

Preparing you and your baby for nursery

Returning to work and arranging childcare can be daunting, especially since places in high-quality nurseries fill up fast. This factsheet is designed to support you through the process and ease the transition from parental leave to working parenthood.

Settling in

- Your nursery will offer settling-in visits, allowing you and your baby to meet the staff and become familiar with the environment
- You will be assigned a key person, who will be your and your child's main contact. They will ask you about your child's likes, dislikes, routines, sleep patterns, and eating habits
- The key person will use this information to ensure your child is settled and that familiar routines are followed. They will also plan your child's next steps according to their curriculum
- Your child's key person will discuss the progress of settling visits, which will gradually increase from short sessions with you present to longer periods where you leave the room or building
- Remember, every child adjusts at their own pace. Be patient and understanding with your child and yourself during this transition to a new routine and environment.



Sleep

Children's sleep patterns and needs are unique, and nurseries will try and accommodate these individual preferences. Sleep in a nursery will be either in a cot or on a mat you can help this transition by starting to do the same at home for their daytime sleep. Nurseries will have policies to ensure safe sleep practices are in operation, which you can ask to see so you are familiar with what to expect.

Milk and eating

Nurseries will work with you and provide your baby with whatever they need in terms of milk and food. If you are breastfeeding, they will have policies in place to safely store the milk and give it to your child in a bottle or beaker. To ease this transition, you could practice bottle or beaker feeding at home. When weaning, clearly communicate to nursery staff your child's dietary preferences and requirements, including any allergies or suspected intolerances. Many nurseries have on-site cooks to prepare meals that meet these specifications.

Comforters

Leaving your child for the first time can be worrying and unsettling, but you can help ease this transition by providing familiar items from home, such as

- Comforter - a favourite toy or blanket
- Sharing your child's favourite story or song
- Providing family photos for display.

These can be used and shared throughout the day to help your child settle. Nurseries appreciate information about your child's culture, traditions, and home language(s), which can help them feel more at home. You can also share some key words in your child's home language to help reassure them as they settle into their new environment.

Sharing information

Nurseries will provide updates on your child's day, including photos, details about their meals, and sleep times. These updates can be reassuring, especially if your child cries when you leave. Most settings will allow you to call when your child is first settling to check on how well they are doing.

Information is usually shared through secure online journals or written diaries/care sheets as well as verbally at drop-off and collection times. This is also an opportunity for you to share information with the nursery, helping staff learn about your child's interests, routines and any learning or development you have noticed.

Summary

Feeling sad about leaving your child at nursery is normal - it's a significant and emotional change. However, you are likely to soon see your child thriving and enjoying their early educational experiences. As you observe their daily growth, learning, accumulation of experiences, friendships and cherished memories, you will be reassured.

If you have any worries or concerns, speak to your child's key person or the Nursery Manager so that you can discuss them together to ensure you and your child feel happy and settled in the new environment.

Further guidance

My NDNA parents page: <https://ndna.org.uk/parents-of-nursery-aged-children/>