



## Questions to ask an early years setting or childcare provider

Choosing an early years setting is a big decision. You're trusting someone to care for your child, support their development, and communicate with you about their needs. Asking the right questions is essential not only to get information, but also to see how a provider communicates, whether their values align with yours, and how they approach relationships with families. Below are some key questions you might want to ask to help you make an informed decision.

You want people who celebrates your child's milestones with you and supports them through challenges.

A quality setting will welcome your questions. If they seem hesitant or dismissive, then do you really want your precious child to go there?

### **1. What is your approach to early learning and play?**

A provider's philosophy shows how they view children and learning. It helps you understand if they prioritise play-based experiences which are essential for a child's rounded development. They should talk about child-led learning that support curiosity and independence.

### **2. What does a typical day look like for the children?**

Daily routines give children a sense of structure and security. A clear mix of indoor and outdoor play, active and quiet time, as well as meals, snacks, and possible sleep time (depending on your child's age) should follow a predictable rhythm.

### **3. How will I know my child is making progress?**

Consistent communication keeps you informed about your child's learning and builds a strong partnership with the setting. Do they do daily handovers? How often do they observe children and feedback to parents on progress? Do they have an app for sharing information? Do they share news via newsletters?



#### **4. What qualifications and training do staff have?**

Staff training directly impacts the quality of care and learning experiences. Does anyone have a Level 6 qualification in childcare? How many staff are qualified at Level 3 (Early Years Educator)? How many staff are first Aid trained? When was the last safeguarding training they attended?

Consider also asking how many staff are present every day. Ratios that meet or exceed regulations are a sign that the setting prioritise meaningful interactions between educators and children.

#### **5. How do you handle emergencies and illness?**

Clear procedures ensure children's safety and prevent the spread of illness. How many emergency contact numbers do they need from you (we recommend three)? What happens if your child falls ill during the day?

#### **6. I am entitled to Free Early Education Funding, will I have to pay for anything else?**

The Free Early Education Entitlement should be free to access at the point of entry. You should never be asked to pay for additional hours as a condition to accessing those free hours. The early years setting is allowed to ask you to pay for consumables such as food, nappies, etc. but there should be a transparent breakdown of the cost of these. If you are not satisfied with their answer, contact [EEYService@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:EEYService@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

Details on who provides meals, how allergies and dietary needs are accommodated, and whether cultural preferences are considered.

#### **7. How do you support children with different abilities?**

Inclusive practices ensure every child feels supported and valued. If your child has additional needs, you should ask for clarification about collaboration with specialists including the Local Authority.

#### **8. How is outdoor exploration integrated into the day?**

Regular outdoor time supports physical health, exploration, and learning. If the setting does not have access to their own garden, how do they ensure children go out daily. How do they access safe, engaging spaces for active play and nature experiences?



### **9. How do you support toilet training?**

Consistency between home and setting makes toilet training less stressful for children. How will they regularly communicate with you?

### **10. How are children comforted when upset or missing home?**

Emotional support is just as important as daily routines. What warm, responsive strategies do they have to reassure and comfort children during transitions or difficult moments?