to secure support for children
 - have effective arrangements for safeguarding children, including child protection procedures; risk assessment of the premises and outings; staff recruitment procedures; and staff supervision.
30. The inspector will spend the majority of time observing the way adults work with children. They will evaluate how well children are learning and whether they are helped to be physically, mentally and emotionally healthy by the adults who care for them. If you are a group provider or a childminder who uses assistants, you will be offered the opportunity to carry out joint observations

⁸ There is more information available in *Conducting early years inspections* (reference no: 120087), Ofsted, 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/conducting-early-years-inspections.

alongside the inspector. You do not need to do this and will not be penalised if you do not. Joint observations will give you the opportunity to understand the judgements the inspector is making and contribute your own views about the quality of practice and learning. There is more information about joint observations in *Conducting early years inspections*.⁹

31. During the inspection, the inspector makes notes either by hand or on a laptop computer. He or she will keep you informed about how the inspection is progressing and give you an opportunity to present any additional evidence. You should to make sure you have presented all the evidence you want to the inspector before the feedback session.
32. At the end of the inspection, the inspector will meet you and any other people you want to be present in a feedback meeting. In this meeting the inspector will tell you the provisional judgements, the reasons for these and where improvements are needed, and what happens next.

Making judgements¹⁰

33. The central question that the inspector seeks to answer is: what difference is this provision making to the learning, development and progress of the children attending? The inspector will assess how well you and/or any staff or assistants deliver the EYFS; and how, as a result, children are helped to make progress towards the early learning goals.
34. The inspector will judge the overall quality and standards of the early years provision, taking into account three key judgements:
 - how well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend
 - the contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being
 - the leadership and management of the early years provision.¹¹
35. The inspector will use a four-point grading scale when making the judgements. The four grades are:
 - Grade 1: outstanding. The inspector will make at least one recommendation to bring about minor improvement.

⁹ *Conducting early years inspections* (reference no: 120087), Ofsted, 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/conducting-early-years-inspections.

¹⁰ There is more information available in the *Using the early years evaluation schedule: guidance for inspectors of registered early years settings required to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage* (120087), Ofsted, 2012; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/evaluation-schedule-for-inspections-of-registered-early-years-provision>

¹¹ Throughout this document, 'leadership and management' includes childminders as leaders of their own provision. Where appropriate, any reference to staff also relates to childminding assistants.

- Grade 2: good. The inspector will identify why provision is not outstanding and will make recommendations for further improvement.
- Grade 3: satisfactory. The inspector will identify aspects of provision that require improvement and will make recommendations or raise actions where he or she judges that the requirements of the EYFS are not fully met. A further inspection may take place within the cycle.
- Grade 4: inadequate. The inspector will set actions to bring about compliance with the requirements of the EYFS and/or Ofsted and will take enforcement action including, in some cases, cancelling registration. Where registration continues, the next inspection will take place within 12 months.

36. When deciding on which grades to award, the inspector will refer to grade descriptors set out in guidance for inspectors and match the evidence they collect against this guidance. You can see this guidance in the evaluation schedule for inspections of registered early years providers.¹²

After the inspection

37. After each inspection, the inspector will write a report which will include:

- the grades that the inspector gave you at the end of the inspection
- a bullet-pointed summary of the overall quality and standards of the early years provision
- what must be done to improve the quality of provision
- a section on how well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend
- a section on the contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being
- a section on the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision.¹³

And, where applicable:

- whether or not the Childcare Register provision complies with requirements, and any action the provider must take to ensure that it does.

¹² *Using the early years evaluation schedule: guidance for inspectors of registered early years settings required to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (120087)*, Ofsted, 2012;
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/evaluation-schedule-for-inspections-of-registered-early-years-provision>

¹³ Throughout this document, 'leadership and management' includes childminders as leaders of their own provision. Where appropriate, any reference to staff also relates to childminding assistants.

38. Shortly after the inspection we will send you your report, which you should check for factual accuracy. If you find any factual inaccuracies then you should tell us immediately so that we can correct them before the inspection report is published on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. Inspection reports are usually published on our website within 15 days of the end of the inspection, unless the inspection judgement is inadequate.
39. Where the inspection judgement is inadequate, the report is published within 25 days of the inspection and, where applicable, will include details of any enforcement action we are proposing to take. We inform your local authority that we have judged your provision to be inadequate. This may affect your eligibility for funding for two, three and/or four-year-olds.
40. The *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* requires you to give each parent of children attending your provision a copy of the report.

Section 2. Inspections of provision on the Childcare Register

The purpose of inspection and its timing

41. The purpose of inspection is to check compliance against the requirements of the register and any conditions of registration.¹⁴ Every year, we inspect a 10% sample of all providers who are only registered on the Childcare Register. The sample size is based on the number and type of providers on the register in the April of each reporting year. We select the sample using a geographical spread of each type of provider and do not normally inspect any provider until they have been registered for a period of six months. However, we inspect all provision, regardless of type, location and length of time since registration, where we receive a concern about the childcare provision that relates to the requirements of registration or any conditions we have imposed.
42. We will tell you whether your inspection has been triggered by a complaint or by random selection.

Before the inspection

43. Inspections are carried out with no notice unless you are a childminder, home childcarer or operate a holiday play scheme. As with the Early Years Register, we telephone childminders, home childcarers and holiday play scheme

¹⁴ The requirements of the Childcare Register are available in *Factsheet: childcare – requirements for the Childcare Register: childminders and home childcarers* (reference no: 080161), Ofsted 2010; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/factsheet-childcare-requirements-for-childcare-register-childminders-and-home-childcarers>; and in *Factsheet: childcare – requirements for the Childcare Register: childcare providers on non-domestic or domestic premises* (reference no: 080143), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/factsheet-childcare-requirements-for-childcare-register-childcare-providers-non-domestic-or-domestic

providers to see if they are operating and have children on roll before the inspections.

44. If you are a home childcarer, we will seek permission from the occupier of the premises where you work to enter the premises and inspect your provision. If the occupier refuses to give permission we may still decide to inspect compliance by interviewing you away from the premises.
45. We do not normally inspect you if you are not caring for children but may choose to do so if we have received a concern about your service.

During the inspection¹⁵

46. Inspections usually take up to two hours and are carried out by one inspector. The inspector does not make any judgements about the quality of what you offer but checks your compliance with the requirements and any conditions of registration. This includes your implementation of policies and procedures.
47. During the inspection, the inspector will:
 - check registration details
 - talk to you, any parents, children and staff members and observe the provision to make sure policies are being put into practice
 - assess the safety of the premises and the risk assessment you carry out
 - assess staff understanding of policies and procedures
 - look at your recruitment policies, where applicable
 - look at your arrangements for making sure unvetted people do not have unsupervised access to children.

After the inspection

48. Following the inspection, you will receive a letter either confirming that you are meeting your requirements for registration or detailing what must be done in order to remain registered. In line with other inspection reports, these letters are published on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. They remain on our website for a period of one year after the inspection.
49. If the inspector judges that you are not complying with the requirements or any conditions of registration, we will take steps to deal with this. This is normally through requiring you to take action to put things right. In rare cases we may use our enforcement powers, including cancelling registration.

¹⁵ There is more information about inspection in *Conducting Childcare Register inspections* available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/conducting-early-years-inspections

Section 3. Commonly asked questions

Will I have to pay an inspection fee?

50. There is no fee for inspection, but you do have to pay a fee to continue to be registered as a childminder or childcare provider. The fee is payable annually and the amounts are set by the Government. For more information, please see [Fees for application and continued registration on the Early Years and Childcare Registers](#)¹⁶ or ring our helpline on 0300 123 1231.

What if I am not caring for children when an inspection is due?

51. As far as possible we will always inspect you when there are children present. Normally, if children are not attending when the inspector arrives, the inspector will not carry out the inspection but will return on another day. However, if it is close to the end of an inspection cycle for those on the Early Years Register we will carry out an inspection even if there are no children present or on roll. This is because the law requires us to inspect each provider at least once during a cycle. We have special arrangements for these types of inspection. You can read more about these inspections in our guidance *The process and guidance for inspecting childminders and childcare settings with no children on roll or no children present at the time of the inspection*.¹⁷
52. If you are a childminder, the law allows us to cancel your registration if you have not provided childminding for a period of more than three years.¹⁸ If you have no children for a period of time and then start caring for them again it is important that you let us know when you start caring for children or we will proceed to cancel your registration after three years.

What if my provision is on a school site?

53. If your provision forms part of a school's extended services and is managed by the school's governing body, we will try to inspect it at the same time as the school. However the registered provision will have its own inspection report.
54. If your provision operates entirely independently of the school and does not form part of its extended services, it will be inspected and reported on separately. This is not likely to be at the same time as the school inspection.

¹⁶ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/childcare-registration-form-paying-fees-for-application-and-continued-registration-early-years-regis>

¹⁷ *The process and guidance for inspecting childminders and childcare settings with no children on roll or no children present at the time of the inspection* (reference no: 080173), 2012, Ofsted; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/process-and-guidance-for-inspecting-childminders-and-childcare-settings-no-children-roll-or-no-child.

¹⁸ Childcare Act 2006, section 68 (www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_1).

There is further information on school-based provision in our factsheet *Registering school-based provision*.¹⁹

What if I only care for children before and after school or during school holidays?

55. If your provision is registered on the Early Years Register you must deliver the EYFS, even if you only care for children at the beginning and/or end of the school day or in the school holidays. You are expected to work closely with other settings, including schools, which also provide the EYFS for those children to ensure they receive the full offer. There is more information on how we regulate and inspect this type of provision in our guidance *Inspecting early years provision made before or after school or during school holidays*.²⁰

What if I mainly educate children in their home language?

56. If you are on the Early Years Register, as well as supporting children in their home language, you must demonstrate to inspectors that you are helping children to acquire a good standard in English during the EYFS. In particular, you must assess children's skills in English to see if there is cause for concern.
57. You, and any assistants or employees, must also have a sufficient grasp of English to ensure the well-being of the children in your care. For example, it must be clear how you would be able to summon emergency help where necessary; that you keep certain records in English, as well as in your home language; and that you read and understand instructions in English, such as safety instructions and information on administering medication or on food allergies.

Will my inspection be different if I receive government funding for the early education of two, three and four-year-olds?

58. No. All providers who deliver the EYFS will be inspected against its requirements, whether or not they receive funding. The local authority will make any decisions about the continuation of funding where provision is judged as satisfactory or inadequate.

¹⁹ *Factsheet: childcare – registering school-based provision* (080291), Ofsted, 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080291.

²⁰ *Inspecting early years provision made before or after school or during school holidays* (080167), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/factsheet-childcare-inspecting-early-years-provision-made-or-after-school-or-during-school-holidays.

Will I have two inspections if I am registered on the Childcare Register and the Early Years Register?

59. Normally the inspector will consider whether you meet the Childcare Register requirements during the inspection of the early years provision. The early years inspection report will include a statement as to whether or not the Childcare Register provision complies with requirements, and where it does not the action the provider must take to do so. The report will not grade the part of your provision registered on the Childcare Register but may comment on its impact on children in the EYFS where this is evident.
60. We will usually carry out a separate inspection if we receive a complaint about the Childcare Register provision that relates only to the requirements of that register.²¹

How will Ofsted report on any concerns made about me or my service?

61. In the majority of cases where we receive a concern about your provision, it will lead to an inspection. The inspection report will include information about any non-compliance we find and set this in the context of the overall quality of your provision. Where we receive a concern we will assess the information to decide whether to:
 - carry out an inspection as a priority (within five days)
 - bring forward an inspection (within 30 days)
 - refer the information to you to deal with because it is a minor matter and we will check how you dealt with it at the next inspection
 - rarely, where the information is very serious and involves other agencies, investigate the matter before we inspect; any actions you were required to take during the investigation will be reported in the leadership and management section of your report.

Celebrating outstanding provision on the Early Years Register

62. Providers who achieve an overall grade of outstanding in their inspection are included in the 'outstanding provider scheme'. Where provision is judged as outstanding overall, the scheme entitles the provider to use the Ofsted outstanding provider logo on a range of communications – from stationery to websites. We issue an outstanding provider pack to provision after the inspection report has been published on the Ofsted website. It contains:

²¹ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/factsheet-childcare-requirements-for-childcare-register-childminders-and-home-childcarers>

- a congratulatory letter personally signed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
- an outstanding provider certificate
- a copy of the Ofsted outstanding provider logo and guidance on how the logo may be used.

More information and advice

63. You can obtain more information about our inspections from:

- our helpline – 0300 123 1231
- our website – www.ofsted.gov.uk

64. The following publications are on our website or you can obtain copies by calling 0300 123 1231:

- [Early years online self-evaluation form and guidance – for settings delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage](#)
- [Ofsted | Using the early years evaluation schedule: guidance for inspectors of registered early years settings required to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage](#)
- [Ofsted | Conducting Childcare Register inspections](#)
- [Framework for the regulation of those on the Early Years Register](#)
- [Ofsted | Conducting Childcare Register inspections](#)
- [Ofsted | Factsheet: childcare - Requirements for the Childcare Register: childcare providers on non-domestic or domestic premises](#)
This factsheet describes the requirements set out in regulations for both parts of the Childcare Register.
- [Ofsted | Factsheet: childcare - Requirements for the Childcare Register: childminders and home childcarers.](#)
This factsheet describes the requirements set out in regulations for both parts of the Childcare Register.
- The [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#); [Development matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage](#); and [A know how guide: the EYFS progress check at age two](#), are available from the Department for Education website: www.education.gov.uk.
- The Foundation Years website: www.foundationyears.org.uk.

65. Your local authority gives advice and support about the regulation of registered provision. You may find its contact details through your local telephone directory, on your local authority's website or the National Association of Families Information Services website: www.daycaretrust.org.uk.

