



Choosing Childcare Your Options in Leeds



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL



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Choosing Childcare

Choosing childcare and early education is a big step for you and your child and finding the right option for you that fits in with your work / training and family life can be a challenge. It is important to make the right decision so give yourself enough time to visit several different types of settings to get a good idea of what suits your child.

Whatever type of childcare arrangement you choose, you want to be confident that your child will be well looked after, happy and safe, in a stimulating environment where they can learn and develop through play. The aim of this booklet is to help you in making the right choice for both you and your child.

What is registered childcare?

This is childcare that is registered and inspected by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills). They fall under one of two registers, with the second register divided into two parts.

1. Early Years Register (EYR) This register is compulsory for childcare providers who work with children from birth until the 31st August after their fifth birthday. These providers offer care and learning to meet the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (EYFS). These settings are inspected before they register and then at regular intervals.

2. Childcare Register

i) The Compulsory part (CCR) of this register covers childcare providers who care for children from the end of the Early Years Register to under 8 years.

ii) The Voluntary part (VCR) of this register covers childcare providers who care for children 8 years and above or childcare in the child's own home.

Types of registered childcare include: childminders, nurseries, children's centres, pre-schools/playgroups, out of school clubs, holiday playschemes, nursery classes, and crèches (open more than four hours in a day or more than fourteen days per year).

Types of childcare not required to register but which have the choice to join the voluntary part of the register include: holiday playschemes that care for children 8 years and over, crèches (open less than four hours a day and less than fourteen days a year) and nannies/home childcarers.

Types of unregistered childcare include: childcare provided by a family member, babysitting or childcare provided by a friend who is not receiving payment of any kind.

Ofsted Inspections

How is childcare inspected?

Childcare providers on the EYR are inspected once every three to four years. It is a legal requirement that all providers on this register must meet standards for the welfare, learning and development of young children set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Ofsted inspector grades the settings under each of the following headings before making an overall judgement of the setting: Overall Effectiveness, Leadership and Management and Quality of Early Years Provision. The overall grades awarded are:

1. Outstanding – exceptional provision with excellent outcomes for children
2. Good – strong provision
3. Satisfactory – sound provision
4. Inadequate – provision is not good enough. For any setting that is rated as 'inadequate' Ofsted will set a number of actions to be carried out. Where there are serious concerns needing urgent attention, inspectors will return as soon as necessary .

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Providers on the Early Years Register are required to follow the EYFS, which is a statutory play based framework for learning and development for every child from birth to the 31st August following their 5th birthday.

So whatever type of childcare you choose, you can be confident that they will be following the same framework of quality care and learning. With good early learning and childcare, your child will get a head start that will help them, not just for primary school but for the challenges that the future might bring. For more information on the EYFS visit: www.foundationyears.org.uk

Paying for Childcare

The cost of childcare varies depending on the hours and the type of care your child requires.

Childminders often operate on an hourly, daily or weekly rate while nurseries usually have a full or half day rate and either setting may ask for a deposit to secure a place and/or some fees in advance.

Depending on your circumstances, there are a number of ways you can get financial assistance to help pay towards your childcare.

Those at work may be entitled to the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or employer supported childcare such as workplace childcare provision or childcare vouchers.

For more information on the childcare element of Working Tax Credit you can contact the helpline details opposite.

For information on employer supported childcare you need to talk to your employer.

Those going into training may be able to get financial help from the university or college, and young and lone parents could be entitled to extra support from Care to Learn or Job Centre Plus.

It is important to be aware that Childcare Vouchers can impact on a Tax Credit claim. To find out which benefits you the most you can contact The Tax Credit helpline on: **0845 300 3900** or visit their website: **www.hmrc.gov.uk/childcare**

Parents of children with additional needs may also have access to other financial help.



Free Early Learning Places for 3 and 4 year olds

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours of free early learning (15 hours per week for 38 weeks per year).

This is funded through the government and makes sure that all children aged between 3 and 4 years have access to high quality early learning the term after their third birthday until school age.

If you only take the free entitlement (15 hours per week for 38 weeks per year). The place is free at the point of delivery so you do not pay a retainer or deposit to secure a place.

Early learning settings include nursery classes, private nurseries, children's centres (that offer childcare), independent nursery classes, playgroups/pre-schools and some childminders. For more information on providers who offer free early learning contact the Family Hub.

Free Early Learning for 2 Year Olds

If your child is 2 and they meet certain criteria, they could be eligible for free early learning for 2 year olds. On offer is a free childcare place and early learning experiences for up to 15 hours per week in a registered setting, family and parenting support and support to access training and employment. To find out more contact the Family Hub or your nearest children's centre.

Childcare for Children with Additional Needs

High quality childcare is good for all children, finding childcare for a child with additional needs can be difficult but you may find your options are limited particularly for older children. Some childcare providers have tailored services for children with additional needs others, may have inclusive services. You can contact the Family Hub or Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA) for more information. **Contact PSLA on: 0800 085 1879**

Types of Childcare

Childminders

- Childminders are self-employed and look after your child in their own home or that of another registered childminder.
- They must be registered with Ofsted to look after children under the age of eight years for pay or gain.
- They can offer full or part-time flexible care, childcare before and after school or during school holidays.
- Childminders are registered to look after a maximum of three children under the age of 5 and three children aged 5 to 8.
- They can also provide care for children aged 8 and over, providing the numbers don't affect their ability to care for those under 8.
- There are some childminders that will take secondary school age children.
- Childminders may also be able to provide care during evenings and weekends.
- Childminders that offer overnight care are required to meet additional criteria agreed with Ofsted and this will be shown on their registration certificate.
- Some childminders are registered to deliver the free early learning for 3 and 4 year olds.
- Childminders must complete a course deemed suitable by Ofsted and the Local Authority. In Leeds, this is called the Leeds Childminder Training.

Children's Centres

Many children's centres provide childcare for children under the age of five, alongside other family services, such as links to Jobcentre Plus, health and family support. They can also provide you with general information and advice, parent and child groups, stay and play, courses and free early learning places.

Not all Leeds Children's Centres offer childcare but they will offer other family services. Contact the Family Hub for further details about children's centre services.

Day Nurseries

Day nurseries provide care for children aged three months to when they start school. There are different types of nurseries, including: private, community, local authority and workplace nurseries. Most nurseries are open 7.30/8am until 6pm all year round (excluding bank holidays). They can provide care on a full or part-time basis and most nurseries in Leeds offer the 15 hours free early learning for 3 and 4 year olds, which your child is entitled to from the term after their 3rd birthday. Check with individual providers to see if they offer free early learning places.

Pre-schools / Playgroups

Pre-schools / Playgroups are usually run by a voluntary committee or private company and care for children aged 2 to 5. They are usually registered with Ofsted but if they open for a short number of hours or a few days, they may not be required to register. They provide sessional, extended or full time care and are usually term time only. They may also be able to register to deliver the free early learning to 3 and 4 year olds.

Nursery Classes

Nursery classes are often based within a primary school or infant school and therefore usually operate term time only. The nursery provides up to 15 hours free early learning per week for 3 and 4 years olds. Some nursery classes also provide extended childcare.

Please note: There is no guarantee that a nursery place will lead to a school place, as there are different/separate admission policies in place. For information about school places please contact the School Admissions Team on 0113 222 4414 or email: education.annual.cycle@educationleeds.co.uk

Independent Nursery Classes

This is provision offered in independent schools i.e. schools where parents pay fees for their children to attend. They usually take children from the age of 2 and children are eligible to access the 15 hours per week of free early learning the term after their 3rd birthday. Any other childcare your child attends at the nursery that is over and above the 15 hours would incur fees.

Out of School Clubs

Out of school clubs generally provide care for children aged 4 to 14 but you should check the individual schemes to see if they have their own age limits.

Out of school clubs normally run during term time and offer care before and after school. The clubs are held on a variety of premises such as schools, church halls and community centres. Some school clubs offer care during school holidays, these will be known as holiday playschemes.

Holiday Playschemes

Holiday Playschemes care for children during the school holidays. Some offer full day care but some offer sessional care. Playschemes are run by voluntary committees, private companies or by school. Not all playschemes run every school holiday so confirm with the Family Hub or the setting itself to determine if the playscheme is operating.

Nannies / Home Childcarers

Nannies are employed by you as the parent, to care for your children at home and may be suitable if you need a more flexible childcare option. Although many nannies/home childcarers do have nursery or childcare training they are not required to hold qualifications. They are unregistered childcare unless they choose to register with Ofsted on the voluntary childcare register.

Crèches

A crèche provides occasional care for parents while they attend particular events such as training courses or meetings. Parents usually remain on the premises. Crèches are registered if they run for more than four hours in a day or for more than fourteen days in a year, or the parents are not within the immediate area. They usually provide care from birth to 8 years.

Parent and Toddler Groups / Stay and Play

Parent and toddler groups are not classed as childcare. Parents stay with their child, as they are drop-in sessions and give children the opportunity to play and socialise with others. They can usually be found in church halls, community centres and children's centres. Sessions usually last for a couple of hours and are held mornings or afternoons. Most only run during school term time.

Breakfast Clubs

Your child's school may have a breakfast club that will provide a nourishing breakfast at the start of the day. There is usually a small charge for this which can vary from place to place. Contact the school directly for information.



Choosing a childcare setting

You will find it useful to visit different types of childcare. It is a good idea to take your child with you. Try going when there are children there so you can see if they are happy and busy. You need to feel that your child will be happy and content to stay.

Don't be afraid to ask questions, a good childcare setting will expect this and you should be shown around the whole setting and not just the room(s) your child will be going into.

To assist you in your search for childcare here are some questions and things for you to consider.

What happens when you've chosen a setting?

- Discuss a settling in period; the length of time this takes will vary with each individual child. Settings normally offer several short introductory visits leading to gradually longer sessions.
- You will be asked to sign a contract/agreement. It is best to read it carefully before signing and keep a copy, as it is a legal document.



The types of things that can be in a contract/agreement are:

- The hourly/daily cost and the hours/days your child attends.
- How to end a contract/agreement, what notice is required by both parties.
- If the cost includes food, nappies etc.
- Details of sick/holiday payment.
- A retainer or deposit (if required) to secure a place.
- Any reduction for siblings.
- Details of payment dates.
- What method of payment can be used.
- Use of childcare vouchers if appropriate.

Information required by the setting

You will be asked for your child's/family details for the setting's records. These include who will be dropping off and collecting your child, relevant medical details, emergency phone numbers and your child's daily routine.

Parents will also be required to sign permission for any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment and share details of who has parental responsibility for a child.

Things to look out for:

- The staff are welcoming and approachable and interested in you and your child.
- Are staff listening and responding to children and joining in with their play?
- Childcare that is homely, bright, comfortable, secure and clean with plenty of floor space for children to move around and with examples of children's work on display.
- Check that there are plenty of clean and safe toys and equipment appropriate for the different stages of children's development.
- Children should be able to choose toys easily and have access to the outdoors daily.

Questions to ask childcare providers

- Are there vacancies? Is there a waiting list and how long?
- Do I have to pay a deposit? If so, how much?
- How much does the setting charge per hour/day?
- Does the cost include meals/nappies/other activities?
- Will I be charged if I am on holiday/my child does not attend and/or for late pick-ups?
- Do I pay when the childminder goes on holiday or is ill? Who will have my child when this happens? (Childminders only)
- Is there a settling in period? If so for how long?
- Ask to see their Ofsted registration certificate and the latest inspection report and ask when the next one is due. A copy of the report can be found at: www.ofsted.gov.uk
- Ask to see any relevant insurance documents i.e. public liability, car insurance.
- Ask to see copies of the setting's policies and procedures i.e. safeguarding children, lost children, behaviour and emergency.
- What is their policy on behaviour and how do you manage this?
- Do they have a current first aid certificate? Is there a first aider on the premises at all times?
- What is the ratio of staff to children?
- What is staff turnover like? How well qualified are the staff and are the entire criminal records checks up to date?

- How will they keep you informed about my child's progress?
- Do they operate a key worker system (this is where one staff member has primary responsibility for your child and usually operates in nurseries)?
- What is the daily routine and how will they incorporate my child's routine into that?
- Where can my child rest or sleep? Are they allowed to bring their own comforters?
- What sort of meals do they provide? Will my child's dietary requirements be accommodated? What do they have in place if my child has food allergies?
- Can I see the current week's menu?
- How do they ensure the setting is inclusive for children with additional needs?
- How will my child's cultural background be reflected and do they celebrate other cultural festivals/food?
- What happens if my child is sick and how do they contact me in an emergency?
- Do I need to bring a change of clothes?

Add any questions of your own and take the list with you when you visit so you don't forget what you want to ask the setting.

Use this space for your own notes, comments and questions.



The Family Hub - Leeds Family Information Service (FIS)

The FIS is a service for parents/carers of children aged 0-19 (up to age 25 for young adults with a disability). We aim to provide accurate information, guidance and advice on a wide range of family services including childcare, family support and leisure activities.

For more information, help and advice you can contact the Family Hub Leeds Families Information Service:

By Phone: 0800 731 0640 / 0113 247 4386
By Email: family.hub@leeds.gov.uk
Online at: www.thefamilyhubleeds.org

By Post: The Family Hub
10th Floor West
Merrion House
Merrion Street
Leeds
LS2 8DT

The FIS is constantly looking to improve its services and welcomes your comments, suggestions and/or complaints.

If you would like a copy of Leeds City Council's policy, please contact us by telephone or email.

All enquiries to the service will be treated confidentially, however, if there are concerns about the health or well-being of a child this may not always be possible. A protocol between the FIS and Ofsted sets out how such concerns are handled in the best interests of the child.