

Factsheet for parents

Choosing childcare – questions to ask childcare providers

There are so many things to remember when you visit a childcare provider – the right questions to ask, things to look out for while at the same time gaining an overall impression of the setting.

It is a good idea to think about the types of things you want to know when you visit and make a note of these and the types of questions you want to ask. These questions will help you to remember some of the key things you should be asking childcare providers when deciding on whether the care they provide will be suitable for your child.

Don't just rely on these questions, though. Only you will know when a childcare setting feels right and you may have other questions you want to ask when you visit. Use the space at the bottom of this factsheet to make notes and to write any questions of your own.

Vacancies and costs

- ✓ Are there vacancies - is there a waiting list and, if so, how long is this?
- ✓ Do you have to pay a deposit? If so, what's it for? Is it returnable?
- ✓ How much does the setting charge per hour/day? Do you have to pay for holidays/meals/nappies/other activities?
- ✓ Do they offer a settling in period? If so, how long for?

Staffing and premises

- ✓ What is the ratio of staff to children? How many children do they care for?
- ✓ Do they operate a key (named) worker system?
- ✓ How will they keep you informed about your child's progress?
- ✓ What opportunities are there for you to be involved?
- ✓ What is staff turnover like? How well qualified are the staff? Are all the criminal records checks up to date?
- ✓ Is there plenty of outdoor space?
- ✓ What Ofsted rating does the setting have and when is the next inspection due?
- ✓ Can you see a copy of the registration certificates and inspection reports for the setting?

Activities and support

- ✓ What are the daily routines and how can they incorporate your child's and other children's routines?
- ✓ Where can your child sleep or rest?

- ✓ What if your child is unhappy? How would they be looked after?
- ✓ What are their policies on discipline and how do they manage children's behaviour?
- ✓ How will your child's dietary requirements be accommodated? What systems do they have in place if a child has a severe food allergy?
- ✓ How will your child's cultural background be reflected and respected? Are there staff members from different backgrounds? Do they have books and activities representing all cultures? What about food/music/religious festivals?

Emergencies

- ✓ What happens if your child is sick?
- ✓ What happens if you are delayed picking your child up at the end of the day?
- ✓ How will they contact you in an emergency?

Use this space to make notes when you visit a setting and to write down some questions on your own.