



Early Years settings myth busting questions for parents with children aged 2, 3 or 4 years old

Early Years settings can be:

- a maintained nursery school
- a nursery class
- nursery
- pre-school or childminder

They're all places where babies and children up to the age of 5 interact with one another and are cared for while their parents are somewhere else.

They provide a routine and structure to your child's day, which can include meal times, naps, indoor and outdoor activities to promote learning, plus learning to build relationships and social skills. They also help children transition into school, usually in the September after their 4th birthday.

Childminders provide childcare for children in the childminder's own home for more than two hours a day. In England, childminders must be registered with Ofsted or a childminding agency.

1. Does my child need to be toilet trained before starting in an Early Years setting?

Early Years settings cannot refuse your child a place if they're in nappies. Ask your provider for their toileting or intimate care policy and do ask for help if you need it.

Your setting can work with you and your child to prepare them for using the toilet and the transition out of nappies. They will talk to you about signs that your child is ready and how to do this at home and in nursery so that you have a common approach.

Each child will be ready at different ages. [Luton Children and Adults Community Health Service](#) can also support you and your child to get ready for using the toilet.



Wee and poo accidents are common, particularly when they are settling in or feeling unwell. Your child will be changed in the setting if they have a wee or poo accident and you may want to leave some spare clothes in case this happens. Your child's key person will explain this.

Flying Start Luton offers Luton parents a FREE virtual workshop on toilet training. Please check the website for dates and times. [Parenting and family relationship - Flying Start Luton](#)

[ERIC](#) is a charity that has online and phone support around toileting, night-time toileting, potty training, constipation in your child and anxieties around using the toilet.

[Tiny Happy People](#) also has some great tips on toilet training, which you can translate into different languages.

If your child is moving to school and they are not yet clean and dry or have a medical condition, there are some useful tips on the [ERIC website](#) or you may want to get in touch with the [school nursing team](#) for individual advice in preparation for the move.

2. My child needs help with the toilet and getting their coat on and off, who will help them at an Early Years setting?

When your child first starts in the setting, they'll be allocated a key person. Part of their role is to help your child to become more independent. The key person will have many games to help your child learn to take their coat off, hang it up and put it on. They'll make it fun! They'll give your child lots of time and encouragement to develop their independence.

The key person will also support your child with their toilet times. If your child is in nappies, they'll change your child. When your child is ready to use the toilet, they'll support your child and liaise with you.

If your child is already using the toilet, their key person will remind them to use the toilet and make sure they are clean and dry after going to the toilet. If your child has a wee or poo accident in nursery, the key person will help them to get changed and clean.

In the setting, the children will have activities to help them practice dressing and washing their hands. There's a short video on Tiny Happy People which has some top tips on helping you and your child [get ready for starting at a setting](#), including becoming more independent.

3. I'm worried my child will not eat at an Early Years setting and will be hungry.

Every setting has a snack time. They'll offer your child a healthy snack, such as a piece of apple, hummus and crackers, or toast. Your child will also have a drink of water or milk. If your child does not want to eat the food offered, that's okay.

Your child will be encouraged to try the snack food and will sit with other children at a table. Sometimes children will do cooking activities or help set the table so that they take part in snack time. Ask your child's key person for the snack menu and talk to your child about the food they can taste at the setting or even try it at home. If your child does not eat at snack time, their key person will let you know.

At lunchtime, your child might eat what you've prepared at home or the setting may offer a hot meal. If your child does not eat all of their packed lunch, it will be sent home so you can see what they've eaten. If the meal is prepared by the setting, they'll let you know what your child has eaten.

You might find these ideas useful for mealtimes at home and early year's settings:

- **Tiny Happy People:** [Meals with babies and toddlers](#)
- **HENRY: Healthy families group:** with Flying Start
- **Healthy Start scheme:** [find out if you're eligible and how to apply](#)
- **Healthy Start vitamins:** recommended for pregnant women, new mums and children from 6 month to 5 years

4. Should my child be speaking in English when they start Early Years settings if we do not speak English at home?

Your child's new setting will ask about your family life, such as who is in the family and which languages you speak at home. They're very used to helping children who are learning English. If they speak the same language as your child, they'll use that language and introduce the word in English.

If no-one in the nursery speaks the same language as your child, they'll ask you to help them learn the words in your home language, use gestures, objects and actions to communicate, play games and sing songs to help your child learn words in English. It's important that you use your shared language at home.



Your child will be able to understand more words in English than they can speak to begin with and will sometimes mix up languages. This is quite usual. If you have any concerns, talk to your child's key person and they'll talk to you if they have any concerns too.

5. Can I stay with my child when they first start an Early Years setting? I'm worried because they have never been apart from me.

When your child starts at the setting, they'll talk to you about helping your child to settle. Your child will have a key person who'll be there to help them by finding out what your child likes to do and also their dislikes!



The key person will use this information to help get your child settled when you've dropped them off. It's quite usual for children to be upset when they first start at a new setting. Most children will settle after a few minutes.

Usually, you and your child will be invited to a settling-in visit where you'll stay with your child. The amount of time you stay with your child will be reduced until your child feels comfortable and is happy to remain at the setting without you.

Some top tips:

- Remember to say goodbye to your child and let them know that you will be back to pick them up.
- Leave something that smells of you or home in their bag.
- Ask a trusted family member or friend to have your child for a while so that they get used to being with a different person. Build up the length of time you're away so that you both get used to being apart and your child knows that you will come back to them.
- Tiny Happy People has more top tips on helping you and your child:
 - [get ready for starting at nursery](#)
 - [leaving your child with family or friends](#)

6. Does my child need to be able to write their own name before starting an Early Years setting?

Children starting in a setting do not need to be able to write their name. Your child might be able to recognise their name or the first letter.

When they start at their setting, your child will have the opportunity to strengthen their muscles through activities like playdough, threading, throwing a ball or building with Lego, which helps with being able to control a pencil or crayon.

Your child will also draw and make marks with brushes, sticks, paint or pencils. They will talk about the marks that they have made and you can ask them about what they have drawn. This is early writing.

By the time, they are ready to leave the setting for reception year at school; your child may be ready to hold a pencil with more control and may be able to write some recognisable letters such as their name or 'mama'.

If you have any concerns or questions, talk to your child's key person who'll give you some ideas of things to do at home. [This parents' guide](#) may also give you some ideas of what children will experience at different ages in their setting.

7. I have other children to drop off at school. How will I get my younger child to an Early Years setting on time as well?

If you're worried about getting your younger child to a setting on time, talk to your child's key person. They will understand! You may be able to adjust your child's hours or days to make it easier for you.

As your family gets into a new routine, it will also become easier. Your older children might be able to help by getting their bags ready the night before or lining up the shoes by the door for everyone.

Tiny Happy People have some fun and free [routine activity sheets](#) to download.



8. What happens if my child bites another child? Will they be sent home?

Biting happens for lots of different reasons and each case is different. Your child's key person will talk to you sensitively and privately if your child bites another child, to discuss what may have happened and to think about any triggers.

The key person will have some strategies that they can put in place with you to support your child in nursery and at home. The nursery will not send the child home.

This [NHS behaviour website](#) reminds us to support children who are biting and to help them express their feelings in a different way.

9. We still use a buggy for my child because they do not like walking.

Once your child is walking, they should be physically active for at least 180 minutes (3 hours) a day, spread throughout the day. Let your child walk with you rather than always using the buggy. Build this up over time.



Encourage activities which support their physical activity at home or when you are out. Moving around and playing games or visiting the park will help improve their coordination and develop the muscles in their arms and hands.

It's good to join in with your child's active play when you can. Have fun showing them how to do new things like running and hopping. Being active together shows your child that activity is enjoyable.

Watching TV or using a tablet for long periods – or being strapped into a buggy, car seat or highchair – is not good for young children.

10. I'm worried about my child's speech. What should I do?

Firstly, children naturally make errors in their speech when learning how to speak, for example, if your child says 'tar' instead of 'car', depending on age this is a developmentally normal speech error pattern.

Listen to your child and make a note of the different patterns/errors they are making. If you're concerned about your child's speech and language development you can [make a request for support via the 'how to refer' link here.](#)
[Click here for the direct link to the Beds & Luton pre-school advice request form.](#)

In the meantime, [check out these free information videos.](#)

11. My child is not talking yet, should I send them to an Early Years setting?

Sending your child to a setting is a personal decision that's completely up to you as a parent. There's no legal obligation to send your child to a setting, especially if you feel they are not ready. However, a setting will provide your child with opportunities that they may not be exposed to in the home setting.

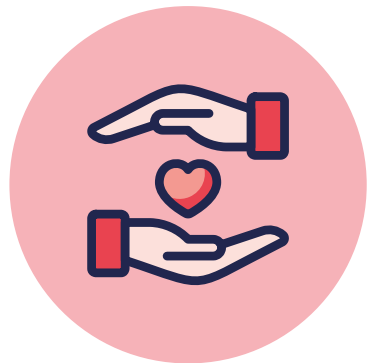
Being in a setting will teach your child about daily structure and routine, as well as promote more independence. Parents are usually very quick to have a child's needs met. However, in a setting, your child will need to proactively seek this support by asking.

If your child is not yet talking, this may feel like a daunting task, but staff are usually well equipped to support your child regardless of whether the child has spoken language or not. Expressive language comes in lots of different forms, and non-verbal communication plays a big part in a child's ability to communicate.

The setting will also provide your child with the opportunity to interact with lots of other children around the same age. This in turn may promote more spoken language, as your child may feel more eager to communicate.

If your child attends a setting and is still struggling to pick up language, the staff may be able to make relevant referrals to other professionals, or introduce your child to one of the language groups such as Lift off to Language.

If you're still concerned and would like some further advice about whether or not to send your child to nursery, [reach out to the speech and language team here.](#) The therapist will be able to advise you further on your child's specific needs.



12. Will my child be able to share or take turns?

Sharing is not an innate concept. It's something that children need to learn explicitly. An unwillingness to share at 2 years old is developmentally completely normal.

Whilst at a setting, the staff will begin to model sharing and turn taking from a young age. When children are around 3.5 to 4 years old, if they're still struggling with being able to share and take turns, the nursery staff can work with them in smaller group activities (known as attention groups) to begin to practise these skills more openly.

13. My child has not been around other children / my child is not used to being around other children / my child is shy.



It's completely normal for a child who is not around lots of other children to be shy or more reserved than some of their peers. You may notice that they start to 'come out of their shell' more, the more they attend a setting, or perhaps they do not, and your child has a shy personality - this is ok!

If your child speaks a lot at home and very little or not at all in a setting that is ok, particularly if they're learning a new language. The setting will monitor this and track progress.

Try not to focus on the not talking but talk to your child about what they have done in nursery or who they have played with.

14. I think my child has special needs. Will the Early Years setting be able to meet their needs?

Yes. All settings will have had a child with special needs at some time. They will have a member of staff called the Special Needs Coordinator who is responsible for supporting children with special needs. If you think your child has special needs, or you've been told by a professional that they have concerns around your child's development, please tell the setting. They'll discuss with you how they can support your child, which will help your child settle and access learning.

All settings have training opportunities through the council's Special Educational Needs Service. This service also works with you and settings to identify the best methods to support your child. They'll also recommend involvement of other services should they be needed.

For more information go to [Luton's Local Offer SEND information page.](#)

Your child cannot be refused admission. However, sometimes the setting will already be supporting lots of other children who need help, and they might not have the capacity to be able to meet your child's needs too. In this case, they'll help you find another place for your child.

15.

If my child has special needs or is struggling with their behaviour, will they be refused admission to an Early Years setting?

When you're choosing the setting for your child, it's important to be honest and share any concerns that you may have. The setting will then be able to help you and your child.

Your child cannot be refused admission but sometimes the setting will already be supporting lots of other children who need help and they might not be able to meet your child's needs, so they will help you find another place for your child. You can also [use the Luton Directory](#) to find another setting near to you.

There are a range of free online guides for Luton parents on a variety of parenting topics. Enter the access code **HATTERS** to explore the NHS evidence based guides and then follow the simple registration instructions to work through a guide. You'll need your Luton postcode.

[Online learning \(inourplace.co.uk\)](#)

To find out more about Early Years settings please go to:

- [day nurseries and maintained nursery schools](#)
- [pre-schools](#)
- [childminders](#)

For further childcare information from Luton Council go to: [childcare in Luton](#)

For any additional assistance, please contact Luton Family Hubs:

✉ familyhubs@eyalliance.org.uk

📄 familyhubs.luton.gov.uk

Toddler transition



Pre-school transition

