

The Dog Daycare Licence Guide 2026

What your licence costs, how to pay less, and how to pass.

Every council fee in England we could find, 230 of them, read from the councils' own websites. Plus the star-rating maths, an application checklist, and the rules in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



A note from Duncan

Same licence. Very different bills.

I have run a licensed dog daycare since 2011, and every time the licence came up for renewal I wondered what other daycares were paying. So we read the fee page of every council in England that publishes one.

What we found surprised us. The same national licence, inspected against the same Defra guidance, costs £181 for a commercial daycare in one council and £1,410 in another. Some councils send a vet and charge for it. Some charge for every year of the licence, so a five-star rating barely helps. Most owners never compare.

This guide puts it all in one place, region by region, with the link to every council's own page. I hope it saves you some money, and some guesswork.

Duncan

Inside

The national picture

The map

Why fees differ

London

South East

East of England

South West

West Midlands

East Midlands

North West

Yorkshire and The Humber

North East

What five stars saves you

The application checklist

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Check yours

The national picture

One national licence. 230 different prices.

A dog day care licence is issued under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 and inspected against the same Defra guidance everywhere. Each council sets its own fee. The guidance says it must be fair and may cover the application, the inspection, compliance checks and enforcement. What that adds up to depends on where you are.

£181 to £1,410

Like for like (a new licence, commercial premises, 2026/27): £181 in Portsmouth, £1,410 in Westminster. Daycare at home can cost less, from £107 in Hull.

£445

What the middle council in England charges for a new licence, taking each council's lowest figure.

£719 vs £285

The middle fee in London against the North East, the dearest and cheapest regions.

16 and 39

Councils where a new licence can cost £1,000 or more, and councils where it can cost under £300.

A third

What a year of licence can cost at five stars, where the council charges one fee whatever the length. A five-star licence lasts three years.

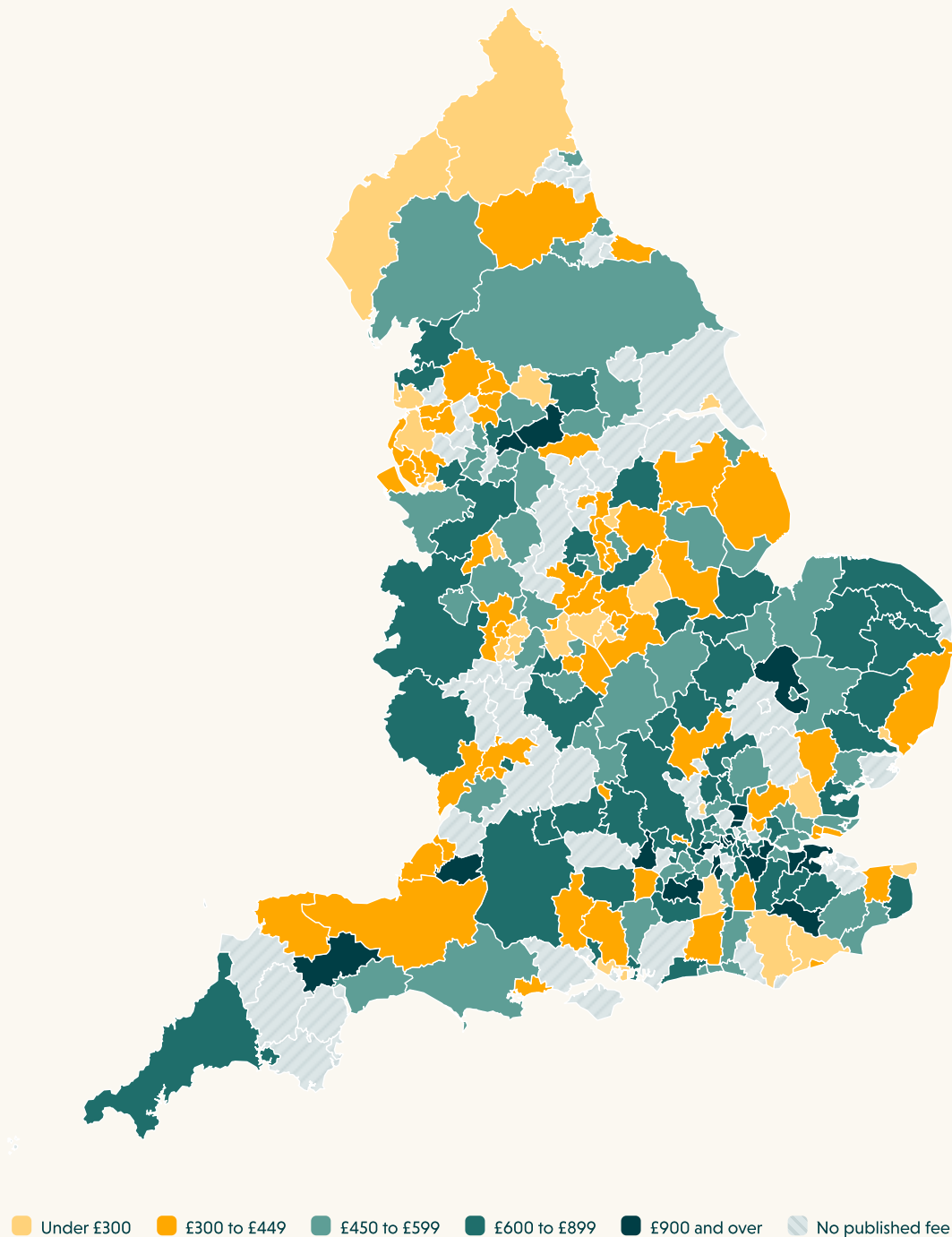
£1,951

The most for any single payment: Kirklees, for a three-year licence paid up front (£253 plus £566 for each year).



The map

What a new licence costs, council by council



How to read these figures

Each figure is what the council says a new licence costs, application and grant added together. Where it varies by licence length, number of dogs or premises, the range is shown; our headline compares like with like (commercial premises, shortest term). Some councils add a vet's inspection, charge less for daycare at home, or use their boarding fee. Not every council prints a fee year and fees usually change each April, so check your council's own page before you apply. 51 councils were re-checked by hand on 12 October 2026.

Each council coloured by the highest new-licence figure it gives. Boundaries: Office for National Statistics, Local Authority Districts (December 2024), Open Government Licence v3.0, contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right.

Why fees differ

Four things that change your bill

1. Whether a vet comes

The guidance does not require a vet to inspect a dog daycare. Some councils send one anyway and charge for it. Bromley's vet inspection is £488 or £666 on a new application, with a £311 mid-term visit.

2. How the fee is split

Many councils charge in two parts: an application fee when you apply and a grant fee when the licence is issued. Add both to compare. Westminster's £1,410 is £1,120 plus £290.

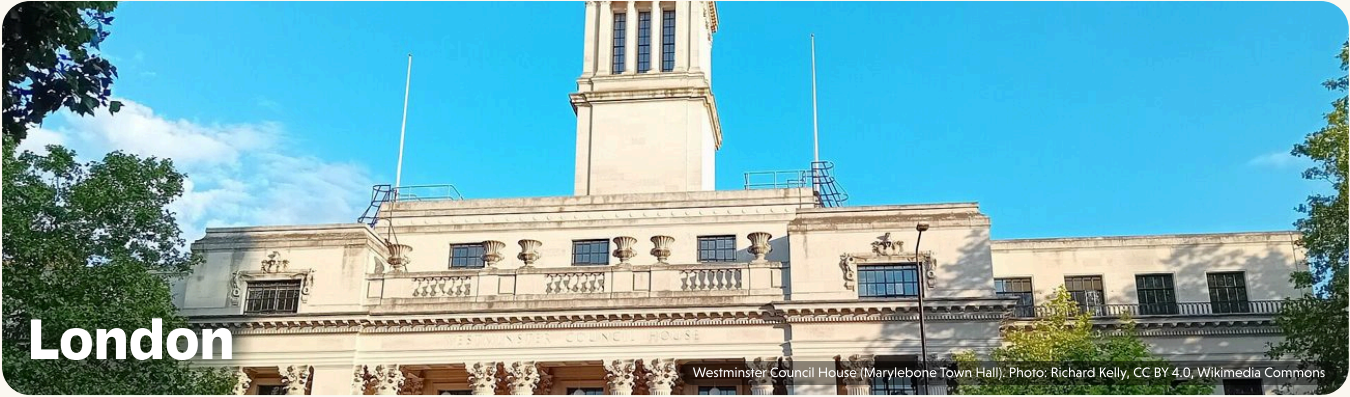
3. Size and length

Some councils charge more for more dogs, or for a longer licence. Others charge one fee for any size and any length, which rewards a good star rating.

4. Home or premises

A few councils charge less for daycare run from a home. Hull charges £107 for a home-based licence and £208 for commercial premises.





£719

Middle new-licence fee

Redbridge

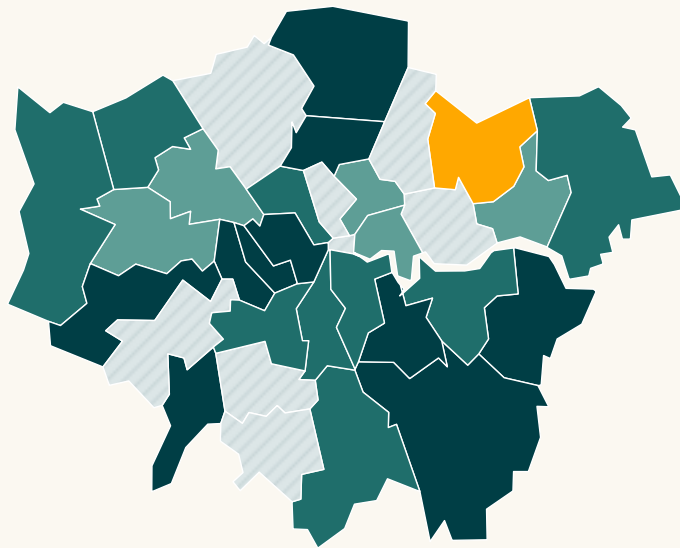
Cheapest: £443

Westminster

Dearest: £1,410

72

Licensed daycares on registers,
62% five stars



3.2×

The dearest council in the London charges 3.2 times the cheapest, comparing each council's lowest figure.

£274 more

The region's middle fee against England's £445.

Under £300 £300 to £449 £450 to £599
£600 to £899 £900 and over No published fee

25 councils with a published fee

Barking and Dagenham	£511.73	Hackney	£593	Kingston	£994 to £1,183
Bexley	£1,259	Hammersmith and Fulham	£1,079 or £1,363	Lambeth	£749.53
Brent	£450 to £575	Haringey	£759 to £968	Lewisham	£1,043
Bromley	£722 to £1,048	Harrow	£637	Redbridge	£443
Camden	£632	Havering	£674	Southwark	£773.90 to £830.60
Croydon	£651	Hillingdon	£529 to £765	Tower Hamlets	£563
Ealing	£467.65 to £554.21	Hounslow	£498 to £1,308.50	Wandsworth	£719
Enfield	£944 to £1,016	Kensington and Chelsea	£1,202 to £1,350	Westminster	£1,410
Greenwich	£737.18				



South East

Guildford Guildhall. Photo: Martinvi, CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons

£501

Middle new-licence fee

Portsmouth

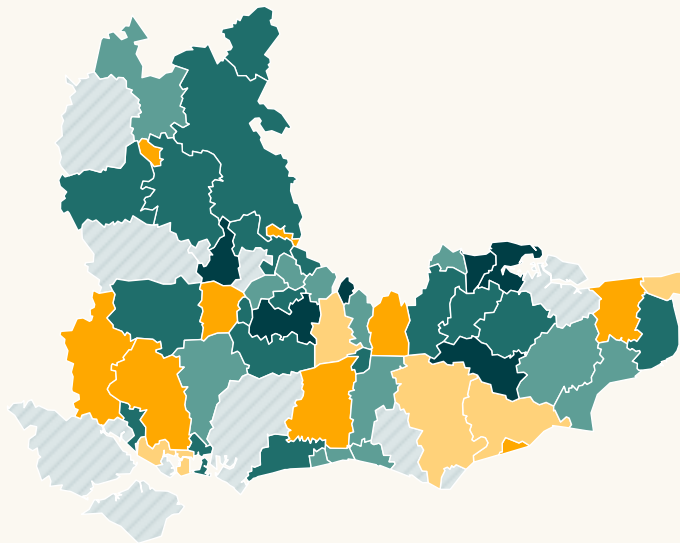
Cheapest: £181

Guildford

Dearest: £1,164.50

209

Licensed daycares on registers,
66% five stars



6.4×

The dearest council in the South East charges 6.4 times the cheapest, comparing each council's lowest figure.

£56 more

The region's middle fee against England's £445.



51 councils with a published fee

Adur and Worthing	£456	Gravesham	£1,120, plus a vet inspection	Sevenoaks	£728
Arun	£833	Guildford	£1,164.50	Slough	£390.40
Ashford	£453	Hart	£318 or £444	South Oxfordshire	£676.50
Basingstoke and Deane	£483 to £606	Hastings	£352	Spelthorne	£600
Brighton and Hove	£451	Havant	£655 to £885	Surrey Heath	£440 to £503
Buckinghamshire	£719	Horsham	£429	Tandridge	£318
Canterbury	£362.92	Maidstone	£590 to £605	Test Valley	£331
Cherwell	£485	Medway	£560 to £965	Thanet	£276 plus vet fee if needed
Crawley	£659.10	Mid Sussex	£587	Tonbridge and Malling	£655 to £721
Dartford	£481	Milton Keynes	£820	Tunbridge Wells	£710 to £1,000
Dover	£460 to £625	Mole Valley	£286.50	Vale of White Horse	£676.50
East Hampshire	£510	Oxford	£420	Waverley	£867.60
Eastleigh	£730	Portsmouth	£181	Wealden	£263 to £278
Elmbridge	£432 or £510	Reigate and Banstead	£501 or £554	Winchester	£378 to £430
Epsom and Ewell	£665 to £915	Rother	£263 to £278	Windsor and Maidenhead	£518.40 to £696
Fareham	£211	Runnymede	£575	Woking	£608
Folkestone and Hythe	£361.10 to £510.40	Rushmoor	£638.57	Wokingham	£1,019



East of England

Ipswich Town Hall. Photo: Tyssil, CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons

£457

Middle new-licence fee

Ipswich

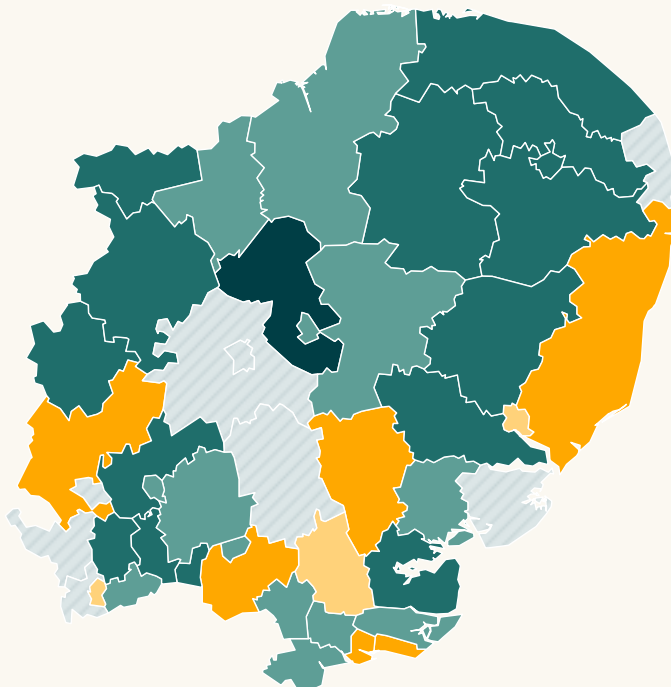
Cheapest: £131

**East
Cambridgeshire**

Dearest: £408 to £983

152

Licensed daycares on registers,
66% five stars



6.2×

The dearest council in the East of England charges 6.2 times the cheapest, comparing each council's lowest figure.

£12 more

The region's middle fee against England's £445.

■ Under £300
 ■ £300 to £449
 ■ £450 to £599
 ■ £600 to £899
 ■ £900 and over
 ■ No published fee

35 councils with a published fee

■ Babergh and Mid Suffolk	£618	■ East Hertfordshire	£554	■ Norwich	£577 to £627
■ Basildon	£234.50 to £453.50	■ East Suffolk	£357	■ Peterborough	£699.60 to £898.70
■ Bedford	£643	■ Epping Forest	£331.50	■ Rochford	£485
■ Braintree	£439	■ Fenland	£432 to £591	■ South Norfolk and Broadland	£480 to £610
■ Breckland	£576 to £724	■ Harlow	£365 to £460	■ Southend-on-Sea	£408
■ Brentwood	£485	■ Hertsmere	£436 to £532	■ St Albans	£688
■ Broxbourne	£579 to £648	■ Huntingdonshire	£320 to £640	■ Stevenage	£457 to £591
■ Castle Point	£390.94	■ Ipswich	£131	■ Thurrock	£541
■ Central Bedfordshire	£421 to £436	■ King's Lynn and West Norfolk	£336 to £490	■ Watford	£214.20 to £276.30
■ Chelmsford	£272	■ Maldon	£811	■ Welwyn Hatfield	£510 to £605
■ Colchester	£565	■ North Hertfordshire	£526.75 to £621.25	■ West Suffolk	£356.40 to £515.99
■ East Cambridgeshire	£408 to £983	■ North Norfolk	£576.45 to £634.06		



Bristol City Hall. Photo: Nilfanion, CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons

£412

Middle new-licence fee

Gloucester

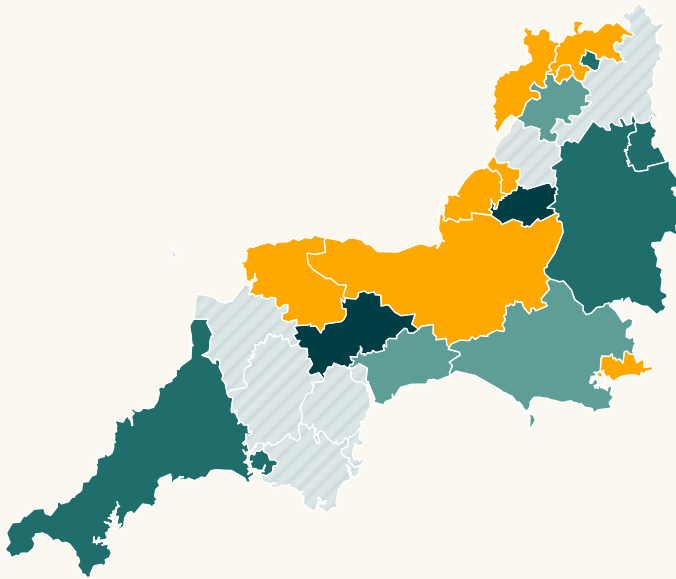
Cheapest: £278 or £371

Bath and North East Somerset

Dearest: £1,089

141

Licensed daycares on registers, 65% five stars

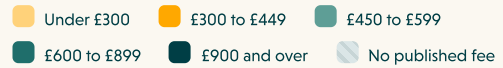


3.9×

The dearest council in the South West charges 3.9 times the cheapest, comparing each council's lowest figure.

£33 less

The region's middle fee against England's £445.



18 councils with a published fee

■ Bath and North East Somerset	£1,089	■ East Devon	£450	■ Plymouth	£579 to £657
■ Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	£447	■ Forest of Dean	£351 to £411	■ Somerset	£281 to £448
■ Bristol	£343	■ Gloucester	£278 or £371	■ Stroud	£579
■ Cheltenham	£600	■ Mid Devon	£741 to £1,012	■ Swindon	£420 to £840
■ Cornwall	£395 to £705	■ North Devon	£403	■ Tewkesbury	£333 to £419
■ Dorset	£538.50	■ North Somerset	£312.50 to £437	■ Wiltshire	£395 to £774



£432

Middle new-licence fee

Walsall

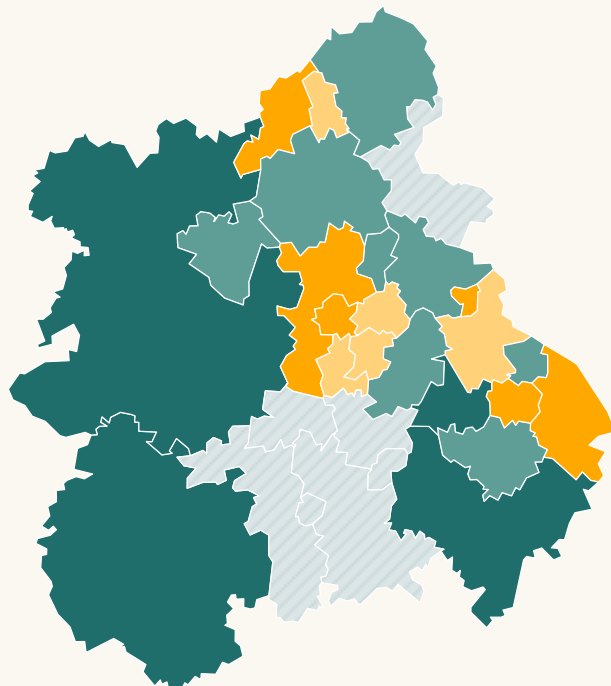
Cheapest: £125 or £160

Herefordshire

Dearest: £775

68

Licensed daycares on registers,
50% five stars



6.2×

The dearest council in the West Midlands charges 6.2 times the cheapest, comparing each council's lowest figure.

£13 less

The region's middle fee against England's £445.



23 councils with a published fee

■ Birmingham	£577	■ Nuneaton and Bedworth	£465	■ Stoke-on-Trent	£285
■ Cannock Chase	£511.70	■ Rugby	£175 to £425	■ Stratford-on-Avon	£492 to £639
■ Coventry	£432	■ Sandwell	£290	■ Tamworth	£373
■ Dudley	£257.97 plus vet fees	■ Shropshire	£562 to £634	■ Telford and Wrekin	£520
■ Herefordshire	£775	■ Solihull	£450 to £697	■ Walsall	£125 or £160
■ Lichfield	£480	■ South Staffordshire	£402	■ Warwick	£433 to £572
■ Newcastle-under-Lyme	£395	■ Stafford	£468	■ Wolverhampton	£291.29 to £362.78
■ North Warwickshire	£143.50 to £267	■ Staffordshire Moorlands	£400 or £500		



£400

Middle new-licence fee

**Hinckley and
Bosworth**

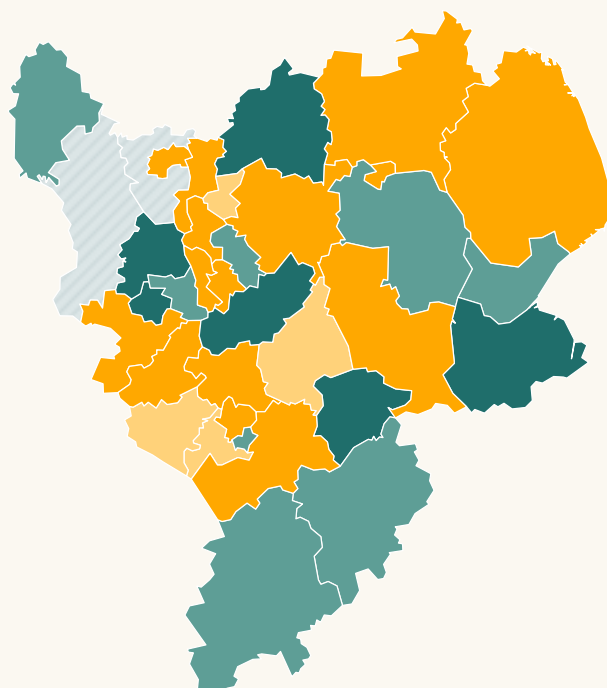
Cheapest: £222.32

Rutland

Dearest: £402 to £817

115

Licensed daycares on registers,
63% five stars



2.9×

The dearest council in the East Midlands charges
2.9 times the cheapest, comparing each council's
lowest figure.

£45 less

The region's middle fee against England's £445.

Under £300 £300 to £449 £450 to £599
£600 to £899 £900 and over No published fee

33 councils with a published fee

Amber Valley	£655.20	Erewash	£469.50	North Northamptonshire	£524
Ashfield	£330	Gedling	£400 to £453	North West Leicestershire	£284 to £361
Bassetflaw	£459 to £642	Harborough	£290 to £368	Nottingham	£374
Blaby	£240	High Peak	£400 to £500	Oadby and Wigston	£485
Bolsover	£303.93	Hinckley and Bosworth	£222.32	Rushcliffe	£620
Boston	£546.10	Leicester	£348	Rutland	£402 to £817
Broxtowe	£400	Lincoln	£324	South Derbyshire	£424
Charnwood	£265.90 to £317.10	Mansfield	£271	South Holland	£536.55 to £669.90
Chesterfield	£344	Melton	£233	South Kesteven	£407.50
Derby	£533 to £689	Newark and Sherwood	£348	West Lindsey	£355
East Lindsey	£368	North Kesteven	£436.80 to £517.60	West Northamptonshire	£554.80



£422

Middle new-licence fee

Blackpool

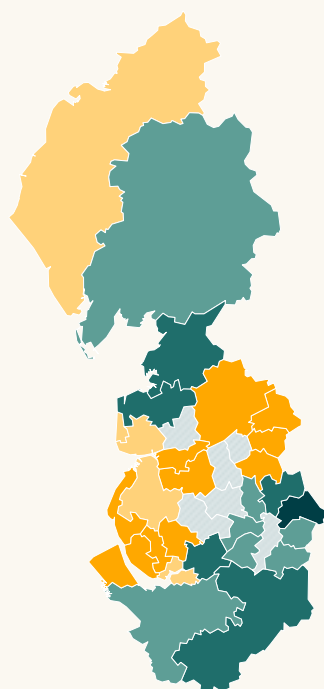
Cheapest: £140

Oldham

Dearest: £816 to £955

213

Licensed daycares on registers,
60% five stars

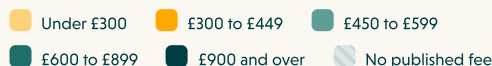


5.8×

The dearest council in the North West charges 5.8 times the cheapest, comparing each council's lowest figure.

£23 less

The region's middle fee against England's £445.



29 councils with a published fee

Blackpool	£140	Lancaster	£428 to £621	St Helens	£330 plus vet fees
Burnley	£221 to £334	Liverpool	£325	Stockport	£440 to £490
Bury	£368.50 to £504.50	Oldham	£816 to £955	Tameside	£422 to £514
Cheshire East	£662	Pendle	£438	Trafford	£493 to £546
Cheshire West and Chester	£471 to £574	Ribble Valley	£368.80	Warrington	£622.51
Chorley	£303 to £333.55	Rochdale	£504.30 to £708.10	West Lancashire	£273.54
Cumberland	£287	Rossendale	£435	Westmorland and Furness	£534
Fylde	£206	Salford	£495 to £599	Wirral	£441
Halton	£246.79	Sefton	£359 to £402	Wyre	£540 to £868
Knowsley	£419	South Ribble	£303 to £333.55		

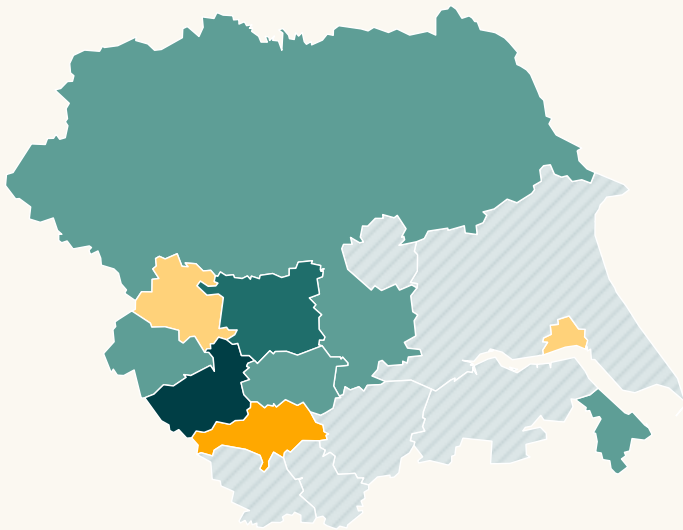


£382
Middle new-licence fee

Hull
Cheapest: £107 to £297

Kirklees
Dearest: £819 to £1,951

76
Licensed daycares on registers,
59% five stars



7.7×
The dearest council in the Yorkshire and The Humber charges 7.7 times the cheapest, comparing each council's lowest figure.

£63 less
The region's middle fee against England's £445.

Under £300 £300 to £449 £450 to £599
£600 to £899 £900 and over No published fee

10 councils with a published fee

Barnsley	£326.24
Bradford	£125.30
Calderdale	£409 or £450.40
Hull	£107 to £297
Kirklees	£819 to £1,951

Leeds	£490.40 to £740.25
North East Lincolnshire	£450
North Yorkshire	£355 to £455
Wakefield	£408 to £451
York	£287 to £505



North East

Newcastle Civic Centre. Photo: Bob Castle (English Wikipedia), CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons

£285

Middle new-licence fee

**Redcar and
Cleveland**

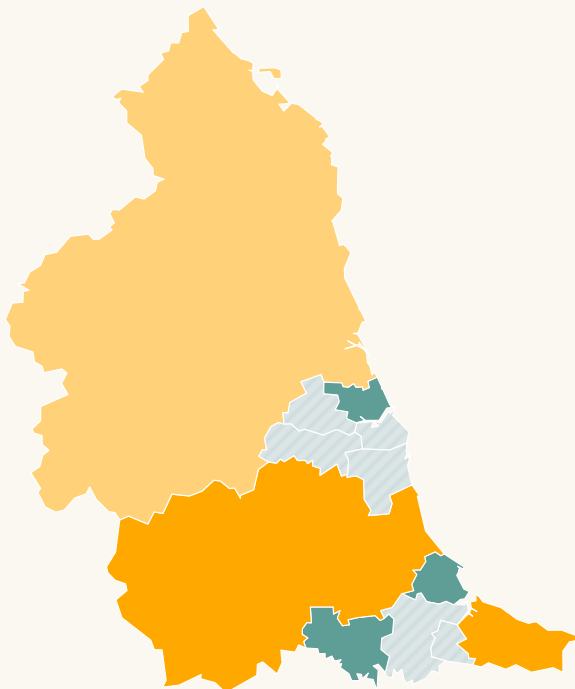
Cheapest: £239 to £388

Hartlepool

Dearest: £380 to £480

51

Licensed daycares on registers,
75% five stars



1.7×

The dearest council in the North East charges 1.7 times the cheapest, comparing each council's lowest figure.

£160 less

The region's middle fee against England's £445.

Under £300 £300 to £449 £450 to £599
£600 to £899 £900 and over No published fee

6 councils with a published fee

Darlington	£281 to £451
Durham	£396
Hartlepool	£380 to £480

North Tyneside	£270 to £476
Northumberland	£288.75
Redcar and Cleveland	£239 to £388

How to pay less

What five stars saves you

Your star rating sets how long your licence lasts: one year at one or two stars, two years at three or four, three years at five. Where a council charges one fee whatever the length, every extra year of licence is free.

COUNCIL	HOW IT PRICES	1 OR 2 STARS	3 OR 4 STARS	5 STARS
Westminster	One fee, £1,410	£1,410	£705	£470
Elmbridge	One fee, £432 for five dogs or fewer	£432	£216	£144
Liverpool	One fee, £325	£325	£162.50	£108.33
Kirklees	£253 plus £566 for each year	£819	£692.50	£650.33

Cost of a new licence for each year it lasts. Renewals are often cheaper.

The catch

Five stars needs the higher standards: one member of staff to eight dogs instead of ten, two structured walks a day per dog, and more. For a 30-dog daycare that can mean another person on the floor. Our free calculator works out your own numbers.

generasoftware.com/tools/five-star-cost-calculator



Is it worth it? A 30-dog daycare in Elmbridge, over three years

Licence fees at one or two stars (three one-year licences)	£1,296
Licence fees at five stars (one three-year licence)	£432
Saved on the licence	£864
A fourth member of staff to go from one to ten dogs, to one to eight (National Living Wage, 9 hours, 240 days, plus 15% costs)	£31,572 a year

The licence saving alone will not pay for the higher standards. Five stars pays when you already run close to them, or when it lets you charge more. Put your own figures into the free calculator.

How to pass

The application checklist

Taken from the Defra statutory guidance for dog day care, which every council inspects against. Tick it off before the inspector arrives.



Before you apply

- ☐ Your council's application form and fee
- ☐ A list of every premises you use
- ☐ Public liability insurance
- ☐ Planning permission, or a check you do not need it

People

- ☐ Licence holder qualified (for example Ofqual Level 2) or working towards it
- ☐ Written training policy and training records for every member of staff
- ☐ No more than 10 dogs per member of staff
- ☐ A key holder within about 30 minutes

Written procedures

- ☐ Feeding, cleaning and transport
- ☐ Preventing and controlling disease
- ☐ Daily health and welfare checks
- ☐ Death or escape of a dog
- ☐ Care if the licence is suspended or in an emergency
- ☐ Under-ones kept separate unless the owner agrees

- ☐ Introducing a new dog to a group
- ☐ Enrichment agreed with each owner

Emergencies

- ☐ A written emergency plan everyone knows
- ☐ A policy for extreme heat and cold
- ☐ Drills at least once a year
- ☐ Isolation space, or a vet letter for off-site isolation

Records for every dog

- ☐ Microchip, age, sex, breed, owner and emergency contacts
- ☐ Vet, insurance, medical and behaviour history, diet
- ☐ Vaccinations finished at least 2 weeks before day one
- ☐ Signed consents, kept for at least 3 years

On inspection day

- ☐ 6 square metres per dog, inside and out
- ☐ Sleeping areas between 10°C and 26°C
- ☐ 2 secure barriers between any dog and an exit
- ☐ Crates no more than 1 hour in any 8
- ☐ No more than 6 dogs walked at once

The full checklist, with the higher standards for four and five stars, is free at generasoftware.com/templates/dog-daycare-licence-checklist

Outside England

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

The 2018 regulations, and the fees in this guide, apply in England only.

Scotland

Dog day care is licensed by the council as animal boarding under the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963, renewed every year. Falkirk Council, for example, licenses "a boarding kennel, day care facility or cattery" for £320.30. The Scottish Government has consulted on moving boarding into its newer 2021 licensing rules.

Wales

Also the 1963 Act, through the council, renewed every year. The Vale of Glamorgan charges £275 for an animal boarding establishment licence, which runs from 1 January to 31 December, and has its own commercial day care conditions.

Northern Ireland

GOV.UK directs boarding kennels and catteries to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), with a licence renewed every year. It publishes no fee and does not mention day care, so check with DAERA and your council before you open.



**GENERA**

SOFTWARE FOR PET BUSINESSES

Before you apply or renew

Check yours in three steps.

1

Find your council. Search the live table at generasoftware.com/research/dog-daycare-licence-fees by council or town. Every row links to the council's own fee page.

2

Ask what the fee covers. A vet's inspection? A mid-term visit? A cheaper renewal? The guidance does not require a vet for dog day care.

3

Work out your yearly cost at your rating, and whether five stars is worth it for you, with the free calculator at generasoftware.com/tools.

generasoftware.com/research

Genera is the booking and invoicing software Duncan built to run his own five-star daycare. It holds you to the daily numbers on your licence and keeps every dog's vaccination dates where an inspector can see them.

Spotted a fee that has changed? Tell us and we will update it.

Fees read from 230 council websites, 22 September to 12 October 2026. Councils change fees every April: check yours before you apply. Not legal advice.

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