

Maternity nurses, au pairs, nannies & childminders

A maternity nurse will be on call 24 hours a day 5 or 6 days a week, however this can be flexible depending on your needs. Some nurses are also available for just day or night bookings. Maternity nursing can be a very demanding job so most nurses take a 3 hour break each day for a catch up sleep or some “time out”. Extra duties such as preparing meals, shopping or caring for siblings should be discussed and confirmed at interview stage although most maternity nurses have a “muck-in” attitude.

The main roles of a maternity nurse are:

- Providing support and guidance to the new parents and teaching them to care for their new baby/babies
- Giving advice on all aspects of baby care including breast or bottle feeding, expressing, routine, general baby care and hygiene
- Care of baby’s clothes etc., including laundry and nursery cleanliness, sterilising and making up bottles
- Night feeds (most maternity nurses sleep in same room as baby/babies)
- Teaching parents of multiples to handle and feed babies together and confidently

Many maternity nurses specialise in:

- Twins, triplet and more
- Breast feeding trouble-shooter
- Routine and sleep training
- First babies – teaching the parents the baby basics

Lots of maternity nurses work on return bookings and word of mouth. There are also agencies that place nurses with families. As well as looking at clients’ overall needs, they try and match the clients’ and nurses’ personalities, which makes living each other for the length of booking a lot easier.

Nannies are a privileged addition to a family at an amazing time, but which can be full of overwhelming joy and many fears. They can help new parents become confident, loving, positive parents. As parents and carers, we are investors in people. Babies who have positive, loving input with good sensory and physical stimulation and good routines become more confident, loving and caring adults. The role of maternity nurse is far reaching. They have the ability to change a child’s life and to help make better parents.

- A good place to start would be <http://www.childcare.co.uk> which has useful information on there, plus lists all nannies / babysitters / childminders etc. by area. Registration is free and you need only pay if you wish to email people. However if you save or view a profile you tend to get an email anyway! You can activate a profile for a fee to detail what you are specifically looking for, and search for providers near you by postcode. Providers can also review your profile and send you emails if they are interested in the position.

- Another option is <http://www.gumtree.co.uk>. Make sure you are really specific about your requirements in your ad if you use Gumtree, so that you're not overwhelmed with CVs. Suggestions include being almost painfully precise (and particularly in terms of requirements around care for multiples) to limit the applications to 15-20. It's also worth getting the likely candidate to "road test" the role after interviewing/talking to them a couple of times on the phone so you can observe their interactions with your children, and discuss attitudes to discipline and how they would deal with various situations. Nannies who seem best on paper/on a phone call aren't always the ones who do best interacting with your children.
- [Herts family information service](#) is a great site which can give you a list of all registered childminders, crèches, day nurseries etc. within a certain area.
- Ensure you get several references of previous families they've worked with – and give those families a phone call, don't just rely on the written reference.
- Be very clear with yourself and prospective nannies about the level of autonomy/responsibility that you want them to have. Most nannies prefer to have a reasonable level of say in how they spend their day and how they do things; the more experienced they are, the more say they prefer in my experience! If you are uncomfortable unless things are done "your way", be up front when you're recruiting someone to see if they are OK with this, otherwise there will be a lot of frustrations on both sides.
- Discuss with prospective nannies about the things that are important to you to make sure their views are similar to yours – if you're a Gina Ford disciple and she or he is a free 'n' easy kind of soul, it's going to be hard on both of you, and confusing for your kids.
- Check market rate and aim to pay at the top end – it makes sure you attract quality candidates, and reduces the risk of them leaving you for a better offer. I always figure my children are the most important thing in my life, and if £20 or £30 a week is the difference between someone OK or someone great, it's worth going without a few nights out or new pairs of shoes for.
- Always be clear in writing what you expect from an au pair or nanny – i.e. tidying toys, putting clothes away, reading to the children, tv allowances for the children etc. to minimise misunderstanding later on...
- While nannies (unless you're doing a nanny share) will be wholly focused on your children, a child minder might be looking after children from several families and will not be able to wholly follow your way of doing things as they need to have routines and priorities that work for all the children they look after.
- Don't forget that this isn't always going to be an easy relationship to get right. If the nanny is great then it can be hard dealing with how close they get to your kids and whether they are "replacing" you in your kids eyes. If the nanny isn't great then you're worried and resentful. You also need to balance treating them well (and let's face it, they won't work well for you if you don't treat them well) and desperately pandering to every whim to prevent nannies from leaving. If things go wrong you

need to (as in every relationship) sit down and work through the problems together, but if things don't improve it's probably best to move on and try again.

- Dealing with the tax/payroll situation can be complex, though www.hmrc.gov.uk has a great deal of information on getting started. There is also a site called <http://www.listentotaxman.com> which does all the calculations for you if you put in a weekly/monthly/annual gross amount. Most recommended tends to be <https://www.nannytax.co.uk/> which will deal with it ALL for you – tax, payroll, payslips, contracts, employment lawyers etc – for a flat annual fee. You might also find it useful taking a look at [Voice the union](#) – which is essentially the Union for nannies and other education professionals – which has useful information about working as a nanny (useful for prospective employers of nannies!)
- Other recommended websites include <https://www.tinies.com/> and <http://www.nannyjob.co.uk/>
- Recommended agencies include <http://hawthorne-nannies.co.uk/>, <http://www.rosebudnannyagency.co.uk>, <http://www.angelsnannies.co.uk> and [Eden Nannies & Maternity](#)
- If you choose to go down the agency route, here are some things to think about:
 - Whether there is a registration fee
 - What the placement fee is
 - What sort of salary range their nannies would tend to require (bit of a give-away if they quote weekly nanny rates much less than other agencies as it shows they don't have same quality nannies)
 - Whether they personally interview nannies
 - Whether they check all their references
 - Whether they ensure nannies are CRB checked
 - What other diligence do they do e.g. do they check current driving licenses, up to date first aid qualification? Etc.
 - Whether they refund all or part of placement fee if Nanny leaves in first 6 months
 - Whether they will help with the drafting of the contract – Hawthorne is very helpful here
 - When do they recommend you start to interview for Nannies (you'll need to work out when you think you might want them to start)
 - What sorts of aftercare do they provide (i.e. do they help iron out teething problems, calling both you and the Nanny for feedback after a few months and ensuring all is well)
- Regardless of where you find your nanny, you will also want to think about the following before advertising:
 - Is it essential the Nanny has formal qualifications (e.g. NNEB)
 - Will she live in (cheaper) or live out (keep your privacy)
 - What hours you need them for – and think whether you'll also need babysitters for evenings (nannies may not want to work horrendously long days – often they start at say 7.30pm and finish at say 6.00pm – the agencies can help with babysitters too (for a further fee!).

- What duties will they do (i.e. childcare only, housework too etc.) – with twins they are unlikely to have time to do much more than the childcare. This involves the nanny taking full care of the children, medical check-ups, do their washing and ironing, cook their meals, tidy the house at the end of the day, take them to baby / toddler groups, other developmental activities etc.
- Whether there are any specific requirements e.g. non-smoker, car driver, many years' experience of dealing with babies etc.
- What holiday you'd offer
- Do you provide the use of a car for the Nanny whilst they are at your house