



Choosing a childcare provider to suit your child and circumstances is an important decision. This leaflet will guide you through the different aspects of registered childcare provision to help you choose.

The first step is to get an up to date list of providers from the Family Information Service. Then try to find out as much background information as possible about your chosen setting/s, such as how long a provider has been registered and who owns/funds a group setting. Ofsted inspection reports are available on the Internet at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports) and will provide you with the latest Ofsted assessment of every childcare provision.

Please note: Not all Childminders reports will display their name, if you require this information make a notice of the URN number and call the Family Information Service for details.

Call the FIS helpline on 0121 303 3521  
8:45am-5:15pm monday-thursday  
8:45am-4:15pm friday  
e: [familyinformation@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:familyinformation@birmingham.gov.uk), enquire online at [www.birmingham.gov.uk/fis](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/fis)

## Making good childcare arrangements

What to look for and what to ask



If you have any difficulty reading this document please call us on 0121 303 3521 to ask if a full or summary version can be made available in large print, another format or another language.

# Settling In

## Helping your child to settle in

The settling in period is essential for you and your child. It will help you feel more comfortable about leaving your child as it can be an emotional and stressful time for you. Visit the provider as often as possible. Make sure that your child is familiar with his/her carer and the premises before they start.

## How long will it take your child to settle in?

This will depend on the child. However you know your child best and you will know whether they are settling. Trust your instincts. Occasionally the type of care chosen may not be appropriate for your child. In these situations it may be necessary to move the child to another carer or review your own work or training commitments.

## Leaving your child

There are no rules about how long you should stay with your child on the first day although it may be helpful to agree a settling-in plan with the provider. You know your child best and will know when the time is right to leave. Always be honest and, if your child is old enough to understand, explain that you are going to leave and say when you are coming back. Your child will almost certainly be upset, but saying that

you are going will be less upsetting for them than creeping away while they are not looking.

## Making things easier on the first day

- Try to be organised
- Allow yourself plenty of time to get ready to avoid rushing
- Be positive and cheerful
- Talk to your child about what the first day will be like

## Make sure that the good care continues

It is essential that you have a good relationship with your child's carer. Communication both ways is very important.

At the beginning of each day remember to pass on any relevant information about your child i.e.

- How they slept
- What they had for breakfast
- Any other relevant personal information

Providers will give either verbal or written feedback concerning your child. At the end of each day remember to ask for relevant information about your child i.e.

- Times of meals/What was eaten
- Sleep Times

- Nappy changes/toilet visits
- Activities for the day

## When problems arise

No matter how small the issue, if it bothers you or your child it is important. Talk to your carer as soon as it is possible because it can probably be sorted out quickly.

It is important that both you and the carer have compatible attitudes and values. If older children are unhappy with their carer, don't dismiss their concerns, listen to them to try and find out about the situation and then talk to the carer.

## Making your concerns known

If you have tried to resolve the problem in a fair and friendly way without success, you may need to take the matter further. Complaints about childcare providers should be made to Ofsted (Office For Standards in Education). Childcare Inspectors employed by Ofsted register and inspect childminders, private and voluntary day nurseries, playgroups, play-care and holiday schemes.

If you think that your child or another child may be at risk, you should report your concerns immediately to the

**Ofsted Helpline –  
Tel 0300 123 1231**

# What to look for

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## The Paperwork

- The OFSTED certificate should be on display. Check this for the number of registered child places and for any specific restrictions on the setting.
- Check that setting has a Public Liability Insurance Certificate and that this is up to date.
- Check that there is a current First Aid Certificate.
- Check that the provider has additional business insurance on vehicles used to transport children.
- Is there a written statement about special needs that includes both SEN and disabilities?
- Look out for any quality awards that indicate the high quality of the setting.
- Read through some of their policies and procedures.

## The Environment

- Ask to have a look round all areas, including the kitchens & toilets – don't be afraid to inspect these thoroughly.
- Check that the premises are clean, well-lit and adequately ventilated.
- Check that the premises are attractive and inviting; that pictures reflect children's differing backgrounds and experiences.
- Check the amount of play space and if there are lots of different activities going on.
- Check that the physical environment is, as far as possible, suitable for children with disabilities.
- Have a look round the garden or outdoor area.
- Check that there are quiet spaces to rest, relax or sleep in.
- Look out for safety equipment e.g. smoke alarms, fire/radiator guards.
- Check that the range of toys, books and other play materials reflect a commitment to anti-discriminatory practices?

## Staff and Relationships

- Make sure you meet the manager and all staff who will care for your child. For a childminder ask about other members of the household and arrange to meet them if possible.
- Do the staff seem enthusiastic and interested in the children?
- Observe the relationships between staff and children and also between the children. Are children encouraged to be confident & independent?
- Do staff & children express positive attitudes and behaviour?
- Are staff responsive to children's needs, even where these are unspoken?
- Do staff communicate effectively with each child?
- Do the children seem happy and positive?
- Ask to be introduced to your child's key worker.



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# What to ask at the providers

It is important that you feel comfortable about asking questions or making requests or suggestions.

## Staff and Relationships

- What childcare qualifications do staff hold?
- Have staff had training in inclusive practice? Has someone at the setting had Disability Discrimination Act training?
- Who is the named SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator)?
- Will my child's key worker work with me in order to understand my child's requirements?
- Are there any restrictions on when parents can visit the setting?
- Can arrangements be made for a mother to continue breastfeeding?
- Are parents encouraged to be involved in the running of the settings? (e.g. consultations, trips, decision making)
- How will my child's development be recorded?
- How will they help my child settle in?
- Remember to discuss any allergies and health issues with the provider.

## Activities & Environment

- How are activities planned? Is there a weekly programme?
- Does the setting have any specialist equipment, or access to specialist equipment, if necessary? (e.g. through Toy Libraries)
- What is the range of activities?
- How does the setting ensure that disabled children can access activities?
- Will they pick my child up from their school, nursery or playgroup? What are the arrangements for this?
- Are there any pets?
- How will my child's day be recorded?
- What are the toilet training arrangements?
- What are the arrangements for sick children?
- What are the emergency arrangements if the childminder is sick?
- Will older children need any spending money?

## Costs

- It is essential to discuss the payment of fees and understand what's included.
- How much are the fees?
- What does the fee include? (e.g. nappies, food, trips, attendance at playgroup)
- What hours are included in the contract?
- Is there a deposit?
- What happens when I go on holiday?
- What happens if my child is sick?
- What happens when the childminder goes on holiday, or nursery closes in an emergency e.g. bad weather?
- Is there a charge if I am late picking up my child?
- Is there a written contract which includes all these details? Important check before signing the contract exactly what is included.

**Costs are part of the legal contract between parents and childcare providers. Ofsted will not intervene in any financial disputes.**

