

Choosing a Childcare provider - what to look for



It is always a good idea to visit childcare providers yourself - inspections and accreditation are no substitute for parental judgement. We would advise visiting several in your chosen area to enable you to compare the services on offer.

When you do visit, prepare questions in advance. Tick off those that are answered during your visit and make sure you ask any that have not been answered, you can always telephone later if you forget to ask something.

It is a good idea to take your child with you to see how staff talk to him/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:

- how long has the childcare setting been in operation?
- how long have the staff been working with children and what specific childcare training have they undertaken for their job?
- what qualifications are held by the staff?
- what is the ethos of the setting?
- do you enjoy being with children and why?
- can I look around the building to see the rooms and outside play space? If there is no outside playspace how will you make sure my child gets the chance to play outside?
- where will my child rest?
- what kind of food and drink will you give?
- what will my child do all day?
- how do you encourage good behaviour?
- will my child be with a regular group of children? How old are they? How will their timetable fit in with my child?
- how will you make sure I know how my child is getting on?

Top 10 quality pointers

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

- are the children calm, safe and happy?
- do children play and talk together?
- are the staff listening to children and answering them carefully?
- are the staff friendly and proud of their work?
- are the staff joining in with what the children are doing?
- are there lots of fun activities planned to help children learn and play? Can children plan some of these themselves?
- are there plenty of clean toys and equipment for children to use?
- are 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)?
- are parents kept well informed about their child's progress?
- do parents have plenty of chances to say what they want for their children?

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.