

THE MULTIPLE BIRTHS FOUNDATION



**SOURCES OF PRACTICAL HELP  
FOR FAMILIES WITH TWINS, TRIPLETS  
AND HIGHER ORDER MULTIPLES**

Multiple Births Foundation  
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Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital  
Du Cane Road, London W12 0HS  
Tel: 020 3313 3519  
E-mail: [mbf@imperial.nhs.uk](mailto:mbf@imperial.nhs.uk)  
Website: [www.multiplebirths.org.uk](http://www.multiplebirths.org.uk)

One of the questions most frequently asked by the parents of twins, triplets and more is “Where can I find help?” This leaflet gives an outline of some of the available options both practical and financial. Prices for paid help should only be used as guidance, as they will vary in different parts of the country.

### **Financial Support**

The government offers a number of schemes for parents. Every family should receive child benefit, which is calculated per child. Some will also be eligible for child and working tax credits and others may be entitled to further support depending on circumstances. For more information visit the government website [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) or call 0845 300 3900. You may also find it useful to use the grants and benefits calculator on [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

Many employers run childcare allowance or vouchers schemes. These often work on a salary sacrifice basis and vary depending on the organisation. Speak to your employer to find out more.

In addition all three and four year olds in England are entitled to a 15 hours of free learning per week for 38 weeks of the year. This can take place in Ofsted registered nurseries, playgroups, preschools or child minders. Lists of Ofsted registered childcare providers in your area can be obtained from your local authority.

#### **Free Help Available**

There is no free state help routinely available for twin families. However there are voluntary organisations that can offer families more practical support who are outlined later in this booklet. Families who are expecting a higher order multiple birth should contact their health visitor in the antenatal period for advice. For information about local social services provision you should contact your local Social Services Department.

### **Support Networks and Helpful Resources**

#### **The Multiple Births Foundation**

An independent charity dependent on donations and grant giving bodies for its funds the Multiple Births Foundation offers professional advice to expectant parents, parents of multiples and professionals. In addition it offers a range of literature written by specialists, evening prenatal meetings, a membership scheme and an informative website.

#### **Twins Clubs and Tamba**

Some of the most helpful local advice will probably be gained from other twin or triplet mothers in your area, who are usually only too pleased to pass on their experiences. For details of your local group phone contact Tamba on 0800 138 0509 or visit the following sites:

[www.twinsclub.co.uk](http://www.twinsclub.co.uk)

[www.twinsonline.org.uk](http://www.twinsonline.org.uk)

[www.twinsuk.co.uk](http://www.twinsuk.co.uk)

#### **Family or Family Information Services (formally Children’s Information Services)**

A free information service for parents and carers of children aged 0 to 19. They offer information and advice on childcare and local activities, including lists of Ofsted registered nurseries and child minders. Call 0800 2346 346 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm weekdays, 9.00 am to 12.00 pm Saturdays) to find your nearest centre or visit the National Association of Families Information Services (NAFIS) website.

### **National Childbirth Trust**

Most NCT groups have a working mothers' group, nanny share registers and breastfeeding counsellors. They also offer local advice and run coffee mornings and afternoon gatherings.

### **Children's Centres**

The Sure Start Children's Centres are designed as a one stop shop of services for parents and children, many of which are free. They offer early learning and daycare activities for children up to the age of 5, combined with professional advice on health and family matters, training and job opportunities. In addition many can provide services such as health visitors, breastfeeding support, healthy eating and speech and language therapy.

### **Home Start**

This charity operates a be-friending scheme, volunteers visit families in their own homes to offer friendship, support and practical assistance.

### **Pre Schools and Playgroups**

Playgroups are often non-profit-making. They may be run by volunteers, often including parents, and provide play time and early education to under fives.

Most playgroups cater for children between the ages of three and five, are open throughout the school year and usually offer half-day sessions. They generally provide places for between 10 and 20 children - there must be one adult for every eight children and at least half of the adults must be qualified leaders or assistants. Three and four year olds can normally get their 15 hours of weekly free early learning at these providers.

Sessions are usually from two-and-a-half hours to four hours, during term time, every day or for several days a week.

Typically, pre-schools and playgroups cost £7.00 to £15.00 per session.

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### **Mum and Baby or Toddler groups**

These are informal groups where mums meet to have a coffee and get out of the house. The age range is dependent on the group but usually between 0 and 5 years. There are sometimes different rooms available for different ages, depending on the size of the group and venue. More

often than not groups are run by volunteers with costs varying from nothing to around £3 -£5 per child.

### **On line**

The internet is a useful source of information and support, although it is worth reading the 'about us' section for each site as there are some less legitimate sites available too. Two of the leading sites for parents and parents to be are [www.mumsnet.com](http://www.mumsnet.com) and [www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com) both of which include areas in their chatrooms for parents of multiples and have 'meet a local mum' links. [www.twinsclub.co.uk](http://www.twinsclub.co.uk) is also a good site for parents of multiples and [www.tamba.org.uk](http://www.tamba.org.uk) has an internet chat room for parents of multiples too. More generic parenting articles can also be found on a range of sites including [www.babycentre.com](http://www.babycentre.com) or the BBC and NHS Choices ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) offers the most reliable advice on health matters

### **Other Activities**

Sometimes it helps just to get out of the house and meet other new parents. Most areas have a local Twins club where you can meet other parents of multiples for a coffee and a chat.

List of other groups aimed at all new parents can be obtained through your Family Information Services, your local library or children's centre and sites such as **Netmums** or [www.familiesonline.co.uk](http://www.familiesonline.co.uk)

### **Finding Childcare**

Each local authority runs a families information service who will be able to give you lists of Ofsted registered nurseries, pre-schools and childminders in your area. Free newspapers and magazines that come through the front door or can be picked up in the library or at your children's centre often carry adverts. In addition, it is worth looking at [yell.com](http://www.yell.com), in the Yellow Pages or Thomsons directory, or speaking to other parents.

The Good Nanny Guide is written by Charlotte Breese (Pub. Vermilion, London £11.99) and is available from all good book shops. This gives advice on how to conduct an interview, what questions to ask, and how to draw up contracts.

It is always difficult finding the right person to trust with your children. In choosing the most appropriate childcare for your situations you may want to consider:

- Time scales - some providers may get booked up in advance
- Recommendations from other parents
- Comparing several different providers to see what's on offer
- If the provider is Ofsted registers and staffing levels
- Thinking about your child's personality, age and interests – what environment they would prefer
- Checking opening times, costs, holiday dates and charges (theirs and yours), degrees of flexibility and provision for sickness (theirs and your child's)
- If the venue feels friendly, clean, light, well ventilated and big enough for children to be active indoors and outdoors
- What the provisions are for sleeping and eating
- The activities provided for the children to do—ie types and varieties of toys, will be any trips out and if so where and how often
- If the children look happy and how the staff interact with them
- The age range of children being cared for.

## **Paid Help Available**

**We cannot stress strongly enough the importance of CRB checking and following up ALL references, especially on nannies/helpers who have sole charge of your children.**

### **Maternity Nurses**

Usually for first month to 6 weeks, they work 24 hours a day, 6 days a week. Costs range from £850 gross per week for twins, and from £900 gross per week for triplets. Part time Maternity Nurses charge £15-£20.00 per hour for daily or night help. Some agencies have people with less experience who will work for lower salaries to gain experience.

### **MNT (Maternity Nanny Training)**

MNT offers a variety of accredited training schemes for maternity nurses, including one especially designed for looking after twins and triplets. The MNT website contains a job page; jobs listed are placed by parents or agencies independently. Some of their newly qualified maternity nurses will work for less money to gain experience.

### **Nannies**

Nannies salaries can vary, below is a guide to rates of pay:

Live-in in London, newly qualified NNEB, NANCW, BTEL, NVQ's £250-£300 net per week.

Live out from £350 net.

Experienced (at least 2 years) from £450 upwards live-in in London per week. Live-out in London, from £500+ net, qualified or with experience. Out of London - from £250 net upwards. Nannies normally work 8 am - 6 pm, 5 days per week, possibly 1 weekend per month and 1 or 2 evenings of babysitting a week, though that would be negotiable.

### **Night Nannies**

Night Nannies work usually 9.00 pm – 7.00 am and charges start at around £90 per night.

### **Doulas**

A doula is usually a mother and has learnt childcare from experience rather than by training. They are like a substitute mother or sister – someone who can help and support you before, during and after you have given birth. Doulas can attend the birth and support the mother through the experience; they can also help at home after the birth, helping in the house and with the care of the babies. They are not there to take the place of a medical professional but to support the mother. Doulas can work full or part time, depending on your needs. Some mothers have them just for the birth whilst others have them only after the babies have arrived for post natal help. You can expect to pay a registered doula from £10-£17 an hour or a flat fee of £400 upwards for attending the birth. Trainee doula's cost less—around £150 for birth and £10.00 per hour postnatal support.

Doula UK offer a hardship fund which covers the expenses of a doula to work with a local family who can not afford the doula themselves. An example would be a family on state benefits. More information can be found on their website.

### **Mother's help**

A Mother's help can be live-in or live-out, they are normally young women aged 17-18 who live-in and have with no formal training. Costs start at £200 per week depending on experience.

Some may prefer to live-out. And an experienced one would charged £7.00 upwards

### **Au Pairs**

Au Pairs are usually aged between 17-18 years old, from overseas, will work 25 hours per week and live with your family. They will help with children or do house work but should not be left

in sole charge. Au Pairs will want time off to attend an English Language College to improve their English. Rates of pay are around £70 per week.

### **Day Nurseries**

Day Nurseries are run by businesses or voluntary groups, and provide care and learning activities for children from birth to five years old. They usually have a special baby room. Parents can send children full or part time, and some offer early drop-offs or late pick-ups. Most day nurseries cost from £25 to £55 per day. All Ofsted registered nurseries agree to meet certain quality standards and must be registered, checked and inspected regularly to make sure they are suitable to look after children. They are also required to follow the Early Years Curriculum.

### **Registered Childminders**

Childminders generally look after children in their own home. And will often take children from a few months. Many will also look after school age children after school and in the holidays. All Ofsted registered childminders who care for children under eight agree to meet certain quality standards and must be registered, checked and inspected regularly to make sure they are suitable to look after children. They are also required to follow the Early Years Curriculum. As they are self-employed they can often be flexible about the days and times they work, however every childminder is different so you will have to discuss this with them. They can look after up to six children under eight years old, although no more than three must be aged under five. All childminders must be registered with the local social services department and are subject to a regular Ofsted report. For further information about registered child minders contact [www.childcarelink.gov.uk](http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk). The approximate cost of a childminders charge between £3.50 - £7 per hour depending on where you live, as a parent of multiples, you may be able to negotiate a better fee.

### **Best Bear Childcare**

Best Bear is an independent website, which only lists nanny agencies that have been assessed by Best Bears Childcare's strict criteria. They cover all childcare from maternity nurses, nannies, au pairs to baby sitters.

### **Cleaners/Domestic Help**

Can be obtained through agencies or locally by putting cards in shop windows, or word of mouth. Rates of pay: starting at £9 an hour, or more in central London.

Please be aware that helpers who live in expect free board and lodging in addition to their wages. You should also take into account that agencies charge fees, which are usually based on salary. Agency rates and salaries differ so it is worth phoning around.

### **Additional Information**

With the exception of social services and childminders, all the resources which have been listed can be obtained either through agencies, who will charge commission (from a week's salary upwards), or through advertisements in nursery nurse magazines, e.g. Nursery World, Nursery Choice, or The Lady.

TNT is a free magazine available outside central London tube stations. Adverts can be placed for all types of help, mainly Australians and New Zealanders will apply; they will work in the country as well as London.

Nannies that come via an agency will already have had their references taken up, though it is still advisable to talk to previous employers yourself for first hand reports. Some agencies now come and interview you at home, so they really do try to pair prospective nannies and their employers very carefully. **Remember to have CRB checks carried out on all helpers.**

If you advertise you will answer all the phone calls and have to check references yourself. You may have as many as 50 phone calls to sort through.

## Useful Addresses and Phone Numbers

The Multiple Births Foundation (MBF)  
Hammersmith House Level 4  
Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital  
Du Cane Road  
London W12 0HS  
Tel: 020 3313 3519  
E-mail: [mbf@imperial.nhs.uk](mailto:mbf@imperial.nhs.uk)  
[www.multiplebirths.org.uk](http://www.multiplebirths.org.uk)

Tamba (Twins and Multiple Births Association)  
Manor House, Church Hill  
Aldershot, Hants, GU12 4JU  
Tel: 01252 332 344  
E-mail: [enquiries@tamba.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@tamba.org.uk)  
[www.tamba.org.uk](http://www.tamba.org.uk)

TAMBA Twinline (helpline)  
Tel: 0800 138 0509  
10am – 1pm, 7pm – 10pm  
Every day

Homestart UK  
The Home-Start Centre, 8-10 West Walk,  
Leicester, LE1 7NA.  
Tel: 0116 258 7900  
Fax: 0116 258 7901  
E-mail: [info@home-start.org.uk](mailto:info@home-start.org.uk)  
[www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk)

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)  
Alexandra House  
Oldham Terrace  
Acton  
London W3 6NH  
Tel: 0300 330 0700  
[enquiries@nct.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nct.org.uk)  
[www.nct.org.uk](http://www.nct.org.uk)

PACEY is the Professional Association for Childcare and  
Early Years  
Royal Court, 81 Tweedy Road  
Bromley, BR1 1TG  
0300 003 0005\* | [info@pacey.org.uk](mailto:info@pacey.org.uk)  
[www.pacey.org.uk](http://www.pacey.org.uk)

Best Bear Childcare  
Website with a list of childcare agencies in the UK  
[www.bestbear.co.uk](http://www.bestbear.co.uk)  
Call 08707 201277 or email [help@bestbear.co.uk](mailto:help@bestbear.co.uk)

Doula UK  
Tel: 0871 4333103  
[www.doula.org.uk](http://www.doula.org.uk)

MNT Training  
The Barn, Lane End  
Itchen Stoke, Alresford  
Hampshire, SO24 0QZ  
United Kingdom  
Tel: 0844 826 8446  
Fax: 0844 826 8447  
Email: [info@mnttraining.co.uk](mailto:info@mnttraining.co.uk)  
[www.mnttraining.co.uk](http://www.mnttraining.co.uk)

Night Nannies  
[www.nightnannies.com](http://www.nightnannies.com)

Netmums  
[www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)

Mumsnet  
[www.mumsnet.com](http://www.mumsnet.com)

Family or Children's Information Services  
[www.familyinformationservices.org.uk](http://www.familyinformationservices.org.uk)

Ofsted  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Finding childcare:  
<https://www.gov.uk/browse/births-deaths-marriages/child-adoption>

Twins Club  
Parent information & forums  
[www.twinsclub.co.uk](http://www.twinsclub.co.uk)

ChildcareLink  
National and local childcare information  
[www.childcarelink.gov.uk](http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk)

Children's Centre  
[www.direct.gov.uk/childrenscntresfinder](http://www.direct.gov.uk/childrenscntresfinder)

Turn2us—grants and benefits checker  
[www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk) / 0808 802 2000

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