

Crèches

National standards for under 8s
day care and childminding

SureStart

Introduction

The Government is committed to promoting the welfare and development of all our young children. Good quality care and education in the early years raise educational standards and opportunities, and enhance children's social development.

The Government is determined that all child care services, be they new or established, provide a secure and safe environment for children, not least so that parents can have confidence that their children are well looked after.

About the national standards

The national standards represent a baseline of quality below which no provider may fall. However, they are also intended to underpin a continuous improvement in quality in all settings.

There are 14 national standards. Each standard describes a particular quality outcome, and is accompanied by a set of supporting criteria giving information about how that outcome is to be achieved. Regulations under the Children Act require providers (technically the registered person in each setting) to meet the 14 standards and to have regard to the supporting criteria. The law also requires Ofsted to have regard to both the standards and criteria.

The national standards do not override the need for providers to comply with other legislation such as that covering health and safety, food hygiene, fire or planning requirements.

Applying the supporting criteria

The criteria differ between each of the five categories of day care and childminding provision:

- full day care
- sessional day care
- crèches
- out of school care
- childminding

In addition, a number of annexes have been attached where appropriate, explaining how the criteria are applied to overnight care, facilities caring for babies and open access schemes.

Providers will normally show that they are meeting the headline standards by following the criteria. However, the criteria do not have to be followed to the letter if the provider can demonstrate, and Ofsted is satisfied, that the standards are being met in a different way. There are two exceptions to this.

First, certain criteria refer to requirements that are set in the regulations (Day Care and Childminding (National Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 No.1996, and other regulations under Part XA of the Children Act 1989) for example, the requirements on physical punishment and record keeping. Clearly providers are obliged to meet these requirements and so the flexibility which applies to the other criteria will not apply in this instance. Footnotes to the text of the criteria highlight where this is the case.

Second, standard 2 says that the provider must meet the requirements for adult:child ratios and training and qualifications which are set in the criteria, although they do incorporate a degree of flexibility (for example, the action plan process allows the qualification requirements to be met over time where they cannot be achieved immediately).

Most providers will be clear into which of the five categories of childcare their setting falls, and therefore which criteria apply. There will be circumstances, however, where a particular setting displays characteristics of more than one category. In these cases Ofsted will notify the provider which category of childcare is being used for registration, and whether any additional or alternative criteria are appropriate.

For example, although a setting operating for 4½ hours is treated as full day care, there may be full day care criteria e.g. those referring to laundry and other premises facilities which are not appropriate because the setting is operating for a period only just over the limit for sessional care. In these circumstances, the relevant sessional day care criteria may be applied.

Also, for example, where a crèche facility offers full day care for a short period of 6 weeks during the summer holidays, certain full day care criteria may be applied for that period.

In all cases Ofsted's exercise of discretion in applying the supporting criteria will:

- be focused upon the outcome for the child or children being cared for, and in their interests;
- be a professional judgement;
- be an individual decision based upon a recognition of the uniqueness and abilities of the provider;
- be fully and explicitly explained and justified in writing;
- remain consistent with the outcomes required by the 14 national standards.

Glossary

Registered person: a person deemed qualified to care for children and whose name appears on the certificate of registration. The registered person has overall responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of the national standards are met. A company, committee or other group may be the registered person.

Manager: the person in day to day charge of the setting. The manager need not be the same person as the registered person. If not, the manager will be recruited and vetted by the registered person. A manager must have appropriate qualifications and experience.

Parent: any person with parental responsibility for a child.

Early Years Childcare Inspector: a person employed by Ofsted who is responsible for regulating and inspecting day care and childminding provision.

National standards

Crèches

Definition

Facilities that provide occasional care for children under eight and are provided on particular premises on more than five days a year. They need to be registered where they run for more than 2 hours a day, even where individual children attend for shorter periods. Some are in *permanent* premises and care for children while parents are engaged in particular activities, e.g. shopping or sport. Others are established on a *temporary* basis to care for children while their parents are involved in time-limited activities, e.g. a conference or exhibition.

National standards

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Equipment: Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

Standard 6

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Health: The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

Standard 8

Food and drink: Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

Standard 9

Equal opportunities: The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

Standard 10

Special needs (including special educational needs and disabilities): The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

Standard 11

Behaviour: Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

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Working in partnership with parents and carers: The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

Standard 13

Child protection: The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

Standard 14

Documentation: Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, and to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the children's parent.

Annex A

Babies/children under 2: These are additional criteria to be met by a registered person providing group care who wishes to care for babies.

Standard 1

Suitable person

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

Supporting criteria

- 1.1** The registered person complies with all conditions of registration, including any which require them to submit to a vetting procedure whereby the information supplied is verified with the relevant sources.

The vetting procedure, which includes criminal records check, will enable the early years child care inspector to determine the suitability of those caring for, or having regular contact with, children. If the registered person fails to comply with such a condition the early years child care inspector may, amongst other things, take this into account in determining their suitability.

- 1.2** The registered person, their staff and volunteers have not been convicted of an offence or been the subject of an order which disqualifies them from registration under regulations made under schedule 9A of the Children Act 1989.*

Where disqualification arising from an offence carries a time-limit in the regulations, and that time-limit has expired, or where an offence mentioned in the regulations made under schedule 9A was not subject to a qualifying sentence, or where the person is or has been the subject of an order mentioned in the Disqualification for Caring for Children Regulations 1991, in determining the suitability of the registered person the early years child care inspector will have regard to all circumstances of the offence or order. Factors will include the date of offence or order, the type of offence or order, the degree of culpability of the person and the person's activity and involvement with children since the offence or order.

- 1.3** The registered person ensures that any person who has not been vetted is never left alone with children.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Qualifications

1.4 The manager has at least a level 3 qualification appropriate to the post.

In addition:

- the manager has at least 2 years' experience of working in a day care setting;
- all managers, staff and volunteers are suitable, both mentally and physically, to care for children;
- all managers, staff and volunteers have the appropriate experience, skills and ability to do their jobs.

Standard 2

Organisation

The registered person meets required adult:child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

Supporting criteria

- 2.1** The registered person demonstrates that staff are deployed effectively within the premises to ensure the safety, welfare and development of children.
- 2.2** There is a named deputy who is able to take charge in the absence of the manager.

Group size

- 2.3** The size of a group never exceeds 26 children. A provision may include more than one group.

Staff training and qualifications

- 2.4** The registered person ensures that:
- at least half of all child care staff hold a level 2 qualification appropriate for the care or development of children. Where this cannot be achieved immediately, providers set out an action plan detailing how they intend to meet this criterion and in what timescale.

Ofsted will consider the plan offering their approval or indicating aspects that need improvement;

- all staff have induction training which includes health and safety and child protection policies and procedures in their first week of employment;
- the continuing training needs of staff are met.
- trainees under 17 years of age are supervised at all times and are not counted in the staffing ratios; where the registered person is satisfied that trainees of 17 years or over are competent and responsible they may be included in the staffing ratios.

2.5 Accessible individual records are kept on the premises containing the name and address of the staff members, any volunteers and committee members and information about recruitment, training and qualifications.*

Staffing ratios

2.6 The minimum staffing ratios are:

- 1:3 children under 2 years
- 1:4 children aged 2 years
- 1:8 children aged 3–7 years

These ratios include any children of staff or volunteers.

2.7 There is a minimum of two adults on duty.

2.8 Any care provided for children aged 8–14 is not allowed to adversely affect the care provided for children under 8 years old.

2.9 There are adequate staff to ensure the security of any group of children which is constantly changing and give children the help they need to settle in. Regular volunteers and trainees can be taken into account in the normal staffing ratios.

2.10 The registered person ensures that suitable contingency arrangements are in place to cover emergencies and unexpected staff absences, and sufficient suitable staff and volunteers to cover staff breaks, holidays, sickness and time spent with parents.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Registration system

- 2.11** There is a system for registering children and staff attendance on a daily basis, showing hours of attendance. The name, home address and date of birth of each child who is looked after on the premises should be recorded.* There is a procedure in place for identifying children and parents to ensure that children are collected by the correct person.

Standard 3

Care, learning and play

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

Supporting criteria

- 3.1** The registered person ensures resources appropriate to children of different ages are provided and organises them so that they are readily available.
- 3.2** The registered person and their staff offer support to children in the activities they choose. They listen to children and talk with them about what they are doing.
- 3.3** The registered person ensures all their staff help children learn about what is right and wrong.
- 3.4** The registered person ensures there are opportunities for children to rest as needed.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Standard 4

Physical environment

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

Supporting criteria

- 4.1** The premises are made welcoming and friendly to children and parents.
- 4.2** The premises are clean, well lit, adequately ventilated and maintained in a suitable state of repair and decoration.
- 4.3** The registered premises are for the sole use of the facility during the hours of operation.
- 4.4** The registered person ensures they operate within local planning and building control requirements.
- 4.5** There is access to a telephone on the premises.
- 4.6** Rooms are maintained at an adequate temperature.

Indoor play area

- 4.7** The space standards provide minimum space requirements for the whole provision. The registered person shows how this space will be divided up and used to provide activities for groups of children and how staff will be deployed within it.

The following space standards represent minimum space per child.

Age	Sq. Mtrs
under 2 years	3.5
2 years	2.5
3–7 years	2.3

- 4.8** Play areas are large enough to give scope for free movement and well spread out activities. There are separate areas for different activities including space for children to rest.

- 4.9** There is adequate storage space for equipment.

Outdoor play area

- 4.10** If outdoor play space adjoining the premises is provided, it is safe, secure and well maintained.

Toilet facilities

- 4.11** There is normally one toilet and one wash hand basin with hot and cold water available for every ten children over the age of two.

Kitchen area

- 4.12** If there is a kitchen area, children do not have access to it unless it is being used solely for a supervised children's activity.

Standard 5

Equipment

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

Supporting criteria

- 5.1** The registered person ensures that sufficient suitable toys and play materials are available to provide stimulating activities and play opportunities for the children in all areas of play, learning and development. These are appropriate for the ages and individual developmental needs of the children.
- 5.2** Furniture, toys and equipment on the premises are in good repair and conform to BS EN safety standards or the Toys (Safety) Regulations (1995) where applicable. If public playgrounds are used, the registered person ensures that children do not use faulty equipment.
- 5.3** There are sufficient numbers of child sized chairs and tables to allow flexible arrangements for groups of children to play and eat together.

Standard 6

Safety

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

Supporting criteria

- 6.1** The registered person takes reasonable steps to ensure that hazards to children on the premises, both inside and outside, are minimised and is aware of, and complies with, health and safety regulations. Staff are trained to have an understanding of health and safety requirements for the environment in which they work.

Risk assessment

- 6.2** The registered person conducts a risk assessment of the premises and this is reviewed if there is a significant change or if the registered person suspects that it is no longer valid. An action plan with timescales identifies action to be taken to minimise identified risks.

Gas/electricity

- 6.3** Gas, electrical and other appliances and fittings conform to safety requirements and do not pose a hazard to children.

Security

- 6.4** The premises and any outside play area are secure and children are not able to leave them unsupervised. The registered person has an effective system for managing access to the premises, ensures that it is used, and keeps a record of visitors.
- 6.5** Children are supervised at all times. In the event of a child being lost or not collected there is a clearly defined procedure to be followed.*
- 6.6** In large venues there is easy access to security staff if required.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Outside area

- 6.7** Ponds, drains, pools or any natural water are made safe or inaccessible to children. Outdoor water activities are closely supervised at all times.
- 6.8** The registered person does not usually keep hazardous indoor and outdoor plants on the premises. However, if these are present, they are made inaccessible to children.

Fire safety

- 6.9** The registered person is fully informed about fire evacuation procedures for the whole building.
- 6.10** There are written procedures for emergency evacuation of the crèche from the building,* which include any special measures to be taken where children are located above or below ground level, known to all staff and fire drills are carried out periodically. The registered person complies with any recommendations made by the Fire Safety Officer and records are kept to his satisfaction.
- 6.11** Fire doors are not obstructed and fire exits are clearly identifiable and easily opened from the inside.
- 6.12** Adequate fire detection and control equipment are readily available.

Outings and transport

- 6.13** The registered person ensures that there are operational procedures for the safe conduct of any outings provided. Records are kept about vehicles in which children are transported, including insurance details and a list of named drivers. Drivers using their own transport have adequate insurance cover.

Insurance

- 6.14** The registered person carries public liability insurance for the provision.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Standard 7

Health

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

Supporting criteria

Hygiene

- 7.1** The premises and equipment are clean.
- 7.2** The registered person ensures that staff are informed and aware of the importance of good hygiene practice in order to prevent the spread of infection. Staff are informed of and kept up to date with hygiene procedures.

Animals

- 7.3** The registered person ensures that any animals on the premises are safe to be in the proximity of children and do not pose a health risk.

Sandpits

- 7.4** Sandpits are protected from contamination and the sand is clean.

Food handling

- 7.5** Those responsible for the preparation and handling of food are fully aware of, and comply with, regulations relating to food safety and hygiene.

Medicine

- 7.6** The registered person has a clear policy, understood by all staff and discussed with parents, regarding the administration of medication. If medicine is to be given it includes the following:
 - medicines are stored in their original containers, clearly labelled and inaccessible to children;

- medicines are not usually administered unless they have been prescribed for that child by a doctor;
- the parent gives prior written permission to administer any medication;*
- written records are kept of all medicines administered to children, and parents sign the record book to acknowledge the entry;*
- if the administration of prescription medicines requires technical/medical knowledge then individual training is provided for staff from a qualified health professional. Training is specific to the individual child concerned.

First aid

- 7.7** There is a first aid box, the contents of which will be determined in the first aid training course and are checked frequently and replaced as necessary. This is kept in an accessible place out of the reach of children.
- 7.8** There is at least one member of staff with a current first aid training certificate on the premises or on outings at any one time. The first aid qualification includes training in first aid for infants and young children which is consistent with any guidance issued to local authorities by the Secretary of State.
- 7.9** Written parental permission is requested, at the time of the placement, to the seeking of any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment in the future.
- 7.10** A record is maintained, signed by the parent, of any accidents.*

Sick children

- 7.11** There is a policy about the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious which is discussed with parents. This includes a procedure for contacting parents or another adult designated by the parent if a child becomes ill whilst in the crèche.

Smoking

- 7.12** There is a no smoking policy.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Standard 8

Food and drink

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

Supporting criteria

- 8.1** Fresh drinking water is available to children at all times.
- 8.2** Children attending a temporary crèche all day are offered a midday meal or a packed lunch, which can be provided by parents. Parents are advised of what can be stored safely.
- 8.3** If food is provided, the registered person requests information from the parent about any special dietary requirements, preferences or food allergies the child may have. Where these exist, the registered person makes a record and takes heed of the information provided.

Standard 9

Equal opportunities

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

Supporting criteria

- 9.1** The registered person has and periodically reviews an equal opportunities policy, which is consistent with current legislation and guidance. All staff and volunteers understand and implement this policy and it is available to parents.
- 9.2** All children and adults are treated with equal concern and the registered person has regard to relevant anti-discriminatory good practice. The registered person promotes equal opportunities with regard to employment, training, admission to day care and access to the resources, activities and facilities available.

- 9.3** The registered person liaises with parents to ensure that all children's records contain information which enables appropriate care to be given.

Standard 10

Special needs (including special educational needs and disabilities)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

Supporting criteria

- 10.1** The registered person has a written statement about special needs which is consistent with current legislation and guidance and includes special educational needs and disabilities. It is available to parents.
- 10.2** Staffing arrangements are designed to meet the needs of individual children who attend and have special needs. Such children are welcomed appropriately.
- 10.3** Children with special needs attending a crèche have access, alongside their peers, to the facilities, activities and play opportunities provided whenever reasonable, in order to promote their welfare and development.
- 10.4** The physical environment is, as far as is reasonable, suitable for children with disabilities.
- 10.5** The registered person ensures the privacy of children with special needs when intimate care is being provided.

Standard 11

Behaviour

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

Supporting criteria

- 11.1** The registered person produces a written statement on behaviour management, including bullying, which states the methods used to manage children's behaviour. This is fully understood and followed by all staff and is available to parents.
- 11.2** The registered person creates an environment that encourages good behaviour.
- 11.3** Adult handling of behaviour is consistent and developmentally appropriate, respecting individual children's level of understanding and maturity.
- 11.4** Physical punishments, or the threat of them, are not used.*
- 11.5** Adults do not use any form of physical intervention, e.g. holding, unless it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children, an adult or serious damage to property. Any incident is recorded and the parent informed of the incident on the day.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Standard 12

Working in partnership with parents and carers

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

Supporting criteria

12.1 Information is given to parents which includes:

- basic written information about the setting e.g. the admissions policy, hours, contact information, staffing, routines etc.;
- details of policies and procedures which are available to parents.
- a written complaints procedure which includes the address and phone number of the regulator;*
- information about activities provided for children;
- information about the registration and collection system;

12.2 Volunteers or committee members are given full information and guidance on their roles and responsibilities.

12.3 There is a system in place for the exchange of information between parents and staff members. Parents are able to share information and their views and concerns are respected and acknowledged. Appropriate and prompt action is taken on any concerns raised and a record of all complaints is maintained.

12.4 Staff are aware of the need to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

12.5 Parents have access to all written records about their children.

12.6 Children are only released from the care of the provision to individuals named by the parent.

12.7 If a child is identified as a child in need (section 17 of the Children Act 1989) the registered person, usually with parents' permission, gives appropriate information to referring agencies.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Standard 13

Child protection

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

Supporting criteria

- 13.1** The protection of the child is the registered person's first priority.
- 13.2** The registered person has a written statement, based on the procedures laid out in the booklet 'What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused – Summary' (or any national guidance which replaces this publication). This statement should clearly state staff responsibilities with regard to the reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect in accordance with local Area Child Protection Committee** procedures and should include contact and telephone numbers for the local police and social services. It includes procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer.* These procedures are shared with parents before admission to day care.
- 13.3** The registered person ensures that:
- a designated member of staff is responsible for liaison with local child protection agencies and with Ofsted in any child protection situation;
 - other staff are aware of child protection issues and are able to implement the policies and procedures in the absence of the designated member of staff.
- 13.4** The registered person ensures that all staff are aware of possible signs and symptoms of children at risk and are aware of their responsibility to:
- report concerns to police or social services in accordance with local Area Child Protection Committee procedures without delay;

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

** The Area Child Protection Committee in each local authority area brings together representatives from the main agencies responsible for helping to protect children from abuse and neglect

- keep concerns confidential following the guidelines in 'What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused – Summary'.

Standard 14

Documentation

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, and to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.

Supporting criteria

- 14.1** Records relating to individual children are retained for a reasonable period of time after the children have left the provision. * *
- 14.2** The records are always available for inspection by the early years child care inspector. *

Notification of changes

- 14.3** The early years child care inspector is informed of the following at the earliest opportunity:
- any changes in members of staff and people living on the premises; *
 - any significant changes to the premises; *
 - allegations of abuse by a member of staff or volunteer, or any abuse which is alleged to have taken place on the premises; *
 - any other significant events. *

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

* * Certain records are required to be kept as set out in regulations

Annex A

Babies/children under 2

These are additional criteria to be met by a registered person providing group care who wishes to care for babies.

Organisation

A.1 The registered person ensures that:

- children aged under two years are cared for in groups of no more than 12;
- staff caring for babies are competent to do so;
- at least 50% of staff caring for babies have received training in this specific area;
- the person in charge of the babies room has at least two years' experience of working with children under two years;

Care, learning and play

A.2 The registered person ensures that:

- children have the opportunity to interact with a consistent adult at frequent intervals;
- children's individual sleeping routines are respected;
- activities, toys and equipment are appropriate for the child's age and provide varied sensory opportunities and experiences.

Safety

A.3 The registered person ensures that:

- when in high or low chairs, children are restrained in safety harnesses;
- sleeping babies are frequently checked.

Food and drink

A.4 The registered person ensures that:

- feeding and nappy changing takes place in accordance with the child's individual needs and not as part of a nursery routine;
- normally, babies are held whilst bottle feeding, preferably by the same carer;
- facilities for the hygienic preparation of babies' feeds are available;
- suitable sterilisation equipment is used for babies' feeding equipment and dummies if used;
- records are kept of babies' food intake for parents.

Physical environment

A.5 The registered person ensures that:

- there is a separate base area for children under two. However, they should be able to have contact with older children and can be transferred to an older group after they reach the age of 18 months if that is appropriate for their individual development;
- nappy changing facilities are provided which meet environmental health standards;
- quiet areas are provided to enable individual sleep patterns to be facilitated.

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