

Choosing Childcare



Fa ily
INFORMATION SERVICE



What is Torbay Family Information Service?

We hold a wide range of information for families in Torbay including details of all Ofsted registered childcare in Torbay, where to get advice and support, on anything affecting your family, and clubs, groups and events in your area.

- All the information we hold can be found online through Torbay Directory **www.torbaydirectory.com/family**
- You can contact us free by telephone on 0800 328 5974, or if you have free minutes on your mobile phone our landline number is 01803 207758
- You can contact us by email at **fisenquiries@torbay.gov.uk**
- You can come and meet our friendly and knowledgeable advisors face to face in our reception area next to Tor Hill House, Union Street, Torquay
- For daily updates, you can like us on Facebook, facebook.com/TorbayFIS, or follow us on Twitter, twitter.com/TorbayFIS

Choosing the best childcare is important for you and your child and you need to feel confident about the type and quality of childcare that you choose.



Understanding Quality of Care

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) is the governing body that inspects all registered childcare to ensure children get good quality childcare in a safe environment.

Registered childcare is inspected by Ofsted to make sure it meets minimum national standards around safeguarding and welfare, and learning and development; known as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It includes registered childminders, nursery schools and classes, day nurseries and pre-schools. Children's centres are also inspected by Ofsted. To check a provider's latest inspection report visit www.ofsted.gov.uk or phone Ofsted on 0300 123 1231.

Early Years providers will receive a grade from Ofsted at the end of their inspection. The grades range from Outstanding and Good to Requires Improvement and Inadequate.

People working as registered childcarers have to meet strict standards of care and are required to be checked under the Disclosure and Barring System (DBS).

Some childminders may be registered with an agency rather than as an individual. In this case the agency, and a sample of the childminders belonging to it, will be inspected by Ofsted.

Some types of childcare provider do not have to register but may choose to through Ofsted's

Voluntary Childcare Register. This includes people who provide care in the child's home, short term care, activity groups and care for children aged 8 and over. Unregistered childcare is more informal and includes nannies and au pairs, babysitters, family and friends who look after your child, some crèches and care when you are present such as parent and toddler groups.

Childcare Choices

The type of childcare that best suits you and your child will depend on the reasons you need childcare and the age of your child.

Day Nurseries

Day nurseries offer care for children on weekdays. Trips and outings may be provided. Day nurseries can provide 15 hours of free childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. You will need to check what is included in the price as you may be charged for extras, such as meals and nappies, in addition to the cost of the session.

Ofsted registration: Must be registered, check their latest inspection report.

Age range: Usually between 3 months and 5 years.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday all day, usually between 8:00am and 6:00pm but sometimes opening hours are longer than this. Care is usually offered all year round except

Bank Holidays and some may close for a week over Christmas.

Registered Childminders

Childminders are self employed and work from their own homes to provide childcare. Childminders attend a range of different activities such as trips out to local attractions and playgrounds, childminding groups and children's centres. They can offer funded places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

Ofsted registration: May be registered with Ofsted individually or as part of an agency.

Age range: All ages, depending on their registration.

Opening hours: Most work from 8:00am until 6:00pm but they are usually flexible, offering hours outside of these times.

Some childminders provide evening or weekend care. Childminders may also pick up and drop off at other childcare providers and schools nearby.

Nursery Classes at a School

Nursery classes are usually attached to an infant or primary school and often only provide the 15 hours free childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds, although you may be able to pay for extra hours if there are spaces available. They are sometimes referred to as maintained nurseries. Attendance at nursery classes does not guarantee a place for your child at the school.

Ofsted registration: Inspected as part of the school's registration.

Age range: Children can attend from the start of the term after their third birthday or the term before for 2 year old children eligible for a funded childcare place.

Opening hours: During term-time only.

Pre-Schools

Pre-schools are often located in places such as community centres and church halls and are run by voluntary groups or committees. Pre-schools can offer 15 hours free childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds, although you may be able to pay for extra hours if there are spaces available.

Ofsted registration: Must be registered. Check their latest inspection report.

Age range: From 2 years to 5 years. Some don't take children until they are 3 years old.

Opening hours: Sessions are usually offered during term-time and can be morning and/or afternoon with similar opening hours to the school day.

Tips for Choosing Childcare

Contact the Family Information Service for details of childcare providers in your area.

Draw up a shortlist and speak to providers on the telephone first as this will save you time and wasted visits. Check their opening hours, fees, vacancies and the ages they cater for.

Arrange visits as this the best way to see what a setting is like is to look around and meet the staff. Arrange appointments with two or three examples of your chosen type of childcare. Childcare providers vary greatly in size, environment and atmosphere. Make sure the place is right for you and your child.

When visiting take along the list of questions in the 'What to Ask' section of this leaflet. It is a good idea to take your child with you and, where possible, visit during normal opening hours. This will give you the opportunity to view the setting whilst the children are around and see if they are calm, happy and busy. It will also allow you to see how the carer(s) interact with the children they are caring for.

Look at Ofsted reports as this will tell you how Ofsted judged the quality of care at their last inspection, which areas are strong and which areas need improving. Trust your instincts, but make sure this is backed up by facts. It is recommended that you look for settings with an Outstanding or Good grade to ensure your child receives the best quality early care and education.

Agree a contract with your chosen provider. It is important to have a written agreement or contract on pay, hours and conditions as this will help to avoid disagreements in the future. Many childcare providers will arrange 'settling in' sessions before your child starts properly. This may be for just a couple of hours at a time and you can stay with your child.

What to Ask

It is a good idea to prepare some questions before you visit a childcare provider so you don't forget anything important. To help you we have prepared some questions you might want to consider. Add your own questions and don't be afraid to ask; good childcare providers will expect this and will also expect to show you the rooms and outdoor spaces used by children.

1. How long have you been established for?
2. What qualifications do you (or your staff) hold?
3. What other age groups will be with my child?
4. What will be a typical day for my child here?
5. Where will my child rest and how will my child's routine fit in?
6. How do you manage behaviour?
7. What is your approach to toilet training?
8. What sort of meals do you give children?
9. Do you make outside trips and visits and where to?
10. Do you keep a record of my child's progress and how will I be kept informed of it?
11. How will we exchange information and communicate about my child on a daily basis?
12. Can I see your registration certificate?
13. Where can I find your policies and procedures (these outlay how the setting manages practice in areas such as safeguarding, behaviour and equality)?
14. Can you tell me about your Safeguarding Policy and does that include DBS checks?
15. What are the ratios of children to carers?

16. Do you operate a keyperson scheme (where an identified member of staff has primary responsibility for your child)? If so, who would be my child's keyperson?
17. What happens if my child is sick or in an emergency?
18. How do you ensure children with disabilities or additional needs are included?
19. How do you ensure cultural differences, including language barriers are recognised and celebrated? Will my child learn about other cultures and celebrations?
20. What would I need to provide for my child's day here?



Paying for childcare

If you use registered childcare you may be able to use Tax Credits or Childcare Vouchers to help with childcare costs.

Funding for 2 year olds

Some 2 year olds are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year depending on whether they meet certain eligibility criteria. A funded place can be claimed at any setting with an Ofsted grade that is Good or Outstanding. To find out whether your child could be eligible and to apply, visit www.torbay.gov.uk/childcare2yo.

Funding for 3 and 4 year olds

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare for 38 weeks of the year from the start of the term after their third birthday. A funded place can be claimed at any setting with an Ofsted grade that is better than Inadequate.



Children with Disabilities or Special Educational Needs

Anyone providing childcare is required to consider how they will provide for children with disabilities and/or special educational needs (SEN). Each Early Years provider clearly outlines what they are able to do to support the learning and development of children with an SEN or a disability in their Local Offer, which can be viewed on Torbay Directory. They should also have an inclusion policy that sets out how they will ensure that every child is included and involved in activities.

Group settings, such as day nurseries and pre-schools, have a specially trained and experienced Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo). They are responsible for ensuring that your child receives care that meets their needs. They should also be able to tell you how they would plan for your child, show you suitable resources that they could use and explain how they might adapt activities to ensure your child is included.



Further information and support

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet or would like further advice or support please contact us. If you are unable to find the childcare you need and would like more help, we can offer additional support. This can include contacting providers on your behalf to arrange visits and a place for your child.

Torbay Family Information Service

www.torbaydirectory.com/family

0800 328 5974

fisenquiries@torbay.gov.uk

Useful contact:

Ofsted

www.ofsted.gov.uk

0300 123 1231



**This leaflet can be made
available in other formats.
For more information please
telephone 0800 328 5974.**