



## How To... Choose The Right Nursery Management Software For Your Setting

# How to: Choose the right Nursery Management Software for your setting

It's an exciting but daunting thought. You know you need to embrace technology, go paperless and enter the world of nursery management software. You understand the need to "go digital" to allow yourself and your staff the freedom to be able to spend more time doing the job you and they are so passionate about instead of spending hours completing the paperwork that is essential to running a successful nursery. But the inevitable task ahead seems so overwhelming! Allan Presland, CEO of Parenta, compiled his top tips to help you choose the right software for your setting.

## Benefits to your setting

Anything you can do to reduce time spent on lengthy admin tasks, enabling you to have an instant insight into the many areas of your business will benefit. If you're currently using traditional methods of data admin and manually filing reports in your setting, then going digital will certainly save you a lot of time in the future. When Parenta conducted its National Childcare Survey, nursery chain Banana Moon, which has a total of 46 settings, said that since installing Abacus nursery management software, its planning and preparation time had reduced by an incredible 50%!



## Affordability vs. long-term gain

Purchasing any piece of software can be costly. However, when it comes to buying nursery management software, consider what the long term 'return on investment' potential will be. If it's going to save you time and money in the long run, then it could be a great financial investment for your business - many even come with their own payment plans. Nursery management systems are designed to help you manage and organise every aspect of your setting including invoicing, staff rotas and timetables, tracking the children's progress and securely holding sensitive data - eradicating lengthy admin tasks. So, if you and your staff are saving valuable time, money and resources you can focus on what really matters - the children.

## Research!

A simple online search will result in a multitude of nursery software companies offering what at first glance seems to be “much of a muchness”. Many software systems will offer similar packages and features, so we recommend that you invest some time into researching various providers. Find out who their customers are and if they have a wealth of experience in the sector. Look for a company that is well established, with a good reputation and credit rating, has positive customer feedback and places customer experience at the forefront of its company values.

## Data protection and storage

If you choose to invest in nursery management software, it's best to pick a company that is up to date with the latest government legislation and requirements, especially with the new GDPR regulations that came into effect recently. Look at their website for news and updates. This will give you a good indication as to how professional they are and how seriously they take data security.

Look at things like how and where your data will be stored and hosted, how often it is backed up and look for confirmation of ISO accreditation which is the international standard in information security management. All of these things will give you peace of mind with regards to cyber security and help you make the right choice.

## Capability

Due to Ofsted requirements, as part of the EYFS Statutory Framework you're required to keep a record of each child's development - so do look out for software that makes it quicker for you to identify where each child is in their own development pathway, by linking your observations directly to an online portal that meets the EYFS curriculum requirements. Safeguarding forms a substantial part of day-to-day life in your setting, so a package that gives you clear visibility on things like staff ratios and each child's individual profile (which would include allergies etc.) is vital.

It's also incredibly important to be able to see at a glance two important variables within your business: Gaps in staffing and capacity within your setting. Look out for software that allows you to quickly identify these elements of your business – this can help you to decide when to place an advert or do a local leaflet drop if capacity is low and also when to advertise for vacancies, even at short notice.



## Embrace the change!

Any new system brings change. Initially, all of your data will need to be uploaded into a new system which at first glance may seem like a huge task but try and remain focused on the long-term benefits. All reputable providers will allocate a dedicated account manager and customer care team to you who will be on hand to assist with that initial migration of information, all of which should be included in the initial set up cost. The majority of software these days is hosted online, and will be tailor-made to your needs. Look out for offers that guarantee your money back if you are not happy with the system.

Most software companies will provide demos. It's recommended that you use this demo time as a key part of your research. How helpful and insightful is the demo? Are you receiving fantastic customer service? Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions!

The amount of data that the software can handle (both now and in the future) is quite important, especially if you envisage your setting will grow in size. Ask in more detail about how the software is updated to meet specific changes to legislation and whether this holds any additional costs.

## Training

It's important to understand how the system is actually going to work on a day-to-day basis and how you can get the most out of your chosen software to enable you to use it to its full potential. Make sure you choose a provider who will offer you a comprehensive training package and not just take your money and run! Ask if there is a limit to amount of training they provide or if there is any additional charges for training.

Look for phrases like "unlimited, free of charge training" which in some cases could include up to 12 hours a day of phone support, face-to-face training, online video training, or even screen sharing training which is a blessing when trying to navigate your way around a new software system. Ongoing training, not just for the initial set up, is always helpful, so choose a provider that is happy to continue free of charge training even after the initial period.



## Reporting

The subject of reporting is one that is often cited as being the most time consuming and therefore frustrating in this industry. It is key to choose a system that allows you to run reports on every aspect of the business to ensure nothing gets forgotten. Running a report that gives you a quick snapshot of room capacity, staff ratios, registers or dietary requirements is just as important as running full, comprehensive and detailed reports on specific data e.g. outstanding payments, free entitlement allocation, registers, milk or occupancy.

Any setting will need to report on its profitability status at some point during the financial year, therefore detailed present and future financial reporting is fundamental. Reports such as 'aged-balance reports' and 'future fee predictions' which sound intimidating but can be run with minimal effort and provide you with significant insights into the financial efficiency of your nursery. Within a matter of minutes, you can discover how much revenue your nursery will generate over a period of up to a year, based on your current occupancy – giving you the tools to guide you through any future decisions relating to the management of your childcare setting.

The childcare sector is going through a very tough time with limited funding, which means that there has never been a more important time than now to ensure you get paid every month ...and on time. Running reports that can show you exactly what outstanding income is due every month will help you with your cash flow, ensuring you can cover all your outgoings like salaries and rent etc.

If you are one of the many childcare providers who struggles to recover nursery fees, look for software that is integrated with a 'fee collection' option which effectively enables parents to pay their nursery fees to you every month via Direct Debit, allowing the software provider to chase any outstanding fees, not you. This way, you can keep your administration completely separate from the everyday care of the children, avoiding any potential breakdown in relationships you've worked hard to build with parents.



Many of our customers say they save, on average, 5 days a month on invoicing, when they move from a paper-based system to Abacus. That's 3 working months a year more to spend on the things that matter to you, like providing great childcare.

## Upgrades

The digital world is moving at a fast pace and the majority of software on the market will consist of different elements, which can become out of date in time. Ensure you pick a provider that will offer you not only an in-house development team dedicated to adding new features as older versions become out of date but one that will provide and install these essential upgrades free of charge!

Allan Presland's no. 1 best-selling book from Amazon "Improving the business of Childcare", explains what it is that successful nurseries do, that the less successful ones do not. It explains how to adapt processes and systems within any childcare business to enable it to increase profitability and thrive.

If you want to spend more hours with the children in your setting and find that administration tasks cut into this precious time, Abacus nursery management software from Parenta will provide you with the ideal solution. Designed for use by all childcare providers, from small pre-schools to larger settings and nursery chains, Abacus simplifies your administration tasks into one easy-to-use system.

# Parenta Solutions



## SOFTWARE

### NURSERY MANAGEMENT - ABACUS

- Save hours by reducing planning time by 50%
- Speedy invoicing to all parents and carers in minutes
- Instant view of all financial reports
- Manage payments and track debt

### EYFS LEARNING JOURNEY TRACKER - FOOTSTEPS 2

- Record meaningful and detailed EYFS observations
- Improve essential safeguarding and save hours of time
- Reduce your workload and spend more time with the children
- Identify at a glance each child's development pathway

### ONLINE DAILY DIARY - DAYSHARE

- Share every magical moment of each child's day with their parents and carers with our online diary software

### PARENT PORTAL APP

- Bringing parents and carers closer to their child's day by providing a timeline of their progress
- Download Parent Portal App on Android or iOS

- We collect fees, allowing you to focus on childcare, not credit control
- Fee collection reduces stress about pay day
- Maintain good relationships with parents
- Eliminate bad debt from your setting
- We operate on a 98% success rate across the board



## TRAINING

Increase employee motivation and keep staff for longer within your setting by offering training – the ideal tool for you to develop your team.

Parenta courses include:

- Level 2 Childcare
- Level 3 EYE Diploma
- Level 5 Childcare Leadership Qualification
- Business Admin Levels 2 and 3
- Advanced Qualifications in Team Leading and Management

*PLUS ...* Parenta offers a free recruitment service - no fees!



## ONLINE CPD COURSES

No deadlines, no time restrictions, no classroom! Support your staff or further your professional development with our online CPD accredited courses



## MARKETING SOLUTIONS

### WEBSITE DESIGN

- Our childcare websites generate genuine interest and leads from parents and carers
- We specialise in designing and building childcare websites so you can rest assured that our team know what Ofsted and parents/carers are looking for

### BRANDING & DESIGN

- Showcase your setting with branded products. From newsletters to logos and prospectuses to business cards, we take care of all your branding needs

### SOCIAL MEDIA

- We assist you with setting up and using your social media accounts in no time to help you increase your setting's visibility

## Working together for our children



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