



Essex County Council
Early Years and Childcare

Getting ready for your babies

Creating an under two-year-olds
provision in your setting



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Are you ready for your babies?

With new funding available many settings have been considering opening their settings to under two-year-olds

The EYFS Framework lists several statutory requirements that are linked directly to best quality 0 to 2 years provision.

The following EYCC guidance has been designed as a reflective tool to use alongside the EYFS Framework, with questions to consider if you are looking to set up a baby area in your settings.



Early Years Foundation Stage Framework Statutory Requirements

Space requirements

Section 3.81: The premises and equipment must be organised in a way that meets the needs of children. Providers must meet the following indoor space requirements where indoor activity in a building(s) forms the main part of (or is integral) to the provision: Children under two years: 3.5m² per child.

Section 3.85 baby room: There should be a separate baby room for children under the age of two. However, providers must ensure that children in a baby room have contact with older children and are moved into the older age group when appropriate.



Reflective questions

- Does your proposed baby area meet the EYFS space requirements?
- How will you ensure that there is a safe separate area for your babies?



Key person

Section 3.41: Each child must be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents and/or carers. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.

Reflective questions

- Are baby room staff familiar with the attachment theory and other specific 0 to 2 years research?
- Will the child's keyperson do personal care routines for their key children?
- How often does the keyperson have a discussion with the parent of their key child?
- Do you have a keyperson buddy system in place?



Key point

Remember for babies it's so much more than just a cuddle, a nappy and a bottle!

Ratios and supervision of children – sleeping arrangements

Section 3.84: Sleeping children must be frequently checked to ensure that they are safe. Being safe includes ensuring that cots and bedding are in good condition and suited to the age of the child, and that babies are placed down to sleep safely in line with the latest government safety guidance:

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) NHS

Practitioners may also find it helpful to read NHS advice on the safety of sleeping babies:

Reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) NHS

Foot note: These judgements should be based on useable areas of the rooms used by the children, not including, storage areas, thoroughfares, dedicated staff areas, cloakrooms, utility rooms, kitchens and toilets.



Reflective questions

- ➔ Have you considered sleeping arrangements – are they age appropriate? Cots, Dream Coracle?
- ➔ Are staffing arrangements for checking sleeping babies; systems in place to ensure [safe sleeping](#)?
- ➔ How will you ensure children have separate sheets/blankets – how will these be maintained/washed?



Supervision requirements and food requirements

Food and drink facilities:

Section 3.68: Babies and young children should be seated safely in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair while eating. Where possible there should be a designated eating space where distractions are minimised.

Section 3.69: Children must always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating. Choking can be completely silent, therefore, it is important for providers to be alert to when a child may be starting to choke. Where possible, providers should sit facing children whilst they eat, so they can make sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking and so they can prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.

Section 3.71: There must be an area adequately equipped to provide healthy meals, snacks and drinks for children as necessary. There must be suitable facilities for the hygienic preparation of food for children, if necessary, including suitable sterilisation equipment for babies' food. Providers must be confident that those responsible for preparing and handling food are competent to do so. All staff involved in preparing and handling food must receive training in food hygiene.



Reflective questions

- ➔ Have you considered staffing arrangements for mealtimes?
- ➔ How will you ensure food/milk preparation and storage of food/milk is hygienic and safe?
- ➔ Do you have hygienic facilities to accommodate baby food requirements eg suitable kitchen for blending, heating food/milk?
- ➔ Will you have highchairs or other suitable chair/table furniture for young babies?



Ratio and qualifications requirements

Under twos

Section 3.47: For children aged under two:

- there must be at least one member of staff for every three children
- at least one member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification or have received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status³⁷ and be suitably experienced in working with children under two
- at least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification
- at least half of all staff must have received training that specifically addresses the care of babies
- where there is a room for under two-year-olds, the member of staff in charge of that room must, in the judgement of the provider, have suitable experience of working with under twos

Reflective questions

- How will you meet staffing requirements and ensure staff have appropriate training and experience for the care of babies?
- Do you have a diverse staff team in place to work with your 0 to 2 years?

Health & Safety

Section 3.79: Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation, including fire safety and hygiene requirements.

Reflective questions

Fencing – separate safe space

- Consider the type of dividers or fencing you will use – will these allow you to maintain visual contact and safety at all times?

Nappy changing facilities

- Have you considered how personal hygiene will be supported and promoted within your baby area?
- How will you ensure children's privacy is maintained during personal care routines?
- How will you ensure staff are protected from Safeguarding allegations during personal care routines?
- Will appropriate hand washing facilities be available close to the baby area?
- Where will nappies and other waste be disposed of?

Registration requirements

The **Childcare Act 2006** says that childcare is ‘any form of care for a child, including education or any other supervised activity’.

Most providers caring for children under 8 years old for more than 2 hours a day in England must register with Ofsted. If you’re a childminder or a childminder without domestic premises, you can choose to register with a childminder agency instead.

To register, you need to be 18 or over and have the right to work in the United Kingdom (Ofsted 2025).



Reflective questions



- ➔ Have you contacted [Ofsted](#) with your intended plans to take babies?
- ➔ What is your current registration? Do you need to change your registration to include under 2's in your setting?
- ➔ Have you considered the implications and changes you will need to make within your setting to accommodate younger children?

For example: space requirements, staffing ratios, outdoor space provision, age-appropriate equipment and resources etc.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Safeguarding requirements

Safeguarding points to consider:

- do you have a safeguarding policy?
- have staff received relevant safeguarding training?
- does a member of your team regularly attend the ECC safeguarding forums and briefings?
- does the setting keep updated on safeguarding themes and topics?

Essential documents and support to consider:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- EYFS – Welfare Requirements
- What to do if you're worried a child has been abused
- EYCC safeguarding audit
- LADO flowchart
- Essex SG referral flowchart
- Whistle Blowing policy
- Early Help Drop Ins



Special Education Needs (SEN)

- **SEND Code of Practice** – The Code of Practice provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations and applies to England. It relates to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabled children and young people.
- **Ordinarily Available** – A support document that sets out a common set of expectations about the provision and practice that is expected in all Early Years settings, mainstream schools and Post 16 providers for all children and young people with SEND. It is what a parent or family can expect to be ‘normally’ or ‘ordinarily’ available to their child without the need for involving specialist support.



Reflective questions


- ➔ Do you have a trained SENCO – Special Educational Co-ordinator?
- ➔ Are staff confident in supporting young children with SEN?
- ➔ Are you familiar with the Ordinarily Available document?



Setting up your environment


Creating an under two-year-olds environment

Reflective questions

- 
- Have you considered how you will offer a relaxed and calm environment for your under 2s, minimising noise levels while children sleep?
 - Have you considered the position of your under 2yr area – how will you ensure the area is safe, hygienic, warm, calm and suitable for babies?
 - Have you considered what dividers/fencing you will use to separate the under 2s from older children and resources that may not be age appropriate?
 - Will your baby area be soft and cosy – what floor coverings and soft furnishings will be used?
 - How will you maintain the hygiene of these soft furnishings?
 - How will you maintain a hygienic space for young babies to sit, crawl, sleep?

Learning and development – EYFS

Reflective questions

- 
- Are staff confident in understanding typical age-related development and behaviours?
 - Do staff have a good understanding of how to challenge and scaffold learning with under twos?
 - Are your staff familiar with Schematic behaviour and how to support children's schemas?
 - Do you have a wide variety of age-appropriate, safe, open-ended resources ready for your under twos?
 - Documents to be aware of:
 - **Birth to 5 Matters** - Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage
 - **Development Matters** - Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage

Enabling environments ideas

Ideas to consider when setting up a baby area in your settings:

Create safe spaces: Make spaces that feel familiar and comfortable for babies.

Use natural colours: Soft lighting as opposed to bright coloured environments

Use moveable furniture: Use furniture on wheels, moveable display boards, and baskets to zone up areas.

Use different platforms: Use different leveled platforms to work off, such as a cable drum, pallet, or wooden chairs pushed together, foam shapes, planks, clean tyres

Cosy corner: Create a quiet, comfortable space for children with tall teepees, den frames, nature print accessories.

Create a role play area: Add wooden items, loose parts, real plants, and soft lighting.

Outdoors: Create a safe space to explore the grass, and other sensory materials – have good quality wet weather suits

Risk/assessment: Regularly review the safety of all of the above

Create a nature table: Collect items around the nursery grounds and provide explore bags/baskets for children to collect items.

Maths: Incorporate math into all areas of the room, such as measuring cups, spoons, jugs

Mark making: Water painting, chunky crayons, painting, chunky chalk, paper, blackboards

Create treasure baskets: 0 to 9 months approx. (Elinor Goldschmied)

Heuristic play baskets: 9 months to 2 years approx. (Elinor Goldschmied)

Exploratory baskets: Loose parts play/open ended eg. boxes, blocks, tubes, containers, plastic bottles, shakers



Business considerations



Reflective questions

Understand your market

- Do you have large numbers of families in your area with young children or will there be in the near future? For example, are there any plans for new housing developments.
- Who are the other childcare providers in the area with vacancies? What do you know about them and what they offer? Do they offer baby places and how does their provision compare to yours?
- Do your research about the need.



Consider any external factors that may influence your business in the near future

- Any political changes that may influence the need for childcare or impact businesses. For example, in November 2024 there have been recent employment reforms announcements which will increase the need for childcare places. Budget announcements such as a rise in Employers NIC may impact small businesses viability.
- Any economic factors impacting businesses such as changes in universal credit.
- Consider social changes. Parents working from home more, certain days childcare not needed.
- Technological impacts to your business. Cyber security and how technology can support your business and cut costs.
- Legal changes that influence your business such as changes in legal childcare ratios.
- Environmental changes. Any proposed changes to transport infrastructures within your area.

Business considerations



Reflective questions

Staff, training and ratios

- Do you have staff with the relevant training for younger babies?
- If you need to recruit, where will you advertise?
- How will you continually analyse your business model as babies get older and impact the ratio changes? This will impact your staffing needs and as well as levels of income.

Costs to consider

- Babies may attract higher hourly rates but also higher costs.
- Will the setting provide nappies/wipes?
- Staff ratios need to be considered if staff need to frequently leave the room.
- Meals, snacks, and milk prep what are the associated costs?
- Waste collection – costs for nappy disposal.
- Increased insurance costs.
- Check lease agreements for any timing restrictions.

Income Levels fees and charges

- Know your breakeven point. How much revenue do you need to generate to cover all your costs? How does that equate to numbers of children and age groups?
- Full day care considerations – higher rental costs, higher insurance, staffing and increased hours may increase not only hourly wages but also the add on costs including employers NIC and employers pension contributions.

For support starting your business, please refer to the [ECC, EYCP website](#).

If ECC have any capital funding available, it will be advertised [here](#).

If you would like any business support, please contact: bmc@essex.gov.uk

Useful links and websites

Training suggestions

National Day Nurseries Association – [Baby Room Leader](#) - online course

National Day Nurseries Association – [Nursery training: Brilliant Babies](#) - working with birth to 2-year-olds

Early Years Alliance – [Building babies' brains](#)

Early Years Alliance – [Inspirational baby room practice – getting it right from the start](#)

PACEY – [Working with babies](#)

Audit tool recommendations

ECC – [Quality Matters Working with Babies](#)

ECC – [How do I become an outstanding practitioner?](#)

Elizabeth Jarman® – [Communication Friendly Spaces](#)

High quality best practice

Community Playthings

[Enhancing baby room environments in nurseries](#)

[The baby room: a practical guide for early years educators](#)

[Mona Sakr baby room training](#)

[Room Designs](#)

[National Day Nurseries Association](#)

[PACEY](#)

Talk, Listen, Cuddle – [Babies](#)

Early Years Alliance – [Baby room ideas](#)

Twinkl – [Baby Room Indoor and Outdoor Set-Up Ideas for Early Years Settings](#)

Teach Early Years – [Interacting with babies](#)

Useful links and websites

Further support and reading

Froebel Trust Peter - Dr Peter Elfer
[Nursery attachments and the Key Person role](#)

Veronica Read: [Developing Attachment In Early Years Settings](#)

Elinor Goldschmied: [Treasure baskets](#)

Anita Hughes: [Treasure baskets & heuristic play](#)

Froebel: [Thinking about Babies](#)

Continuous Professional Development (CPD): regular and relevant training for all staff working with babies and young children in your setting

EYCC Best Practice Rooms Basildon: training rooms providing a hands-on experience to support practitioners in creating an outstanding enabling environment

Ofsted

For further information please refer to Ofsted blog for latest updates and articles

Ofsted: Early Years - [News and updates on early years inspection](#)

The Baby Room

The Baby Room Blog: www.thebabyroom.blog

Nuffield Foundation

[Research project Achieving high-quality provision in the baby room of English nurseries from July 2024 to August 2026.](#)

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Early Years and Childcare

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