

Choosing Childcare

What to look for:

Choosing childcare and early education is a big step for you and your child. You can find out about registered childcare and early education services in your area from Scottish Borders Children's Information Service at:

www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk or telephone 01896 758186

The services offered by childminders, nurseries, playgroups and out of school clubs can differ. Try and give yourself enough time to visit several possible options in your area to get a good idea of what could suit your child. You are the expert on your child – trust your feelings.

It can be a good idea to take your child with you when you visit a setting to see how staff talk to him or her. Try to visit when children are there so you can see if they are calm, happy and busy.

Here are some questions you can ask when you visit. Add your own questions as well, especially if you want to enquire about cultural provision or if your child has additional support needs:

- 1) What training, qualifications and experience does the childminder or the staff in the setting have?
- 2) Why do you enjoy working with children?
- 3) Can I look around the building to see the rooms and outside play space?
- 4) Where will my child rest?
- 5) What kind of food and drink will you give?
- 6) What will my child do all day?
- 7) How do you deal with difficult and challenging behaviour?
- 8) Will my child be with a regular group of children of the same age?
- 9) How will their timetable fit in with my child?

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

What to look for when choosing childcare – Top ten quality pointers. When you visit possible childcare options, look for these quality pointers. You could add your own as well:

- 1) Children appear happy, content and actively engaged with what they are doing
- 2) Childcare providers have a genuinely caring and friendly relationship with the children; a calm atmosphere with no raised voices
- 3) The setting is safe, adequately lit and maintained to a good standard of hygiene
- 4) A broad range and generous supply of toys and equipment easily accessible to children
- 5) Adequate personal space for children to play
- 6) Calm area with subdued lighting where very young children can rest and sleep
- 7) Comfortable area where children can relax
- 8) Toys, books and displays that represent and promote different cultures in a positive way
- 9) Clean, appropriately sized toilets and hand basins with individual or disposable towels provided
- 10) A secure and safe outdoor recreation area

Good childcare staff and childminders expect you to ask questions and will be happy to answer them.

Top tips:

- 1) Always take up references. You could ask for names of other parents to talk about your chosen service
- 2) Listen to your child and find out more if he or she seems unhappy
- 3) Always trust your own feelings about your childcare – you know your child best

- 4) Ask to see the registration certificate, insurance certificate and the latest inspection report.

You can find out more about the National Standards that the Care Commission inspect against by visiting the Care Commission website www.carecommission.com and by going to HM Inspectorate of Education website www.hmie.gov.uk for settings where pre-school education is also provided.

Types of childcare

Choosing childcare is an important step for any parent. You need to find the type of Childcare that will best suit your needs as well as your child's. For help in finding suitable childcare in your area, please contact Scottish Borders Children's Information Service at: www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk or by telephone on 01896 758186 for free, impartial advice.

The following care services are regulated by the Care Commission and are subject to annual inspection.

Childminders

Childminders look after children in the childminder's own home and are able to offer flexible care packages. They provide your child with lots of care, fun and learning. Childminders can make the most of local parks, playgrounds, toy libraries, drop – in groups and community centres, allowing for a sociable time where your child can make friends with other children.

Nurseries

Nurseries are run by a team of staff and activities are planned to help children enjoy learning. At nursery, children are involved in activities such as playing, learning new skills and making friends. There are different types of nurseries with different ways of operating so look around for one that suits your child and you. Nurseries are managed in different ways. Private / Independent Nurseries are found across the Borders and may offer extended opening hours

There are different types of nurseries:

Private/Independent nurseries – designed mainly to cater for the children of parents who are working or training. Many of our nurseries are commissioned by the local authority to provide free pre-school education.

Local authority nurseries – run by the local authority in many primary schools, delivering pre-school education and in some settings wraparound childcare is also available.

Voluntary sector nurseries/ Playgroups - provide play and educational session for children aged two – five years old. Playgroups are commissioned by the local authority to provide pre-school education which is free for three and four year olds.

As with local authority nurseries and many private nurseries, these sessions follow curriculum guidelines and are staffed by a qualified team with a parental management committee. Some playgroups also offer extended childcare services.

Playgroups can be found in most areas including town centres and rural villages. Parents can help in playgroups by joining the management committee, helping on a rota or sharing their skills with the group.

Many parents have the opportunity to learn about child development and education through their involvement with playgroups.

Out of school clubs are for school-age children to play, learn and have fun and they are widely used to provide childcare for children whose parents are working or studying and also as a social activity for children. Clubs are usually based in or near schools, some are managed by a voluntary committee of parents and some are privately managed.

They are run outside school hours and activities are planned to help children learn, play and relax with their friends. Clubs will often pick children up from local schools that don't have a club.

Most children attending out of school clubs are primary school aged. However some clubs provide places for two, three and four years olds to fit around nursery or pre-school education, others provide care for children who attend S1+S2 depending on local demand.

Many out of school clubs will be happy to offer part-time childcare. You may need to book regular sessions to make sure a place is available when you need it.

Different types of out of school club

Breakfast Clubs – open in the mornings before school so children can enjoy breakfast there in a safe and supervised environment.

After school clubs – open in the afternoon, usually between about 3pm and 6pm

Holiday Clubs – open during school holidays and in-service day usually between about 8am and 6pm

A few clubs are beginning to extend their opening times, including a Saturday opening, to meet the needs of shift workers.

Alternative format/language paragraph

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Scottish Borders Childcare Partnership

“The Scottish Borders Childcare Partnership facilitates the development of affordable, accessible, high quality childcare to meet the needs of all Borders children and their families.”



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