



Home from home

Giving your child the best start





"The peace of mind that my children are happy and contented is priceless."



Welcome

This guide has been produced by the **National Childminding Association (NCMA)**. We work with registered childminders and nannies, as well as other individuals and organisations, to make sure families receive high-quality, home-based childcare to help children reach their full potential.

Our childcare members have chosen to join their professional association. So if you choose a registered childminder or nanny, make sure they're a member of NCMA.

NCMA can answer any queries you have about home-based childcare. Visit www.ncma.org.uk for more help and advice or call us on **0845 880 0044**.



"I go to work each day confident that Amy is having a good time with friends."

Important decision

Choosing someone to look after your child when you return to work or education is one of the most important decisions you'll ever make.

Deciding on a registered childminder means you can be confident your child is looked after in a safe, family setting by a professional who can offer them the stimulation of a variety of activities and the chance to meet other children.

Parents who choose childminders to look after their children have said that trust is the most important factor in determining their decision.*

* DCSF: Childcare and Early Years Survey 2008 – Parents' Use, Views and Experiences

Peace of mind

We know that when you leave your child with someone, you need complete peace of mind. That's why you'll be reassured to know that all childminders who care for children under 8 are required by law to be registered and regularly inspected by Ofsted in England, or in Wales by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW).

They are also required to undergo professional training, including a first-aid course, prove they meet strict standards, and have public liability insurance, a medical check and an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure as they register – as well as receiving regular inspections.

So if you choose a registered childminder, you can be sure your child is in safe hands.



"My first impressions were how warm, friendly and welcoming it was."

Consistent care

As a parent, you want to make sure your child feels safe and secure. One of the many benefits of using a registered childminder is that your child is looked after by the same person each day, sometimes over several years, so they can form a close relationship with their carer. You can be confident that your childminder will know your child's likes and dislikes, and medical information, such as allergies.

Studies show that good home-based learning is an essential part of giving your child the best start. They can enjoy learning from real-life experiences, such as cooking and shopping. They also learn valuable social skills because they will often be looked after alongside children of different ages (registered childminders can look after children from birth right through to secondary school) – ideal if you have children of different ages.



"She puts so much effort and energy into the children and they totally adore her."


A home from home

Another home is the ideal setting for childcare. Your child will be in a relaxed family environment, where there are routines and surroundings they can become familiar with. They will be looked after with up to six children under 8 and, with such small groups, their individual needs can be easily met – whether it's help with potty training, support with homework or more specific needs.

Many parents choose a childminder with a similar home and parenting style to their own and become good friends in the process.



"She is enthusiastic about the children and enjoys telling me what they have been doing."



"As a parent,
she has made
my life so
much easier."

A flexible choice

Because they work in their own home, a registered childminder can often offer care to fit around your working hours, including shift patterns or even overnight care. And because they usually live in your local neighbourhood, it means that they are able to include your child's activities and clubs in their day – things like music groups, swimming or Brownies – so your child won't miss out on the things they enjoy.

Childminders are also available during school holidays. And, if for any reason they are unable to look after your child themselves, most childminders have links with other local childminders with places available, so you will still have childcare in place.

Making your decision

Childminders are professionals and are used to parents visiting them to ask about the service they provide.

Before you visit a childminder, spend some time thinking about the childcare you need and the things you are looking for in your childminder.

Make a list of questions that are important to you. You can use the ones opposite as a starting point. For some of these questions there are no right or wrong answers, as it will depend on your personal preferences, but they will help you get a good idea of the childminder's service.

NCMA's top five tips:

1. Trust your instinct – many parents say their family instantly felt at home with the childminder they chose for their child. You'll probably see them most days and will need to discuss

your child's care and payments with them so it is important they are someone you – and your child – feel comfortable with.

2. Take someone else with you when you visit – they will help confirm your decision and may think of questions to ask.
3. Don't be afraid to ask for a second visit. Try visiting at a different time if you can – during the day you'll be able to watch the childminder with children, but in the evening you may be able to talk more easily.
4. Visit more than one childminder. Even if the first one seems perfect, it is worth confirming your decision by visiting one or two more.
5. As well as asking questions, make sure you take time to watch how the childminder acts with the children, and look around the setting.

Suggested questions

How long have you been a childminder?

Why did you become a childminder?

What do you enjoy most about the job?

Are you a member of the National Childminding Association?

Do you have any relevant qualifications or training?

Do you belong to a childminding group, network or other support group?

How many other children do you look after, how old are they and how long have you been looking after them?

Do you have any children of your own and, if so, how old are they?

What types of activities do you do with the children?

Do you and the children go on regular outings or special trips?

How do you help children settle in?

Do you have pets or a garden?

What food do you provide?

What do you consider unacceptable behaviour and how do you deal with it?

Do you work with other local childminders? How does this work?

What would you do in an emergency involving yourself or one of the children?

Do you ever take the children out in the car and, if so, do you have suitable insurance, seat belts and car seats?

What do you do about holidays – both ours and yours?

What happens if someone's sick – whether it's you, us, or the children?

Can I see your registration and insurance certificates?

Can I see a copy of your inspection report?

How to find a registered childminder

The best place to start is to ask people you know if they could recommend a registered childminder.

Your local Family Information Service (FIS) will hold a list of registered childminders with places available. Call 0800 234 6346 for details of your nearest FIS. You can also search online at www.direct.gov.uk for childminders in your area.

Speak to a few childminders first and then draw up a shortlist of those you want to visit. You'll find it can take a little while to find any form of childcare, so allow plenty of time.

By choosing registered childcare you may also be able to get financial help. Visit www.hmrc.gov.uk or call 0845 300 3900 for more information.

This NCMA guide features images of real childminders and the children they care for, plus quotes from parents.

