

5. Pre-school groups

What is a pre-school group?

A pre-school offers fun activities and learning opportunities to children aged 3 to 5 (some take on younger children). Most groups offer free early years provision.

Sessions are held during school term time. Some offer full-time childcare.

Do pre-schools need to register?

Yes, if they run for two hours or more on any one day. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) registers and inspects pre-schools. There are requirements relating to staffing, space, light, safety, access etc.

What is the adult to child ratio?

A minimum of 1 adult (paid staff or volunteer) to every 8 children.



Can pre-schools offer free early years provision?

Yes, if they have passed an assessment visit from a local authority officer. This is in addition to the inspection carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Call the Children and Families Information Service for more details.

How do I find a pre-school group?

Contact the Children and Families Information Service.

How do I choose?

Put your child's name down on a waiting list as soon as possible – they can be popular! Arrange to visit more than one pre-school with your child, preferably when a session is going on.

Speak to the staff, look around and consider the following:

- Are entrances and exits secure?
- Is the atmosphere friendly?
- Do the children look happy?
- Does the equipment look clean, safe and appropriate?
- Is there a variety of learning and play opportunities?
- Is there a rota for parental involvement?
- What is their discipline policy?
- How much do sessions cost?
- Are refreshments provided?

Ask to see their registration certificate, inspection notes and insurance certificate.



For more information please contact:

The Children and Families Information Service • Children's Services • 80 Warwick Road • Carlisle • Cumbria • CA1 1DU
tel: 08457 125 737 email: childrens.information@cumbriacc.gov.uk cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/cfis

Contact us if you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, spoken word or in a different language.