

## Choosing Childcare Checklist

Choosing childcare can be difficult and you may need to visit several local options to see what's available. Use the checklist to get as much information as possible to base your decision on. It may be easier to ask detailed questions over the phone so you can take notes. Always follow this up by a visit either with or without your child and don't forget to listen to your instincts. The best childcare settings expect questions and are happy to answer them.



**First impressions** – Visit the setting to see if it looks clean and cheerful and has a friendly feel. Is there plenty of space to play inside and outside? Are the staff and children talking and playing together? Do you feel welcome and are the staff easy to talk to?



**Environment** - Look at the equipment and facilities on offer. Is there a variety of equipment and activities to give your child creative and stimulating experiences? Is children's work on display? Are there separate areas for quiet time and noisy/messy play? How many children are in your child's room?



**Safety** - Your child's safety should be top priority. What happens in an emergency? What precautions are in place? Do they have finger guards on doors? Is it secure? Do they have visitor control systems in use?



**Staff** – Ask about qualifications, training and experience. How long have staff been working there and is there a good balance of ages in the team? Will your child have a key worker and how will you find out how your child is getting on and developing?



**Care** – It's important to speak to other parents with children in the setting so ask how you can arrange this. Is there a flexible settling in period? How do staff deal with misbehaviour and homesickness? Does the setting have visitors and events? And do children go out on visits? Is the setting flexible enough to fit in with work hours? Ask about the latest Ofsted inspection or get the Ofsted Unique Reference Number (URN) from the setting and view it online at [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare\\_providers/list](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/list)



**Meals** - What's on the menu? Is it healthy and is water always available?



**Disabilities and Special Educational Needs (SEN)** - What experience do staff have of caring for children with disabilities and SEN? How would they adapt activities for your child? Is the building fully accessible?



**Childcare costs** - Find out about any financial help to meet your costs, such as the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, childcare vouchers, free childcare for training and learning for work or free early education for 3 and 4 year olds.

Remember, not every setting will be right for you and your child so be prepared to look around – you will find the perfect match.