

*Childcare***Link**

www.childcarelink.gov.uk

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**Lines open 8am - 8pm weekdays,
9am - 12pm Saturdays**

Choosing Childcare: What to look for – Top ten questions to ask

department for
education and skills



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Choosing childcare and early education is a big step for you and your child. You can find out about the childcare and early education services in your area from your local Children's Information Service. Ask about opening hours, price, age of children and if there is a space for your child.

There are lots of differences between different types of childcare, early education or pre-school services and also between individual childminders, nurseries, nursery classes or out of school clubs. Try and give yourself enough time to visit several possible options in your area to get a good idea of what could suit your child. Don't forget you are the expert on your child and should trust your feelings.

It can be a good idea to take your child with you to see how staff talk to him or her. Try to go when children are there so you can see if they are calm, happy and busy.

Here are some suggested questions to ask when you visit. Add your own questions as well:

- 1 How long have you been working with children?
- 2 Have you undertaken any training for your job? Any qualifications?
- 3 Do you enjoy being with children and why?
- 4 Can I look around the building to see the rooms and outside play space? If there is no outside play space – how will you make sure my child gets the chance to play outside?
- 5 Where will my child rest?
- 6 What kind of food and drink will you give?
- 7 What will my child do all day?
- 8 How do you encourage good behaviour?
- 9 Will my child be with a regular group of children?
How old are they?
How will their timetable fit in with my child?
- 10 How will you make sure I know how my child is getting on?

Top ten quality pointers

When you visit possible childcare options, look for these Quality Pointers. You could add your own as well.

- 1** Are the children calm, safe and happy?
- 2** Do children play and talk together?
- 3** Are the staff listening to children and answering them carefully?
- 4** Are the staff friendly and proud of their work?
- 5** Are the staff joining in with what the children are doing?
- 6** Are there lots of fun activities planned to help children learn and play? Can children plan some of these themselves?
- 7** Are there plenty of clean toys and equipment for children to use?
- 8** Is the premises clean, well-kept and safe for children with a fun outside play area (or will children go to parks and other places regularly)?
- 9** Do parents have plenty of chances to say what they want for their children?
- 10** If there are other things you want to know, do not be afraid to ask. Good childcare staff expect you to ask questions and will be happy to answer them.

Top Tips

Always take up references. You could ask for names of other parents to talk to about your chosen service.

Listen to your child and find out more if he or she seems unhappy.

Always trust your own feelings about your childcare – you know your child best.

Copies of this factsheet can be obtained from:

DfES Publications

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