

Wakefield District Families Information Service

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Choosing a Parent and Toddler Group

Who are they for and where are they?

Toddler groups are places where adults can meet with their children and children get the chance to play, whilst adults can both chat and join in the play. There are a variety of different names for groups and they meet in places such as church halls, community centres, family centres and family restaurants.

Toddler groups aim to provide play opportunities for children aged from birth to school age with a parent or carer accompanying the child(ren) at all times. Parents stay with the children and toddler groups are not classified as childcare. They are not registered and inspected. Some of the toddler groups are run by playgroups (or pre-schools) and often the children move on to playgroup at the same premises. Playgroups cater for children aged 2½ and over and children stay there without their parents to get play and learning opportunities. There is a separate information sheet about playgroups.

Who runs them?

The people organising toddler groups may be volunteers or paid staff. If they are run by volunteers then parents and carers may be encouraged to get involved in helping. This may be with the organisation or perhaps occasional fundraising activities. You can choose whether to get involved in these activities. Sometimes this type of involvement has led on to a career working with young children. If this interests you we have a recruitment officer who can help you get started. You can reach the recruitment officer on 0800 587 8042.

What else do I need to know?

The charges for toddler groups vary according to the organisation of the group and whether they are paid staff. Groups usually meet once or twice a week often for a couple of hours. Some have a waiting list but may operate on a 'drop-in' basis.

They do not have to be registered with Ofsted and there are no quality standards for them to meet. Some indicators of a good quality are:

- ✓ Clean safe premises, warm enough for small children to play
- ✓ Clean unbroken toys
- ✓ Records kept of children and families attending and financial records
- ✓ Access to a telephone for an emergency
- ✓ More than one exit from the building in case of fire
- ✓ A first aid kit should be available
- ✓ Other reasonable safety measures should be in place
- ✓ No smoking or alcohol should be allowed when the children are on the premises

These measures are only a guide and the best toddler group for you and your child is the one where you feel most welcome and included.

Useful web sites

www.ofsted.gov.uk

www.wakefieldcis.org.uk

www.childcarelink.gov.uk/wakefield