



NATIONAL NANNY ASSOCIATION



The National Nanny Association
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National Nanny Association Submission to Inform the Competition and Markets Authority Early Years Education and Childcare Market Study

About the National Nanny Association

The National Nanny Association (NNA) is a not-for-profit professional body representing nannies, maternity practitioners and other home-based childcare professionals across the UK. Our mission is to promote high standards, support professional development and champion safe, high-quality childcare in the family home. Professional nannies and maternity practitioners play an important role within the childcare market. They enable parents to remain in work, provide continuity of care, support children with additional needs, offer flexible childcare outside standard nursery hours and deliver highly personalised care in the child's own home.

Despite this, professional home-based childcare remains underrepresented in policy development, workforce planning and funding discussions. We welcome the CMA's market study and the opportunity to highlight how greater transparency, proportionate regulation and fairer funding could improve parental choice and strengthen the childcare market.

For the purposes of this submission, "professional home-based childcare" refers to individuals whose primary occupation is providing paid childcare in the family home. It does not refer to occasional babysitters, informal carers or family members.

The Importance of Genuine Parental Choice

A well-functioning childcare market should enable parents to choose the type of childcare that best meets their family's needs.

For many families this will be a nursery or childminder. For others, particularly those with multiple children, atypical working hours, children with additional needs, babies requiring continuity of care, or parents working shifts, a professional nanny or maternity practitioner is the most appropriate solution.

Professional home-based childcare should not simply be viewed as an alternative to nursery provision. It is a distinct form of childcare that offers one-to-one care, flexibility and continuity within the child's own home. For many families, particularly those with babies, children with additional needs or complex working patterns, it is the childcare option that best meets their needs.

A competitive childcare market should recognise the contribution of professional home-based childcare and ensure parents are able to make genuinely informed choices between all forms of high-quality childcare.

Current Market Challenges

While professional home-based childcare forms an important part of the childcare market, parents often face significant challenges when trying to make informed choices.

The home-based childcare sector currently lacks consistent standards and clear information for consumers.

Parents encounter a wide range of job titles—including nanny, ousted registered nanny, babysitter, maternity practitioner, maternity nanny, night nanny, infant care specialist and sleep consultant—without any consistent framework explaining the qualifications, training or experience associated with those titles.

This lack of transparency makes it difficult for families to compare providers confidently and identify professionals who meet recognised standards.

In addition, current funding arrangements mean parents choosing home-based childcare often receive significantly less financial support than those using other forms of childcare, limiting genuine choice for many working families.



Recommendations

1. Introduce a proportionate regulatory framework for professional nannies and maternity practitioners

The NNA believes there should be a clear and proportionate regulatory framework for professional nannies and maternity practitioners providing paid childcare as their primary occupation. The objective should not be to create unnecessary bureaucracy, but to provide parents with confidence that professionals caring for children in the family home meet appropriate minimum standards in safeguarding, paediatric first aid, relevant childcare training and ongoing professional development. Any future framework should recognise the unique nature of home-based childcare while supporting professionalism, public confidence and quality across the sector.

2. Introduce mandatory Enhanced DBS checks for all professional home-based childcare providers

Parents should be able to assume that anyone providing paid childcare as their primary occupation has undergone an Enhanced DBS check. At present, this is not a consistent requirement across all home-based childcare roles, creating unnecessary confusion for families and inconsistent safeguarding expectations. The NNA recommends that Government introduces a requirement for all professional home-based childcare providers—including nannies and maternity practitioners—to hold an Enhanced DBS check. This would provide parents with greater confidence, improve transparency and establish a consistent safeguarding baseline across the sector.

3. Develop clearer definitions and expectations for childcare roles

Government should work with the childcare sector to develop clearer guidance on commonly used childcare titles and the standards associated with them. Parents deserve to understand the differences between roles such as nanny, maternity practitioner, maternity nanny, night nanny, sleep consultant and other childcare professionals. Clearer role descriptions would improve transparency, reduce confusion and enable families to make more informed decisions.

4. Review funding arrangements to support genuine parental choice

Current childcare funding arrangements primarily support group-based childcare, meaning families choosing qualified home-based childcare often receive significantly less financial assistance. The NNA recommends that Government reviews whether current funding mechanisms provide genuine neutrality between childcare options and considers how appropriately qualified professional nannies and maternity practitioners could be better incorporated into future funding models. Supporting parental choice should mean supporting children wherever they receive safe, high-quality care.

5. Review the Tax-Free Childcare eligibility threshold

The £100,000 adjusted net income threshold for Tax-Free Childcare has remained unchanged despite significant increases in salaries and the cost of living. As a result, increasing numbers of working families lose access to childcare support despite continuing to face substantial childcare costs. The NNA recommends that Government reviews this threshold to ensure the scheme continues to meet its original objective of supporting working families with childcare costs.

6. Review the effectiveness of the voluntary register

The current voluntary register has not achieved widespread participation and remains poorly understood by both parents and professionals, as well as Ofsted themselves. If professional nannies are not brought within the Early Years Register, Government should undertake a comprehensive review of whether the existing voluntary register remains the most effective mechanism for assuring quality, supporting parental confidence and encouraging professional standards. Any future system should be simple, trusted by parents and proportionate for professionals.



Evidence and Sector Engagement

The National Nanny Association's recommendations are informed by ongoing engagement with professional nannies, maternity practitioners, agencies, policymakers and the wider early years sector.

Our work includes:

- Annual workforce surveys exploring the experiences, confidence and future intentions of professional nannies.
- Monitoring trends in the nanny workforce, including the continued decline in the number of Ofsted-registered nannies.
- Meetings and correspondence with Ministers, Members of Parliament and Department for Education officials regarding the future regulation of home-based childcare.
- Written evidence submitted to parliamentary inquiries and government consultations relating to childcare, workforce development and safeguarding.
- Collaboration with parliamentarians and other organisations in raising awareness of safeguarding issues relating to unregulated childcare roles and advocating for higher professional standards.
- Ongoing engagement with nanny agencies and childcare professionals across the UK, providing insight into recruitment challenges, workforce pressures and changing patterns within the sector.

Conclusion

Professional home-based childcare is an essential part of the UK's childcare market, yet it remains underrepresented within policy development despite the important role it plays in supporting children, families and the wider economy.

The CMA's market study provides an opportunity to strengthen the childcare market by improving transparency, increasing parental confidence and ensuring families are able to make genuinely informed choices between different forms of high-quality childcare.

The National Nanny Association believes that proportionate regulation, clearer role definitions, fairer funding arrangements and a review of existing registration mechanisms would contribute to a more transparent, competitive and accessible childcare market for both parents and professionals.

We would welcome the opportunity to continue working with Government, regulators and the wider sector to ensure that professional home-based childcare is appropriately recognised within the future development of the UK's childcare system.