
Childcare options and support

Summary

- The cost of childcare will depend on the type of service you choose.
 - You may be able to get financial help from the Commonwealth Government, contact the Department of Human Services on 136 150 for further information.
 - There are various childcare options available so finding the right type of childcare will depend on your needs and the needs of your child, as well as availability in your area.
 - Childcare options include long day care, family day care, after-school care, occasional care and private nannies.
 - The Commonwealth Government's Child Care Access Hotline can give you up-to-date information and contact details for approved childcare services in all regions throughout Australia. Call 1800 670 305.
 - If you have a concern about the care your child receives or a particular incident involving your child, it is a good idea to make your complaint as soon as possible, either in person or writing. As a first step, speak with the person or service involved about your concerns.
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If you are a parent who is returning to work or study or have other commitments, you might need to access a childcare service for your child.

There are several childcare options to choose from, and finding the right arrangement will depend on the length of care you need, your child's age and the education and care service you think would best suit your child.

Some childcare or family day care services have a long waiting list, so it is a good idea to plan ahead if you know the approximate date when you will need their service. You can put your child's name on the waiting list as early as you like to reserve a place for when you return to work or study, or when it becomes available.

Financial support for childcare

The cost of childcare services will depend on your family income. You may be eligible for assistance from the Commonwealth Government including:

- **Child Care Benefit**
- **Child Care Rebate**
- **JET Child Care Fee Assistance**
- **Family Tax Benefit**
- other government payments.

For more information about Commonwealth Government assistance, visit the **Department of Human Services** website or call 136 150.

'Registered' and 'approved' childcare

The Commonwealth Government provides the Child Care Benefit to help pay for the cost of childcare for families using 'approved' or 'registered' care.

- **Registered care** – childcare is provided by carers registered with the Family Assistance Office. This may include grandparents, relatives, friends or nannies. Some kindergartens, outside-school-hours care services
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and occasional care services sometimes provide this service too.

- **Approved childcare** – childcare is provided by a service provider approved to receive Child Care Benefit payments on behalf of eligible families. Most long day care, family day care, before and after school care and vacation care providers are approved childcare providers. Some occasional care and in-home care services are also approved childcare providers.

Types of childcare and early learning services

There are various education and care options available, and finding the right type of service will depend on your needs and the needs of your child, costs and subsidies, quality of services, as well as availability near your home or work.

Education and care services include centre based services and family day care services. Many providers will allow you to make an appointment to visit their premises where they will show you their facilities and explain their program. It is a good idea to visit the service so you can get a feel for whether or not they would be a good fit for you and your child.

Long day care - centre based service

Childcare centres usually provide long day care, and many offer an early learning component as part of their program. Long day care is suitable for children from birth to age six, and the hours of operation are usually between 7.30am and 6pm. Some childcare centres open earlier and have the option of morning or afternoon sessions.

Private companies, local councils, community organisations, individuals and non-profit organisations operate childcare centres.

The majority of centres are approved by the Commonwealth, which means families using the service may be eligible for the Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Rebate. Approved services must meet the **National Quality**

Standard.

Family day care

Family day care providers offer early education and care for other people's children in their own home.

Family day care is available for children from birth through to primary school age. This type of education and care service may be available overnight or on weekends for families who are on-call or who work shifts. The services are flexible, providing all-day care, part-time, casual, overnight, before and after school care and care during school holidays.

A family day care service provides care in a home for the maximum number of children, including their own children, under national law and regulations.

The majority of family day care services are approved childcare services, which means families using the service may be eligible for the Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Rebate. Approved services must also show that they are meeting the National Quality Standard.

After-school care or outside school hours care

After-school care, also known as outside school hours care is for school aged children or children of any age in special or emergency situations.

The service operates before and after school (7.30am to 9am and 3pm to 6pm), during school holidays and on student-free days.

Centres are usually located on primary school sites in the school hall or playground. After-school care might be provided in a childcare centre, community facility or outside-school-hours care centre near the primary school. Many centres offer a snack.

Vacation care generally includes indoor and outdoor activities.

The majority of after-school care centres are approved childcare services. This means that families using the

service may be eligible for the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate. Approved services must also show they are meeting certain quality standards.

Occasional care

Occasional care provides care for children on a casual basis in a centre. This type of care is suitable for families who do not need regular childcare but only require care from time to time, such as when they have an appointment.

Private nannies

Nannies are paid child carers who often have formal training in childcare or teaching. A nanny should at least have a current first aid certificate. Nannies usually provide flexible care arrangements and may be available after hours and on weekends.

A private nanny is usually more expensive than other day care options. To reduce the cost of nanny fees, some families 'nanny share', where they split the cost of the nanny's fees between two or more families.

To find a good nanny in your area, you can ask for recommendations from other parents, friends and family. You will want to find a nanny who is a good fit for your family. You can also contact a nanny agency to hire a nanny.

If you hire a nanny directly, ask for a Working with Children Check and references.

Help with finding a childcare place and applying for financial assistance

The Commonwealth Government's MyChild website and its Child Care Access Hotline can help you find childcare options within your area and help you apply for financial assistance to help with the cost of childcare.

MyChild website

The Commonwealth Government's MyChild website provides information on the different types of childcare available and how you can apply for financial assistance to help with the cost of childcare. You can also search a database on the website to find childcare centres near you. In many cases, you will also be able to find out if the childcare service has a vacancy and what their fees are.

For more information visit the [MyChild](#) website.

Child Care Access Hotline

The Commonwealth Government's Child Care Access Hotline can give you up-to-date information and contact details for approved childcare services in all regions throughout Australia. Call the hotline on **1800 670 305**.

The hotline operates from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and is a free call unless you call from a mobile phone.

Complaints about childcare providers

In Victoria, the Department of Education and Training manages complaints about licensed childcare providers such as long day care, family day care and after-school care.

If you have a concern about the care your child receives or a particular incident involving your child, it is a good idea to make your complaint as soon as possible, either in person or writing.

As a first step, speak with the person or service involved about your concerns. This might be the approved childcare provider or the person who controls or manages the service, or a staff member at the service. Your concern might be a misunderstanding or something that a simple apology could resolve.

Your childcare provider must manage and respond to your complaint in a discreet, effective and timely way. They also have to tell the Department of Education and Training within 24 hours if your complaint alleges that:

- a child's health, safety or wellbeing needs have not been met
- the law has been broken.

You can also call the Licensed Children's Service helpline on **1300 307 415** if you need help lodging your complaint.

For more information visit the **Department of Education and Training** website.

Where to get help

- Child Care Access Hotline, call 1800 670 305
- Your maternal and child health nurse
- Licensed Children's Service helpline, call 1300 307 415

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