

BECOMING A WORKING PARENT

Starting a new job or returning to a career when you are a parent can be an exciting and challenging time. Getting used to balancing the needs of your family and the demands of paid employment can take time. Having confidence in your childcare arrangements helps.

Work-Life Balance (Balancing work and home)

The Government is encouraging employers to offer a range of policies to help parents balance the demands of their job with bringing up children and other family commitments.

To help you balance work and home we suggest that you:

Look for childcare early (there are often waiting lists for specific childcare and carers).

Talk to other parents about what worked for them. They'll give you a good starting point and some terms of reference to work from.

Consider your future needs. Plan for stability and continuity – it's better to spend time finding care that will grow with your child.

Follow your instincts. Good facilities, a safe environment and lots of activities are crucial, but how you feel about the carer is as important.

Talk to the Family Information Service team who will be happy to discuss issues with you.

**Contact Leicestershire's Family Information Service
0116 305 6545 or email family@leics.gov.uk**

Don't:

- Panic and go for the first option you visit. If you like the look of the set-up, put your child's name down on the waiting list, but don't commit yourself further until you have checked out what else is available
- Agree to an arrangement you won't be able to keep. If you know it will always be a close shave to get back for a pick-up time, or you have any doubts about the carer, be honest with them and yourself and look for a more suitable arrangement
- Stop looking until you're happy with your choice, but be aware you may not find the perfect solution – there may not be one – so be prepared to be flexible

Settling your child in

- Arrange to visit your new childcare situation at least twice with your child if possible.
- On your first day back to work, ensure your child is settled and comfortable at their childcare provision.
- Be happy and positive about the day ahead as your child may pick up on your feelings about your child carer.

Building relationships

The person, or people, you have chosen to look after your child is very important in your family's life and the relationship you all have will be quite different from any other. You want to create a positive partnership, one that grows and adapts as the weeks, months and years go by.

Getting off to a good start

Be honest about your working hours – include realistic travelling time. Know what your child carer's policy is on late pick ups and have a plan in place that includes someone picking up your child if you're unavoidably detained.

You'll have discussed lots of issues when you booked the care in the first place, but new concerns are bound to crop up.

Share information every day. Allow time in the morning or evening to chat to the carer.

You may want to arrange a more formal update system with your carer.

Respect your child's carer for the responsible and important job they are doing.

Help from your Employer

You may find that your employer is keen to help and develop a good Work-Life Balance approach, although they may be unsure how to implement this.

If you think your employer would be interested in receiving guidance and advice on this issue, ask them to contact the Family Information Service.

For more information on returning to work after maternity leave or information on financial support and flexible working visit the Family Information Service Top Tips for Parents on the Leicestershire County Council website.
www.leics.gov.uk