

Keeping children safe

Choosing the right nanny



Camden Safeguarding
Children Board



Introduction

Hiring a nanny to care for your children at home is a popular choice for many families and offers flexibility for parents and fun for children.

Finding the right nanny for your needs can take time and one of the best ways to find a trustworthy nanny is to contact a recruitment agency. For a fee they will match your requirements with candidates for you to interview.

Whether you advertise privately or use an agency, it is vital that you ensure you hire someone qualified and registered to care for your children.

Safety checks and references

There are no legal requirements on a person applying for a job as a nanny. This means that you, as the employer, must be as confident as possible that you are making the right decision and choosing the right person. Your nanny should expect you to check their identity, background, qualifications and employment history.

It is vital when interviewing a potential nanny that you ask to see:

Proof of identity: ask to see two of the following – passport, driving licence and birth certificate. Insist on seeing originals as photocopying can disguise forgeries. One of these must carry a photograph.

References: always ask for two referees, even if the nanny has been referred to you from an agency. One referee should be the nanny's last or present employer. If your potential nanny is a student or straight from college, ask for a reference from the college tutor and also for a separate reference from their final year placement.

Contact referees with open questions that request a description of the nanny's work for the time they employed the nanny. For example:

- how do you rate the care of the children?
- why did the nanny leave?
- what were their strengths and weaknesses?
- do you see any problems with the nanny being left in sole charge of your child?
- were there any health problems or sick leave taken?
- would you employ them again?

Follow up written references with a telephone call or by visiting the referees if possible.

A full employment history: covering all the work done since the nanny left full-time education. Make sure the details of their employment history are given in months rather than just in years. Identify all gaps

and ask for explanations for them. If they have spent a period abroad, they should provide sufficient evidence of this. Ensure that you pursue in your questioning every gap you identify. Does the candidate seem uncomfortable when you probe gaps? Are they unable to give a full or clear explanation? If so, the gaps could be concealing something, such as a criminal record or a medical condition which might suggest the candidate is unsuitable to be left in charge of your children.

Immigration status: This can be as simple as checking and photocopying the passport.

If your nanny is from a European Economic Area (EEA) or a Swiss national, they can legally work for you with no visa required. Nationals of some of the Eastern European EEA states will need to register under the Worker Registration Scheme within a month of starting work — the Home Office (0845 0106677) can give you more information.

For others you will need to check that there is a valid visa that permits work in the UK. Common visas for nannies include the Au Pair Placement visa, the Working Holidaymaker visa, the Overseas Domestic Workers arrangements and UK Ancestry visas.

Knowingly employing an illegal immigrant can lead to a £2000 fine and a two-year jail sentence.

Qualification certificates: insist on originals and do not accept photocopies. Ask the awarding body for verification if the original certificates have been lost.

Health: Ask your prospective nanny if they have any health problems and how many days off sick they took during the last period of employment. Check this information with referees.

Criminal record check: At present parents cannot gain direct access to criminal record information in respect of a person they wish to employ as a nanny. However, nanny agencies are able to register with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and to ask prospective nannies to apply for disclosures from the CRB to assess their suitability to work with children and to be placed on their books.

Parents can ask if the agency is registered with the CRB and whether it uses the CRB to assess the suitability of the nannies it provides. Alternatively, parents could ask the nanny to show them a copy of disclosure and, while the individual would be quite free to refuse, the parents would be equally free not to employ the individual on that basis.

For further information on the CRB contact the CRB information line on 0870 9090 811 or at crb.gov.uk and disclosure.gov.uk

From November 2010, anyone seeking employment as a nanny must be registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) before they can take up any position. It will be an expectation that potential employers will contact the ISA to check that anyone they are considering employing has been duly registered and it is an offence to employ anyone as a nanny who has not been registered. The Independent Safeguarding Authority can be contacted on 0300 123 1111.

Interviewing

If you decide to employ a nanny it is up to you to carry out a thorough and detailed interview. To make sure you are well prepared it is a good idea to:

- Make a shortlist of potential nannies from applications received
- Talk to each selected applicant on the phone
- Set up interview appointments, allowing at least one hour for each applicant
- Arrange for a friend, your partner or a relative to interview with you
- Prepare a list of questions and put the same questions to each applicant
- Take notes at each interview.

It is also a good idea to know what attributes you are looking for in a nanny. Consider:

Skills and knowledge: childcare and child development qualifications, ability to plan and arrange safe, fun learning opportunities.

Other skills could include nutrition - planning and preparing healthy meals and snacks, first aid training, driving experience and organisational skills.

Attitudes: interest in children as individuals, confidence, resourcefulness.

Experience: of working with children of different ages and in a range of settings.

Questions to ask your nanny

- What qualifications or training do you have?
- Are you on the childcare register?
- What kind of experience do you have?
- Why do you enjoy the job?
- Why do you want this particular job?
- How would you organise my child's day and help them achieve developmental goals?
- Will you keep a food and day diary?
- Where will you take my child out?
- How do you feel about early starts and late finishes?
- Can you babysit in the evening?
- What's your policy on potty training, feeding, teaching right from wrong?

Remember, it is illegal to smack another person's child.

Also remember...

- Ask to see their first aid certificate (is it current?)
- Put everything in writing (hours, job description, length of employment, sick/holiday pay, etc.
- You must take out employer's indemnity insurance in case of an accident
- Always use a reputable nanny agency and check references - talk to at least two previous employers.
- If your nanny lives in, you'll be expected to provide them with a room and food on top of their salary.

What should be included in your contract

- A job description and hours of work
- Salary and agreed method of payment
- Length of employment
- Details of sickness and holiday pay, expenses
- Personal additions - on issues such as limitations on watching television and sweets.





For more information contact:

The National Childminding Association on 0800 169 4486, ncma.org.uk
Working Families Helpline 0800 013 0313, workingfamilies.org.uk

If you have any worries about a child or young person who you feel is being ill treated please contact us immediately. Children and their parents may need help urgently.

Phone Camden Council on 020 7974 6666. In an emergency phone the police on 999. All calls are confidential.

