

Parent power



Any time you spend helping out at your child's early years setting, whether it's a nursery, pre-school or parent and toddler group, will benefit both you and your child.

It is well known, and supported by much research, that children whose parents are involved in their early years setting do better educationally, enjoy closer relationships and benefit from a high quality of care.

Helping out a setting is a great experience. You may find out more about the kinds of activities your child enjoys and also observe how they relate to other children in a different environment.

How you can help



Your child's group will always appreciate any offers of support. Many early years settings actively encourage parents to contribute to the life of the group. There are many ways that you can choose to help out, giving as much or as little time as you can.

- Your special interests, ideas or skills may be useful to the setting, for example, staff always appreciate an extra pair of hands to help with day trips or special play activities.
- You can help with fundraising events, selling raffle tickets or assisting with planning and preparation.
- If your child attends a parent-managed setting, you can also contribute by volunteering with the committee, perhaps helping with the accounts or negotiating with a landlord over the terms of a lease.

The benefits



Helping out at your child's early years setting gives many additional benefits for both you and your child:

- Regularly helping out or supporting the setting will give you an insight into the daily routine and will help you to continue your child's learning at home - particularly if you take part in family learning programmes.
- Spending more time in your child's setting is also a great opportunity to meet informally with staff, build relationships and make friends with other parents.
- Seeing you involved in the early years setting shows your child that you think education is important – and that you have a part to play in it.
- Children in early years settings will meet a wide range of adults and children, each with their own experiences, skills and backgrounds helping them to learn to understand and appreciate these differences.
- By contributing to a parent-run committee, you can gain valuable new skills and business experience, such as budget-management or negotiation.

Making the most of your time



If you choose to help out with play activities at the setting and feel unsure about the settling-in process, here are a few tips to help you:

- If you can, try to arrive early to help set out the activities before the children arrive.
- If you are unsure about anything, the team will be happy to help so don't be afraid to ask.
- Join in by watching how the children play and be prepared to talk to them about it.
- Spending time in the book corner is an excellent way for you to help out – read a book with one or two children, talk about the pictures or tell them a story.
- Your own child might find it hard to see you in this unfamiliar situation and not feel comfortable sharing you with a lot of other children. If your child needs extra attention, take some time to reassure them.
- Remember that many settings are required to carry out criminal background checks on all adults volunteering with children other than their own. These policies are for the well-being and safety of the children so you will need to provide the necessary information.

Next steps



If you'd like to find out more about the opportunities available to help out at your child's setting, speak with the team there. Alternatively, you may want to talk to another parent who already helps out at the group.

You can also contact your local regional or branch office of the Pre-school Learning Alliance. For more information or advice visit our website at www.pre-school.org.uk or get in touch with the Information Service team:

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