

Childcare Checklist



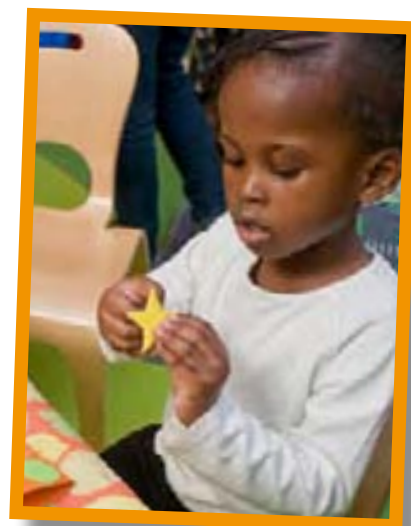
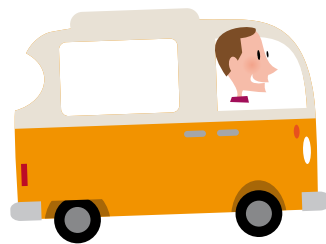
Choosing the right childcare setting

Choosing the right kind of childcare can be difficult – but help is available. The Government has produced a Childcare Checklist that you might find helpful when choosing the right childcare setting for you and your children. Childcare providers should be happy to answer your questions too.



department for
children, schools and families

- ✓ Talk to the nursery, children's centre or childminder about their flexibility. Can they provide childcare that is convenient to fit your work hours and location? Ask about costs. Ask about contracts. Do they charge for late pick-up?
- ✓ Government funding is available to help pay for good quality childcare. Working parents can get up to 80% 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. And if you have a child aged three or four-years-old, you are eligible for 12.5 hours a week free childcare for 38 weeks of the year. For more information go to **www.direct.gov.uk/earlylearning**
- ✓ Think about the type of care that is best for your child. For example, group care is normally with a team of staff working with a number of children. Childminders work at home and care for a smaller number of children.
- ✓ Does the nursery, children's centre, or childminder's home have a friendly feel? Does the location have plenty of space inside and outside – how easy is it for children to move freely between the two?
- ✓ Check the equipment, facilities and activities on offer. Do the children have the chance to take part in a range of different activities? Is there a lot of variety in the toys that are on offer to children? For example, do the toys differ in texture, size, colour and shape? How will you see your child's paintings and other work? Will staff talk to you about what and how your child is learning?
- ✓ Think about safety. What happens in an emergency? What precautions have been put in place? Do they have finger guards on doors? Do they have visitor control systems in use? How do they report incidents to parents? Ask to see the written safeguarding policy – every group childcare provider should have one.



✓ Look at the staffing levels. A nursery or children's centre should have at least one member of staff for every eight children aged between three and five-years-old, and there should be a key person with special responsibility for your child. A childminder could be caring for up to six children under eight.

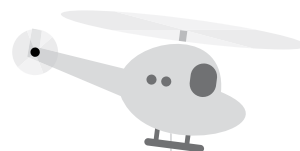
✓ Take time to see whether the staff and children are talking and playing together. Are the childcarers questioning and responding to questions in a way that interests the children and are the children inspired and encouraged to ask questions?

✓ Childcare should be good quality so ask about the latest Ofsted inspection or view it online at **www.direct.gov.uk/doitonline**. Do staff have relevant qualifications? Did you know that quality is generally better in childcare settings where the staff have qualifications, particularly if at least one member of staff involved with the children is an early years graduate?

✓ How does the nursery, children's centre or childminder deal with misbehaviour and homesickness? There should be a written policy for you to see.

✓ Is there a healthy, balanced diet on offer? Ask about how the nursery, children's centre or childminder manages children's dietary requirements.

✓ **Remember:** You should always visit the nursery, childminder or children's centre when it is in full flow, and take your child with you to see what they think.



For more information visit your local Family Information Service or to find your local childcare provider, phone 0800 234 6346 or visit **www.direct.gov.uk/childcare**

