

Best Start in Life

A booklet for you and your two-year-old.

Sign up to our e-newsletter to get up-to-date information for you and your family about free events, offers, health information and much more.

To sign up or to find out more about your local Best Start in Life services, scan the QR code or visit

www.walthamforest.gov.uk/beststartinlife.



Waltham Forest

Welcome

Two years old is an amazing milestone! Your child will be starting to learn and behave in different ways. This pack will help celebrate your child's development and progress towards starting school.

We've created this booklet to support Waltham Forest parents and carers in nurturing their child's health and development, and to share information about our Best Start in Life services.

Did you know?
Best Start in Life services are for all children under five and their families in Waltham Forest.

Our Best Start in Life services are here to support you and your family with caring for your child. They are delivered in our Family Hubs as well as other places across Waltham Forest (such as libraries, parks and community centres) and include council services and services provided by our partners.

Our Family Hubs offer fun play sessions as well as lots of free support about a wide range of topics, like helping your child to develop their speech and language skills and build healthy eating habits.

We have four Family Hubs across Waltham Forest, which you can see on the map to the right. If you have not already registered at one of our Family Hubs, speak to your health visitor, or you can just drop in and speak with our friendly staff. You can also register on the Best Start in Life webpage, which has lots of information about our activities, events and spaces, at www.walthamforest.gov.uk/beststartinlife.

Introducing our Best Start in Life superhero squad

We'd like to introduce you to our Best Start in Life superheroes, our six unique helpers who are here to welcome you to our services. You'll find them all around the borough, at our fantastic Family Hubs, local libraries, and other places where there is something fun for you and your child to get involved with.

Find out more about our superheroes at bit.ly/SuperheroesWF.



Family Hub locations

Open Monday to Friday,
9am to 5pm
(not including bank holidays)

To download the most up-to-date Family Hub timetables, please visit www.walthamforest.gov.uk/beststartinlife.



The next stage of your child's development

Your child will develop lots of amazing new skills between now and their fifth birthday. The pathway on the opposite page shows just some of the milestones that children will typically reach on their journey towards starting school. You can find out more about your child's development at www.walthamforest.gov.uk/yourchildsdevelopment.

Every child develops at their own pace, but if you have concerns about your child's development at any time, you can raise these with the Health Visiting team by calling **0300 033 6200**.

The two- to two-and-a-half year review

When your child is between two and two-and-a-half years old, the Health Visiting team will invite you for a review of their development. You may well have got this booklet at your two-year review! This is a chance to speak about your child's health, development and behaviour, and to receive support and advice that meets the needs of you and your child. The Health Visiting team use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Ages and Stages Social and Emotional Questionnaire (ASQ SE) to help with these assessments.

They will send these to you before your appointment. If there are any concerns about your child's health, development or behaviour, the Health Visiting team can monitor these, or refer you to specialist services for further assessment and support. If your child hasn't been invited for their two- to two-and-a-half year review, you can contact the Health Visiting team on **0300 033 6200** to arrange an appointment.

Supporting your child's learning and development

Learning through play

Play time is a wonderful way for your child to learn. Play can help your child develop their use and understanding of language, as well as their problem-solving and social skills. It can also boost their creativity. Physical play, like running, dancing or jumping, is also an important part of supporting healthy growth.

There are a number of regular 'stay and play' sessions that happen across the borough, where your child can get involved in many different types of play alongside other children. You can meet other families and speak with professionals who can share ideas on other ways to support your child's development. You can find full details of events in the Best Start in Life timetable.

Chit Chat Pitter Pat

Chit Chat Pitter Pat is Waltham Forest's virtual home learning project for children under five. It can give you some tips and ideas for creating fun learning opportunities at home and explains how this learning will support your child's development. You can find 'learning together' activity cards and links to the Chit Chat Pitter Pat Facebook and Instagram pages at www.walthamforest.gov.uk/chitchatpitterpat.



Your child's development pathway towards starting school

Congratulations! Your child is now two!

Two- to three-year-olds

- I can speak in short sentences.
- I can sort objects by colour and shape.
- I can ride a tricycle using the pedals.
- I am beginning to understand other people's feelings.

Three- to four-year-olds

- I can walk up and down stairs easily without support.
- I can use sentences with four or more words.
- I can remember and talk about events that happened yesterday.
- I can use my imagination in pretend play.

Remember, all children develop at their own pace. Some children will master these skills earlier than others. Focus on encouraging them to keep exploring and learning every day.

Four- to five-year-olds

- I can dress myself without much help including doing fasteners and buttons.
- I can say my full name, gender and address.
- I can order objects from smallest to largest.
- I can take turns and share things with others.

School

For lots of ideas of activities you can do at home to support your child's learning and development, visit www.walthamforest.gov.uk/chitchatpitterpat.



Communication and language

Between the ages of two and five, the number of words that your child can say and understand will grow quickly. Learning to communicate takes time and practice. There are lots of things you can do to support your child in developing their language skills.

Talking with your child

Almost any daily activity is a chance to talk, bond and have fun with your child. Understanding your child's interests and using words which are related is the best way to encourage them to listen and help them learn new words. As your child starts to join words together, you can help them build sentences by repeating what they say and adding extra words. For example, if they say 'look, baby' you can say 'yes, look – the baby is sleeping'.

If you have a bilingual family, it's great to use your home languages with your child as they can naturally learn more than one language.

For fun activities and things to do with your child to develop their communication and language skills, visit www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people.

Top tip

If your child doesn't say a word right at first, don't worry. It is important to encourage them to keep talking. Repeating the word in a positive way without correcting their mistake can help. For example, if they say 'pish' instead of 'fish', respond with 'yes, it's a fish'.



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Did you know?

You can use the Bookfinder section on the Bookstart website to find suitable books for your child's age and interests. To find out more: www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading.

Reading together

Reading with your child is a way to introduce them to new words, and a fun activity to share together. Reading as part of your child's bedtime routine, or at other set points during the day, is a way to build positive habits around enjoying books every day. Don't worry if your child doesn't want to hear the whole story – talking about the pictures is fine too.

Libraries are a great place to visit with your child because you can discover lots of new books together. You can also join free story and rhyme sessions which are held during the week. Details of these sessions are in the Best Start in Life timetable. Visit www.walthamforest.gov.uk/libraries to find more information about local libraries in your area.

Where can I get support?

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's communication and language skills, you can speak to your health visitor or visit www.walthamforest.gov.uk/parentingconcerns. Staff at our Family Hubs can also help and give you tips and ideas.

Speech and language therapists in Waltham Forest are available to provide early support and information about young children's communication and language development. They offer regular drop-in sessions in the Family Hubs, where you can chat about any concerns and find out what help is available. Details of these drop-in sessions are in the Best Start in Life timetable. You can contact the Speech and Language Therapy team by phoning **0208 430 7970** or emailing wfspeechtherapy@nelft.nhs.uk.

Health visitors - here to help

The Health Visiting team are always available to discuss any concerns you have and to provide important information and advice about your child's growth, wellbeing and development. You can contact the Health Visiting team until your child is five.

You can visit one of our child health clinics to check your child's weight, growth and development, and speak to a member of our team about you and your child. You can also get in touch by phoning our duty line on **0300 033 6200**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (not including bank holidays).



Did you know?

There are regular child health clinics held in all four Family Hubs every week. Details of these clinics are in the Best Start in Life timetable.

The Health Visiting team can also support you if:

- you are feeling worried or have concerns about your mental health;
- you are in an unhappy or abusive relationship;
- your child has a disability or health problems; or
- you have concerns about your family's health.

Red book

Your child's red book is their personal child health record and is used to record their height, weight, vaccinations and other important information. It's a good idea to continue to take your child's red book with you every time you visit your health visitor, GP or other health professional.

The red book is now also available as a mobile app (eRedbook) that gives you secure access to your child's health information on the go – you don't have to worry about forgetting or losing important information. The eRedbook can be used alongside the paper red book. You can register and access the eRedbook by downloading the mobile app or visiting www.eredbook.org.uk.



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Parenting - how to give your child the best start in life

By now, your child is wanting to become more independent. They may have started to test the boundaries to explore what behaviour is acceptable. They may still struggle with making themselves understood and find it frustrating when they don't understand why the answer to some of their requests is 'no'. This can lead to them having strong feelings which can make them upset or overwhelmed. This may be more likely if your child is tired, hungry, overexcited or bored.

It can be challenging to manage this kind of behaviour, but remember that this is very normal for children at this age. They aren't being naughty, they just don't have the ability to control their emotions yet.

Did you know you can get parenting support?

Being a parent can be very rewarding but it can also be challenging, and there may be times when you need some extra support. Don't worry – you're not alone. All parents and carers go through struggles.

We offer a number of workshops and courses which can give you all the tools and confidence you need to parent your child more effectively, support their learning and development and manage challenging behaviours. Visit bit.ly/ParentSupportWF or phone **020 8496 2442** to get full details and book your place.

The Early Help service is also available to help families deal with problems at the earliest opportunity and support their children in reaching their full potential. For more information, contact your Family Hub or speak to your health visitor.



Top tips for managing behaviour

- Stay calm – children learn from adult behaviour, so it's important to keep your emotions under control. Take a minute away from your child to calm down if you need to, as long as it is safe to do so.
- Talk to your child – it's important for children to understand why you are asking them to do certain things, and for you to explain what behaviours are not acceptable and why.
- Be consistent – by responding to behaviours in the same way each time, your child can learn what is not acceptable, and what to expect when they act in a certain way.
- Praise good behaviour – give your child attention, hug them or smile at them to let them know when you are pleased with something they have done.

For more tips, visit bit.ly/BabyDevelopmentWF

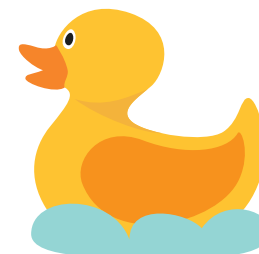
Keeping you and your child safe and well

Safety in the home

Children often have accidents because they learn new skills so quickly. While most accidents aren't serious, it is important to take action to try to prevent them from happening. Some of the most common causes of accidents involving young children are falls, burns or scalds, poisoning, choking, strangling and drowning. You can help prevent these accidents by:

- keeping furniture that your child could climb on away from windows;
- keeping household cleaning products and medicine securely out of reach;
- keeping small objects and plastic bags out of your child's reach, and being mindful if older children have toys with small parts;
- putting hot drinks out of reach of your child (a hot drink can scald even 15 minutes after it was made);
- keeping kettle cables out of reach, and making sure that handles of pans on the cooker are always turned inwards;
- never leaving irons or hair straighteners plugged in; and
- never leaving your young child alone in the bath, even for a moment.

For lots more information on how to protect your child from common accidents, and tips on car safety and keeping children safe in the sun, please visit bit.ly/BabySafetyWF.



Immunisations

Immunisations are an important way to keep your child well by protecting them from some infections that can be serious. In the autumn or winter after their second birthday, your child will be invited to have the flu vaccine nasal spray. They will then be invited for a flu vaccination every year until they finish school.

At around three years and four months, your child will be invited to their next routine immunisations. These will include booster doses of diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio vaccines, and an MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine booster.

If your child has missed any routine immunisations, or if you are not sure that their immunisations are up to date, check in their red book, or speak to your GP. For more information, please visit bit.ly/NHSVaccinationsWF.

Are you worried about your mental health?

Caring for young children can be difficult, stressful, and tiring and may make you feel overwhelmed, stressed or anxious at times. Too much stress can be bad for your mental health, so it's important to try to recognise how you are feeling and to ask for support if you need it. There are lots of services that can support you confidentially and without judgement. Visit www.walthamforest.gov.uk/mentalhealth to find out more. You can also visit bit.ly/WFParentWellbeing for tips and advice on managing your mental health and wellbeing.

Please speak to your health visitor or GP if you are having feelings of anxiety or low mood that you are struggling to manage or that are making looking after your child difficult.

Healthy eating

Offering three well-balanced meals and up to two healthy snacks a day can help make sure your child gets the right amount of energy and enough nutrients to help support their growth and development.

The best way to support a well-balanced diet is to offer foods from all of the key food groups. Here are some examples of foods from each food group.

Starchy foods

Potatoes
Pasta
Rice
Bread
Couscous
Breakfast cereal

Fruit and vegetables

Fresh broccoli
Frozen peas
Tinned sweetcorn
Strawberries
Apples
Tinned peaches in juice

Dairy or alternatives

Milk
Cheese
Yoghurt
Fromage frais
Soya drink

Protein

Meat
Fish
Beans
Lentils
Tofu
Eggs

Top tip

It's a great idea to include something from each food group in every meal, but it's okay if this doesn't always happen.

Portion size

How much your child eats will depend on their age, height and weight, how much energy they need, and how much they have already eaten that day. Young children are good at knowing when they need more food and when they are full, so go at their pace and follow their lead. It's better to serve a slightly smaller portion to start with, so your child can ask for more if they want to.

Snacks

Two-year-olds can be offered two healthy snacks between meals. Ideas for healthy snacks include:

- vegetable sticks, like carrot, pepper or cucumber;
- slices of fruit, like pear, mango or satsuma;
- toast, pitta, rice cakes or chapatti fingers with hummus;
- strips of cheese with sliced apple; and
- chopped fruit with unsweetened yoghurt.

Avoid offering very salty or sweet snacks. Too much salt can be bad for your child's kidneys, and sugar can contribute to tooth decay. If you offer packaged children's snacks, it's important to check the labels on the pack to make sure it has a low sugar content. Some bags or boxes of snacks contain more than one serving, so check how many servings each packet contains before offering it to your child. For more information on feeding your child, visit bit.ly/FeedChildrenWF

Did you know?

You can speak to the HENRY Infant Feeding team if you would like advice around any aspect of breastfeeding, including stopping breastfeeding. Phone their infant feeding line on **0207 961 9073** or join them for one of their drop-in sessions.

Did you know?

Even if your child eats a balanced diet, it is still important to give them a supplement containing vitamins A, C and D every day until they are at least five. Healthy start card holders can collect free vitamins from Family Hubs.



Fussy eating

You may find that your child refuses to eat some foods or starts refusing foods they used to enjoy. They may even refuse whole meals sometimes. This is very normal and most children will begin to accept a wider range of foods in time. You may also find that your child's appetite has decreased, or that it goes up and down from day to day. This can be very normal, but if you have any concerns, there is support available.

Where can I get support?

If you would like support around eating well as a family, mealtimes, or fussy eating, our HENRY Healthy Families team offer sessions and workshops to help. These include drop-in sessions on healthy eating and oral health and workshops on how to eat well for less. For more information, contact the HENRY team on **020 8496 5223** or visit www.henry.org.uk/walthamforest.

Top tips for healthy eating

- Don't try to force your toddler to finish everything on their plate: let them take the lead in deciding how much they eat.
- Keep offering your child new foods, or foods they have refused in the past – it can take 10 times for a child to accept a new food.
- If your child refuses food, try to avoid offering alternatives or snacks.
- Eat together with your child as often as possible, and avoid having the TV or other screens on during mealtimes.

Need help to buy food and milk?

You could qualify for a Healthy Start card. If you're eligible for the Healthy Start scheme, you can get a Healthy Start card which will be topped up with money that you can use to buy healthy food. This is worth £8.50 a week for babies aged under one, and £4.25 a week for children aged one to three and when you are pregnant. You can use the card to help you buy healthy items like fruit and vegetables. For more information, visit bit.ly/WFHealthyStart.

You can use your card in most food shops and can also collect Healthy Start vitamins. Thousands of families have benefited from the scheme. You might be eligible for a Healthy Start card if you have at least one child aged under four (or are currently pregnant), and are receiving any of the following.

- Child Tax Credit (if your family's annual income is £16,190 or less)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Pension Credit (which includes the child addition)
- Universal Credit (if your family's take-home pay from employment is £408 or less per month)

Or, if you are under 18 and have at least one child aged under four, you may be eligible for a Healthy Start card even if you don't claim any benefit.

You can apply for the Healthy Start scheme online at www.healthystart.nhs.uk. If you need help with signing up or would like to talk to someone about the scheme, contact the Health Visiting service or drop in at any of our Family Hubs.

Physical activity

Being physically active every day is great fun for children and is important for their healthy growth and development. The benefits of physical activity for your child include:

- strengthening their bones, muscles, heart and lungs;
- improving co-ordination, balance and flexibility;
- improving sleep;
- improving their confidence; and
- developing their social skills through opportunities to play with others and make friends.

Children under five should be physically active for at least three hours every day. This activity can include standing, moving around, rolling and playing, as well as more energetic activities like skipping, hopping, running and jumping. Once children turn three, this should include at least one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity, like running, climbing, scooting or swimming. This should be spread throughout the day and include playing outdoors.

Children with disabilities should be encouraged to be active for at least two to three hours a week. This activity can be spread out across the week in different ways and adapted to meet the individual needs of each child. This should also include activities to build and develop their strength and balance around three times a week. For activity ideas, visit bit.ly/AccessibleActivitiesWF.

There are lots of ways to help your child get the exercise they need

- Go for a walk – whether it's the journey to nursery, a trip to the shops, or a stroll around the forest, there are lots of ways you can build walking into your day-to-day routine. You could even follow part of one of the Waltham Forest walking routes, which guide you between interesting sites across the borough. For more information, visit bit.ly/WalkingInWF.
- Visit your local park – there are lots of parks across the borough, and many have play areas for your child to explore and enjoy. Why not see what animals, birds or plants you can spot on your visit? To find a local park or play area, visit bit.ly/ParksInWF.
- Go for a swim – swimming is great exercise and by helping your child learn to be safe in and around the water, you are teaching them an important life skill. Local Better leisure centres offer swimming sessions and lessons, as well as other fun activities like soft play to help children stay active. For more information and to find your local swimming pool, visit www.better.org.uk/waltham-forest.

Did you know?

Children under three can swim for free at all of the borough's Better pools.

Children under 18 can swim for free during school holidays. You can register for a one-off fee at your local leisure centre.

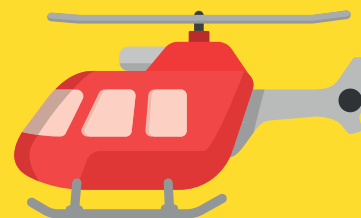
Healthy teeth

Every parent wants their child to have healthy teeth, but it can be difficult to know what to do to make sure this happens, especially in the early years.

Children's teeth are more likely to suffer from decay than adult teeth, so it's important to put good habits in place early to avoid the distress of tooth decay. The good news is that by following a few simple steps, tooth decay can almost always be prevented.

Top tips for healthy teeth

- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush with a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste. Brush your child's teeth twice a day, including once just before bed after all food and drink is finished.
- Encourage your child by setting a good example and letting them see you brushing your own teeth.
- Encourage your child to spit the toothpaste out after brushing their teeth. Don't rinse after brushing – rinsing washes away the fluoride that protects your child's teeth.
- Use songs, games and lots of praise to make brushing your child's teeth fun.
- Avoid sugary drinks and snacks, especially between meals.
- Milk and water are the best drinks for young children. Avoid fizzy drinks, fruit squash and fruit juice. All drinks should be offered in a free-flow or open cup.



Did you know?

Children and young people under 18 are eligible for free NHS dental treatment. If you've not already registered your child, visit bit.ly/DentistsWF or scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet to find local NHS dentists who are taking on new patients.



Where can I get support?

Our Family Hubs offer a number of play sessions and parent workshops that help families get their children's dental health off to a great start. The HENRY Healthy Families and Dental Health team offer face-to-face and online healthy teeth workshops run by a senior dental nurse, who can answer all your dental health questions. You can also speak to the HENRY Dental Health team if you would like help finding an NHS dentist in the borough.

To contact the HENRY Dental Health team, phone **0208 496 5223** or visit www.henry.org.uk/walthamforest.



Potty-training

Potty-training, when a child moves from using nappies to using a potty or toilet, is an important milestone in your child's development. Being potty-trained helps to encourage your child's independence.

Most children will probably be ready to be potty-trained between the ages of 18 months and three years, though some children take longer to develop control. Some children will continue to have 'accidents' up to, and even after, the age of five.

It is better not to put off potty-training for too long, as the older your child gets, the harder they may find it to accept not using nappies. Potty-training at an appropriate age is also better for your child's bladder and bowel health.

There are some key signs that your child is beginning to develop bladder control and may be ready for potty-training soon. You might notice that your child:

- knows when they need to wee or poo, and tells you before or while they are doing it;
- knows when their nappy is wet or dirty;
- can go at least one hour between each wee; and
- is displaying other signs of needing to wee, such as fidgeting or going somewhere hidden.

Top tip

Some people find it easier to start potty-training in the summer when there are fewer clothes to take off and wash if your child has accidents.

What do I need to get started with potty-training?

- A potty. It might be helpful to have more than one, so there is always one close by when your child needs to use it.
- If your child prefers to use the toilet straight away, it can be helpful to have a toilet-training seat and a step stool which they can comfortably rest their feet on.
- Spare clothes. Choose items that are easy to take on and off, like jogging bottoms, shorts or leggings. Avoid clothing with lots of buttons or poppers. Remember to take spare clothes, including tops and bottoms, when you go out in case of any accidents.
- Reusable cloth potty-training pants can be helpful when your child is away from home. These pants have an absorbent layer which can help soak up any accidents but will still let your child know when they are wet.

For more tips and advice on potty-training, visit bit.ly/PottyTrainingWF.

Hand-washing

Hand-washing can help reduce the risk of children catching or spreading illnesses like coughs, colds and stomach bugs. Show your child how to wash their hands using soap and warm water, and make sure they dry them thoroughly. Help them to wash their hands:

- after using the potty or toilet, or after nappy changes;
- before mealtimes;
- after touching animals, pets or pet food; and
- when they return home.

Your child's sleep

If your child is still waking up in the night, waking up early or going to sleep late, or you are experiencing other sleep challenges, remember you are not alone. It is very common for two-year-olds to experience disrupted sleep, and the length and quality of your child's sleep may vary from day to day.

What can affect my child's sleep?

Just like adults, children's sleep can be disturbed by different things, such as:

- the excitement of trying out new skills;
- illness or teething;
- sensitivity to being apart from their parents or carers (often called separation anxiety);
- changes to their usual routines, like starting nursery, potty-training or going on holiday; and
- changing sleep needs.

Top tips for sleep

- Encourage your child to be physically active during the day to help make sure they feel tired by bedtime.
- Try to stick to a predictable bedtime routine each night.
- Do not let your child look at laptops, tablets or phones half an hour to an hour before bed as the light from screens can interfere with sleep.
- Avoid long afternoon naps if possible.



Did you know?

Most two-year-olds will sleep for 11 to 12 hours at night, with one or two naps during the day. However, every child is different, so how much sleep they need will vary.

The Lloyd Park Children's Charity family support team offer one-to-one sleep support. Visit bit.ly/LloydSleepWF or phone **0208 527 1727** for more information and to book your initial sleep consultation.

Sleep environment

Most children make the move from their cot to a bed between about 18 months and three years. However, this will be different for every family.

Many parents or carers move their child to a bed once the child can climb out of their cot or has got too big to sleep comfortably in it.

If you are making the change to a bed, or if your child can climb out of their cot, it is important to make sure that the room they sleep in is properly secured to reduce the risk of any accidents. You should:

- make sure that free-standing furniture is fastened to the wall;
- keep drawers and cupboard doors closed and secured with fastened child locks;
- never leave anything where your child could pull it down on top of them (for example on raised surfaces or window ledges);
- make sure any blind cords are well out of reach; and
- continue to use fitted stair gates, if needed.

Local childcare for your child

Choosing childcare to support your child's learning and development is a big step. Each child and family are different, and the type of childcare you choose will depend on your own family circumstances and the needs of your child. It's important to start thinking about and planning for childcare before you need it.

There are lots of childcare options available, including:

- day nurseries;
- preschools;
- school nurseries;
- childminders;
- crèches; and
- breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday schemes.

To find out more about the different types of childcare providers in the borough, and to search for local childcare providers, visit the Best Start in Life webpage.

How can local childcare providers support my child's learning and development?

- **Developing confidence and independence** – being away from their main carers and spending time with different children and adults will broaden your child's horizons and build their confidence.
- **Learning new skills** – from learning to hold different mark-making tools to putting their coat on and developing their mathematical ideas, your child will soon be learning new skills once they start.

Did you know?

You can take up any free childcare your child is entitled to from the term following their second or third birthday.

Did you know?

Depending on your family circumstances, there is a range of financial support available to help with the cost of childcare. This support includes the following.

- 15 hours a week of free early education and childcare for some two-year-olds.
- At least 15 hours (and up to 30 hours) a week of free childcare and early education for three- to four-year-olds.
- Tax-free childcare (up to £2000 a year to use towards the cost of childcare).

For more information and to find out what financial support your child is eligible for, visit www.walthamforest.gov.uk/childcare.

You can also use the Government's childcare calculator to work out what financial support you may be entitled to. Visit gov.uk/childcare-calculator.

- **Making friends and building social skills** – important social skills such as taking turns, listening to other people and communicating their feelings and opinions are all skills that your child can learn at nursery, preschool or with a childminder.
- **Encouraging your child to eat a wider range of foods** – children who attend childcare often eat many of their meals with other children. Seeing other children eating a wide variety of foods can encourage your child to try them too.
- **Building immunity** – when your little one first starts attending childcare you may feel they have colds more often than before. This can be good in the long run, as it may build up their immune system.
- **Preparing for school** – attending a nursery or preschool, and getting used to spending time in a learning environment, is a great way to ease your child's transition to starting school.

Waltham Forest parent's top tips on fun things to do with two-year-olds

"The play sessions at the Family Hubs are great – my son loves meeting other children, and it's a nice chance to get to know other parents too."

"We visit our local library every week. We join the rhyme time session and then find some new books to take home to read together."

"Getting out to the forest or one of the parks is great for your child and great for you. Spending time outdoors is so important."

"In the summer, my kids love going on the miniature railway in Ridgeway Park."

"We go to the Feel Good centre a lot, both for swimming and for soft play. It's one of our favourite places to go as a family."

"We went to Dads club at Grow Wild in Lloyd Park for the first time recently. My daughter loved it, it was great to see her trying new things."

"We love splashing in the new fountains at Fellowship Square when the weather is hot."

"My son loves the pirate ship in Bisterne Avenue Park. He likes running around on the multi-coloured basketball court too!"

"My daughter has so much fun at nursery. We get photos and messages about all the activities she has been doing, and it gives us lots of ideas of things we can do at home. We made homemade play-dough last week with a recipe that the nursery had shared."

"Sometimes we get the bus to the Olympic Park in Stratford. My daughter likes the bus ride, and there is lots of things for kids to do when you get there."

Further help and support

Support	More information
Alcohol and drug misuse	If you feel you are struggling with alcohol or drug misuse, don't go through it alone. It's important for you and your family that you get the support you need. Change Grow Live can support you with a range of services in a safe and confidential space. Drink Coach allows you to assess your own drinking and risk by taking a quick and confidential quiz. You will then receive personalised advice online and the option to access further support and advice, including one-to-one consultations.
Domestic abuse and community safety	If a family member, partner or carer hurts, threatens or tries to control you, or if you don't feel safe in your community, there is confidential support and advice available.
Early Help drop-in sessions	A place to get free, friendly advice, support, and information. Come and meet volunteers, community organisations, and Early Help teams in a relaxed space. These sessions have information about local services, support for parents and community activities. You can also get help with using our online services. There's no need to book.
ESOL support for speakers of a different language	Waltham Forest English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Single Point of Contact service can support residents in finding free, high-quality help with learning English and joining in with society. The service is open to everyone, regardless of income or immigration status.
Financial support	If you're worried about your financial situation and need extra support, there is a range of information and support available on our website which can help with money, food and energy bills, employment and much more. Our partners at Waltham Forest Citizens Advice Bureau can also help with debt problems and offer support if you are worried that you may be about to get into debt and want help to prevent it.
Housing	If you're worried about your current housing situation, there is help available.
Returning to work	If you are trying to get back into work, get your first job or change your career, it can be hard to know where to start, especially as a new parent. Our Adult Learning Services can help with CV tips, advice on adult learning, and finding job vacancies.
Sexual health	All East Sexual Health service provides free, confidential sexual health clinics across east London and Waltham Forest. You must book an appointment first, online or by phone. The service also offers advice, support, contraception and quick access to testing for sexually transmitted infections. It can also refer you to other experts if this is necessary. Your GP and some pharmacies can also provide contraception.
Special education and disability support (local offer)	This service is available to all children and young people, aged from birth to 25, with special educational needs or disabilities. It brings together all the information from our special educational needs and disability services into one place so you can find support quickly and easily.
Stop smoking	You can get free, confidential advice, information and support to help you stop smoking. Our Stop Smoking Support Service is provided by Queen Mary University of London and includes a 12-week plan with support from a trained practitioner, weekly nicotine replacement therapy and support online or over the phone. Face-to-face help may also be available.
Young carers	There is support for children and young people who provide care to a parent, carer or brother or sister with a disability, health issue or other needs.

Didn't find what you need? Visit our website to find out more: www.walthamforest.gov.uk/beststartinlife



How to get in touch

Change Grow Live
Website: www.changegrowlive.org/walthamforest
Email: CGL.WalthamForest@cgl.org.uk
Phone: 0203 826 9600

Download the DrinkCoach app at: bit.ly/Drinkcoach1

Our Family Hubs are safe, confidential and non-judgemental places where you can get advice on your wellbeing, safety and practical needs and meet with specialist workers.

Website: bit.ly/DomesticAbuseWF
National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 802 5565
Waltham Forest Solace Women's Aid
Phone: 07340 683382
Email: walthamforestIDSVAservice@solacewomensaid.org

Drop-in sessions run from 9.45am to 11.15am.

Every Tuesday at Leyton Family Hub, 215 Queens Road, E17 8PJ

Every Wednesday at Chingford Family Hub, 5 Oaks Grove, E4 6EY

Every Thursday at Walthamstow Family Hub, 313 Billet Road, E17 5PX

Every Friday at Leytonstone Family Hub, 2-8 Cathall Road, E11 4LF

Phone 020 8496 2974 or text or WhatsApp your name plus 'ESOL' to **07770 0541670**.

Website: www.walthamforest.gov.uk/yourcrisisouraction

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/waltham-forest
Phone: 0808 278 7838

Email: Housing.advice@walthamforest.gov.uk
Phone: 020 8496 3000

Website: www.lbwfadultlearning.co.uk

Website: www.walthamforest.gov.uk/sexualhealth

All East Sexual Health service
Website: www.alleast.nhs.uk
Phone: 0207 480 4737

Email: localoffer@walthamforest.gov.uk
Phone: 0208 496 6503

Queen Mary, University of London - Stop Smoking support
Phone: 020 7882 8230 or 0800 169 1943
Email: clinicbookings@qmul.ac.uk

Email: young.carers@walthamforest.gov.uk
Phone: 0208 496 2442

