

Choosing Quality Childcare – A Parent’s Guide

High quality childcare can give your child a good start in life. Choosing childcare and early education can be a big step for the whole family. As well as making sure that the type of childcare you choose is the one that best meets you and your child's needs, you also want to know that your child will be safe, secure, well looked after and happy. When visiting potential settings these questions and tips should help you choose the best setting for your family.

Things to think about during your visit

- Ratio of staff to children – there should be at least:
 - 1 staff to 3 children for under 2s
 - 1 staff to 4 children for 2-3 year olds
 - 1 staff to 8 children for 3-5 year olds
 - 1 staff to 13 children for 3-5 year olds where there is a qualified teacher.
- That the staff have qualifications/experience
- Staff care for and interact with the children
- Children seem happy and content
- Adequate equipment, toys and play materials
- Type of activities organised
- Are snacks provided
- Ways in which parents are involved
- Are the children settled, safe and happy?
- Do children play and talk together?
- Are staff listening to children and answering them carefully?
- Are the staff friendly and enjoying 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?
- 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)?
- Do parents have plenty of chances to say what they want for their children?

What should I ask?

Here are some questions you may like to ask the nursery when you visit

- What are the policies of the nursery?
- Do you keep records and in what form?
- What areas/rooms will my child be using?
- Will my child have a key worker and if so who?
- What activities are provided and do the children play outside regularly?
- How is the day constructed – playtime, meals and rest period?

- What training, experience and qualifications does the staff have?
- What are your fees, do I pay for sickness and holidays?
- What opportunities are there for parents to be involved?
- How many other children do you look after and what are their ages?
- Do you cater for dietary requirements?
- Are you open all year, early morning and late evenings?
- What is the settings settling in policy?
- Do children have regular opportunities to go on visits
- How can parents support with their child's learning here and at home?
- What if I have any concerns about my child's development?
- Are the staff welcoming and enthusiastic?

Issues to consider

- Make second visits to nurseries you liked
- Take your child with you to see how they get on
- Be clear about what type of care you require
- Be prepared to spend time settling your child into new surroundings
- Prepare a list of questions to ask

Staying involved with your childcare provider

It is important to maintain a good relationship with your chosen provider throughout your child's time there. Here are some ways you can stay connected:

- Have meetings with your provider regularly, and ask questions.
 - Share information about your child with your provider, including updates on what happens at home.
 - Share suggestions and concerns with your child's provider.
 - Volunteer when needed. This can include helping out in the setting or signing up for a parental leadership role.
 - Join in special occasions, like trips, celebrations and holiday events.
 - Work together with your provider on your child's learning plan. Look for ways to support learning at home and at the setting. The staff should support you with this.
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- Does the environment/Do the toys, books, displays reflect the children and families in the setting? How will they make sure that your families culture, traditions and languages are supported.

You may not be able to get time off from work during the day, but drop-off and pick-up times are also good times to talk with your child's provider. If your child's provider is not available during these times, ask about other ways you can ask about how things are going and how your child is doing.

Visiting and participating in events at your child's setting sends a strong message. It tells your child and the setting that you think what your child is doing and learning is important.

Complaining about a childcare provider

If you have chosen a childcare provider but need to make a complaint, here are the details of how:

Child protection

If your complaint about a setting relates to child protection visit Ofsted website or telephone Ofsted on 0300 123 1231.

Alternatively/Also you can contact the Haringey Local Authority Designated Person (LADO) on **020 8489 2968/1186** or email LADO@haringey.gov.uk if your complaint is about an adult or member of staff

Contact the Haringey Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub on 020 8489 4470 or 020 8489 0000 for the out of hours service. You can also email mashreferral@haringey.gov.uk

In an emergency please dial 999.

Safeguarding and Standards

In Haringey settings, safeguarding is a top priority. Always check on how individual settings manage their safeguarding arrangements.

- Do staff and volunteers have up to date DBS checks? Staff working with or having access to children, young people or vulnerable adults should be DBS checked.
- Does the provision belong to a professional organisation or quality assurance scheme?
- Does the provision have child protection and health and safety policies in place?

Other complaints

If your complaint is of a general nature such as disputes about contracts or fees first you should contact The Head or Manager of the childcare provision. It is a good idea to put your complaint in writing.

You can ask your childcare provider for a copy of their complaints procedure which explains how your complaint will be dealt with.

If you are not satisfied with the response then you can report your complaint to Ofsted on 0300 123 1231 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk