

Choosing an Early Childhood Education Service

To find out which early childhood education service will suit you and your child best, it pays to do some research and invest some time. Talk to local parents, check out the local newspaper and community notice boards and look online. Make several visits to the options that appeal to you. This way you can observe the children, how the service works and how your child responds to the environment.

There are a number of things you'll want to think about when you're choosing a service.

The Practical Stuff

- Is it close to home or work?
- Is it open the hours that suit me?
- Is my child the right age?
- Can I afford it?
- How long will I need to wait for an opening?
- How much time will I be expected to contribute?

The Feel of the Service

- Are the teachers warm and helpful?
- Are the children comfortable with them?
- Are the children listened to with respect?
- Do teachers get down to the children's eye level to speak with them?
- Do teachers recognise each child's culture? Do any of the teachers speak languages other than English?
- What do they do when children are misbehaving?

Meeting Your Child's Specific Needs

- How adaptable is the physical environment to my child's needs?
- What experience do the staff have in supporting children with similar needs to my child?
- What is the daily routine?
- How will they engage in the things my child is passionate about?
- How will they ensure my child is welcomed by the other children and learn alongside them?
- How will they keep me informed about what's happening for my child?



For a list of places that can help you find of early childhood education options see **The Directory**, pages 102-110.

Pointers From Parents

Never forget that while professionals know their roles, you know your child, so don't be afraid to share this insider knowledge. Talk to the people who are supporting or looking after your child about the words and ways they have of communicating, their favourite ways to be comforted, what they're interested in, the things they're good at and things they find challenging.



All licensed early childhood education services and certificated playgroups are regulated by the Ministry of Education so must meet their minimum standards.