

Choosing Quality Childcare and Early Education in Bolton

Choosing childcare and early education that is right for your child is a big decision. You will want to be confident that your child will be happy and safe, learning and developing through play and that the childcare meets the needs of you and your child.

When choosing childcare it is important that you visit different settings and make your own decisions. Recommendations from other parents can be helpful, but it is really important to remember that every child is different. You know your child better than anyone else and it is important that you do your own research and trust your instincts.

This factsheet provides information and possible questions to ask to help you make your decision.

Where can I get a list of childcare providers from?

Information is available on line at <http://www.mylifeinbolton.org.uk/childcare>
This includes all providers who have given consent for information to be published on line.

Bolton's Families Information Service can provide you with a list of providers to meet your requirements. We can search for childcare and/or early education within a given radius (e.g. 1 mile) of your home and/or work address or for providers who pick up from your child's school. We can also identify those settings that are eligible to offer funded places for 2 year old children.

Call us on **01204 332170**
Visit **any Children's Centre in Bolton**
Email us at **families@bolton.gov.uk**

What types of childcare are available?

- **Childminders**

These are professional, self-employed childcare providers who work in their own home and provide care for a mix of age ranges from birth to 14.

Childminders give children opportunities to take part in everyday activities like family mealtimes, visits to the park and shopping and may take your child to playgroup or school enabling continuity of care.

Some childminders offer more flexible hours to meet shift patterns including evening and weekend hours.

Some childminders are able to offer the 15 hours per week free early learning for three and four year olds and may also offer 15 hours of free provision for 2 year olds from September 2013.



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- **Private Day Nurseries**

Private nurseries usually take children from six weeks to 5 years old and are generally open from 8.00am to 6.00pm although some settings offer slightly longer hours. Children can attend full or part-time to meet their family's needs and most nurseries offer the free 15 hours' early learning and childcare for three and four year old children. Some will also offer 15 hours of free provision for 2 year olds from September 2013.

- **Pre-Schools and Playgroups**

Usually offer sessions of two to four hours for children between two and five years old. Many offer the 15 hours per week free early learning for three and four year olds. Some will also offer 15 hours of free provision for 2 year olds from September 2013.

- **Maintained Nursery Schools and Classes**

Usually open during school hours and offer the free 15 hours per week early learning and childcare although some do provide extra hours at a cost. Some will also offer 15 hours of free provision for 2 year olds from September 2013.

Places are allocated by the Head Teacher of the school and a place in the nursery class does not guarantee admission to the main school.

- **Out of School Clubs**

Before and after school care in Bolton is offered by a range of childminders and out of school clubs; many of these also offer full day care during school holidays. There are also a range of holiday schemes and holiday activities.

What examples of quality assurance should I look for?

- **Ofsted**

Registered childcare settings, nursery schools and schools are regulated by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) and inspection reports are published on the Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Registered childcare providers should have relevant documents available to show you when you visit including:

- Ofsted registration certificate
- First Aid certificate
- Public Liability Insurance certificate
- Most recent Ofsted report



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- **Additional Quality Standard Schemes**

The National Children's Bureau has set up a peer support network called the NQIN (National Quality Improvement Network) and published a set of good practice principles and guidance that link to other quality improvement initiatives supporting the delivery of the Early Years' Foundation Stage.

Other quality assurance schemes also continue to operate to maintain quality across the childcare sector. These schemes demonstrate that the childcare provider continues to meet high standards regarding the management of the setting and the services and facilities it provides. These include:

- Day nurseries – National Day Nursery Association '*E-Quality Counts*'
- Pre-schools and playgroups – Pre-school Learning Alliance '*Reflecting on Quality*'
- Out-of-school clubs – 4Children '*Aiming Higher*'
- Childminders/Home Childcarers not part of a network – PACEY (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years) '*Children come First*'
- In Bolton we have developed our own quality measure – '*Reflecting on Quality*'

Reflecting on Quality

This quality improvement programme has been developed by Bolton Early Years and Childcare Team. This involves the providers working closely with a member of the Team to demonstrate their good practice.

What to look for in a quality setting

Are the children calm, safe, happy and busy? Do the children play and talk together?

Are adults listening to the children and answering them carefully?

How do adults talk to the children e.g. do they show patience and consideration?

Do adults get involved in the children's activities?

Does the environment look well-kept, safe and secure?

Is there a good quality outdoor play area? Do the children spend a good deal of time outdoors?

Does indoor and outdoor equipment appear of good quality?

Are the toilet/changing facilities clean, inviting and accessible to the children?

What are the access and parking facilities like?

Does the setting have a Communication Champion?



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Questions to ask

Ask about the food, including snacks. Look at a menu. Does it seem healthy? Do they cook food on the premises? Are special diets catered for?

How do you manage nappy changes and support toilet training?

What happens if a child is sick or has an accident?

What happens if a child needs to sleep?

How does the key person system work? What happens in the absence of your child's usual carer?

How long have staff been working with children? What training have you/staff had? What qualifications do they have?

Do you have up-to-date first aid and safeguarding training?

How do you encourage good behaviour?

How will you make sure I know how my child is getting on?

How much will the childcare cost? What will the costs cover e.g. outings, food, care during holidays, etc?

Are you able to provide the 15 hours' free entitlement to early learning and childcare the term after my child turns two or three?

Parents are entitled to 15 hours per week free early education and childcare during term time (570 hours per year) from the start of the term after the child's third birthday.

This should be completely free and parents should not be required to pay up front.

Some children will be entitled to 15 hours a week from the term after their second birthday. Please check with FIS or your local Children's Centre if you are eligible.

Disabilities and Special Needs

- Ask about staff's experience and training in supporting disabled children or children with special needs.
- Discuss how staff would adapt activities to meet children's individual needs.
- Ask to meet the setting's SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator).

Finally, once you have found a childcare service you are happy with, try to have a settling in period with a few short visits for your child and yourself. This will help you both feel more confident and at ease.



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Contracts

The childcare provider should ask you to sign a legally binding contract giving details of notice required, payment, holiday periods, childcare hours and any other details that need to be agreed.

Other useful information

<http://foundationyears.org.uk/parents> - *Families in the Foundation Years* is a website with useful information for parents of children up to five

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/> – information about financial help available towards the cost of childcare.

Bolton's Local Directory [My Life in Bolton](#) has details of services, activities and events in Bolton for children, young people and families.

We hope the information in this factsheet has helped you. If you have any suggestions as to how it can be improved please contact Bolton's Families Information Service on 01204 332170 or email families@bolton.gov.uk.

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