

CHILDMINDER CHILDCARE CHOICES

Registered childminders are professional day carers who work in their own homes to provide care and learning opportunities for other people's children in a family setting.

They can care for children from six weeks to eight years. Because childminders look after only a small number of children they can offer individual attention. They can often be flexible about hours and meeting individual needs – sleeping and feeding patterns or homework projects.

Childminders are usually registered to look after up to three children under five and three children aged five to eight, including their own children. They may also look after older children up to the age of fourteen.

Many childminders are happy to provide part-time places for children. Childminders are also willing to take and pick children up from playgroups, schools and clubs.

Childminders can take advantage of unexpected sunny or snowy days and these are a great opportunity for outdoor play and learning. Children can also enjoy real-life experiences like cooking, shopping, gardening, outings to the local park and library. Likewise

if your child is feeling unwell or tired they can just curl up and take it easy, just as they would at home.

Childminders can support your family for years to come, as your children grow up. Brothers and sisters can be looked after together, which makes life easier for the whole family, if this is the case some childminders offer a discount.

Childminders respect the beliefs and traditions of the family and the way they want their children to be looked after. Children can make good friends with the other children who go to their childminder and often form friendships that last well into adulthood.

Costs can vary according to the childminder and the service they offer. The NCMA recommend that childminders are paid in advance. You should agree a regular method of payment.

Under the new CTC (Child Tax Credit) you maybe entitled to help towards paying for childcare.

Childminders often charge a retainer fee to keep a place open for your child.

By law, all childminders must

Be registered by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) before they begin to work with children.

Have a written agreement with the parents of each child they care for. This contract should be reviewed at least once a year. This is a legally binding contract tailor made to suit both you and your childminder. This should clearly set out what is expected from each party. Both you and your childminder should keep a copy.

During the 'settling in' period, normally two to four weeks, a separate contract maybe drawn up or a separate clause added and agreement reached to allow the childminder or parents to alter or end the arrangements without giving the usual period of notice (which is usually four weeks).

Things to think about, when drawing up your contact are:

Costs

1. fees and arrangements for payments
2. are there any additional costs such as meals or nappies?
3. do you have to pay for bank holidays and for periods when you or your childminder are on holidays?
4. do you have to pay if your child or your childminder is sick?
5. Is there a discount for looking after two or more children?

Availability

6. Times your childminder is available to provide care
7. What will happen if you are late picking your child up?
8. Will the childminder collect the child from school/playgroup etc?
9. What happens when your childminder is on holidays or ill?
10. What notice do you have to give about changes to the contract?

Communicate regularly with your childminder and establish a good working relationship. Tell your childminder about sleep patterns, food likes and dislikes, allergies and medical conditions also if you have special words for certain things. Regularly talk to your childminder about your child's progress. It may be useful to keep a diary that goes back and forth daily with your child. It may contain information about feeding, sleeping and toilet training or for older children notes about books or projects they are working on.

Overtime your childminder may become a good friend but remember Childminders feel valued if you are polite, punctual and pay on time.

National Childminding Association

The aim of the National Childminding Association is to increase the quality and quantity of childminding across the Caerphilly county borough.

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