



# Childcare checklist

Choosing childcare for your under five

What to ask pre-schools, day nurseries and childminders

**Choosing the right kind of childcare setting can be a difficult decision but help is available.**

The following checklist will help you choose the type of childcare best suited to both you and your child. The best childcare settings expect questions and are happy to answer them.

- Visit the nursery to get a feel for the day-to-day routine, and take your child with you to see whether they like it too.  
Visit when it is in full flow and, if possible, make a return visit so you can see the setting at different times during the day and week.
- Does the nursery have a friendly feel? Does it have plenty of space inside and outside? If there's no outside space where do children play in the fresh air?
- Check the equipment and facilities on offer. Is there a variety of creative equipment, such as painting stations, sand pits and play areas? Are they kept at a high standard?  
Are the children's paintings and other work displayed on the walls? It is important that your child is offered a number of creative and stimulating experiences throughout the day, within a friendly environment.
- Ask about safety. What happens in an emergency? What precautions have been put in place? Do they have finger guards on doors? Is it secure? Do they have visitor control systems in use?  
Your child's safety is a top priority.
- Check the number of staff. There should be at least one member of staff for every eight children between three and five years old.
- Will there be a key person with special responsibility for your child and who will you be able to talk with about how your child is getting along?
- Take time to see whether the staff and children are talking and playing together.  
Are the staff questioning and responding to questions in a way that interests the children and are the children encouraged to ask questions of their own?
- Ask about the latest Ofsted inspection or view it online at **[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)**.



- Ask about the staff. Are they well trained? Do they have qualifications at the levels needed to best help children learn and develop at their own pace?
- How do the staff deal with misbehaviour and homesickness? There should be a written policy in place so ask to see it.
- Talk to staff about their flexibility. Can they provide childcare that fits in with your work hours? Ask about costs. Ask about contracts. Do they charge for late pick-up?
- Check what food is provided. Is there a healthy, balanced diet on offer? Is water available whenever children want it?
- Find out about the financial help you can get.

Working parents can get up to 70% of their costs back through the **childcare element of Working Tax Credit**, when you use childcare that's registered or approved.

Call the Tax Credits Hotline on 0845 300 3900 to find out what you can claim.

Remember, if you have a child aged three or four years old, you are eligible for **15 hours of free early learning** a week for 38 weeks of the year.

For more information go to [www.direct.gov.uk/earlylearning](http://www.direct.gov.uk/earlylearning)

**And remember, not every childcare setting will match your child's personality, so be prepared to look around. Don't get disheartened – there's a suitable childcare setting out there for you and your child.**



Search for childcare and family services on the Hampshire Family Information Directory at [www.fid.hants.gov.uk](http://www.fid.hants.gov.uk)