

Thinking about childminding?

Your questions answered

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SureStart

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Imagine a job that makes a real, positive difference to a child's life, building their confidence, helping them develop into well-adjusted, sociable children and young people, then add in the flexibility to do this job in your own home, fitting it in with your other commitments.

So you get:

- job satisfaction
- an income
- the opportunity to be your own boss.

Sounds too good to be true? Well it's not! You can have all that if you become a registered childminder, like over 68,000 other people across England from all walks of life. There are men and women from many different backgrounds working as registered childminders, with or without children of their own.

What unites them is their energy, enthusiasm and commitment to a rewarding career.

Children need people like you – responsible adults who:

- really enjoy being involved with children and their parents
- want to play a key role as children grow up
- offer children a safe, stimulating environment.

WHY BE A CHILDMINDER?

WHAT IS A CHILDMINDER?



A registered childminder:

- Looks after one or more children under the age of 8 for more than a total of two hours a day on domestic premises (normally a childminder's own home) for reward
- Is registered and inspected by Ofsted – demonstrating the quality and standards of their care
- Is self-employed, runs their own business and provides a service to the families whose children they care for.

WHAT'S OFSTED?

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) ensure that every childminder meets the national standards such as:

- Ensuring you're suitable to be with children
- Checking that you provide a safe, stimulating and caring environment, giving children opportunities for learning and play
- Making sure that you'll work in partnership with parents and carers.

WOULD IT SUIT ME?

There's great **job satisfaction**:

- Childminders often say that one of the best parts of the job is knowing that you're supporting the children when they need you. You help to provide stability in their lives as you watch them develop, often from birth through their school years.

CHILDMINDING CHECKLIST – IS IT FOR ME?

- Do you like looking after children?
- Would you enjoy planning activities for them?
- Would you describe yourself as energetic, enthusiastic and caring?
- Would you enjoy caring for children from a variety of different cultures and backgrounds?
- Would you enjoy working with parents to ensure you deliver a good service?
- Are you interested in caring for children with special needs – such as a disability or behavioural difficulty?
- Would you enjoy working in your own home?



One great advantage of being a childminder is its **flexibility**:

- You set your own hours. You could decide, for instance, to look after just one child – or a baby – for a morning a week. Or you might decide to make your childminding into a thriving business and care for several children full-time, maybe with an ‘assistant’ – a partner, family member or friend, perhaps (provided they are registered).

And you’re **your own boss**:

- You have the satisfaction of running your own small business, from your own home – a great plus point if you are caring for your own children or grandchildren. So you’re contributing to the family income but still able to be at home with your family. If you have children yourself you can still do the activities you normally do with them, involving the others at the same time, so they all learn and play together. And everyone benefits.

You have **professional status**:

- You work in partnership with the parents for the good of the child, with the professional status that goes with a career in childcare. Parents value childminders and the contribution they make to their child’s life. You play a key role – offering children a stimulating environment, helping them develop social and learning skills that will stand them in good stead throughout their lives.



You **benefit financially**:

- You’ll be self-employed, setting your own rates of pay and you can often continue to receive benefits that other self-employed people can’t. For example many childminders also receive a grant to help them start their business. (Read more about grants on page 12.)

You have the opportunity to **gain business skills**:

- You’ll have the chance to learn and develop skills which will help you run your childminding business effectively, such as marketing techniques to help you advertise your services (although your Children’s Information Service will add you to their list of childminders if you’d like them to). These business skills could be useful if you want to branch out in your career in the future.

HOW DO I SET UP AS A CHILDMINDER?

It's very straightforward.

There are **five simple steps**:

- 1.** Contact your local Children's Information Service (CIS) by calling Childcare Link on 0800 0 96 02 96. They will enrol you on a pre-registration briefing session. That's where you'll be given an application pack and advised about the registration process – so it's clear and easily understood. You'll also hear more about the work of a childminder and the government's national standards for under eight's day care and childminding.
- 2.** Fill in the forms in the pack and return them to your Ofsted regional centre. Their address will be in the pack. Don't worry if you don't find filling in forms easy – your local authority will help you if you need it.
- 3.** Apply for the essential checks explained in the pack, including:
 - A police check for yourself and anyone else in your home aged 16 or over, by the Criminal Records Bureau.The forms you fill in to ask for these checks are signed by Ofsted's inspectors during their visit to your home or at special signing sessions (which you'll find out about at the pre-registration briefing sessions)



- A health check for yourself, to make sure that you are physically and mentally fit to care for children
 - An Ofsted inspection of you and your home, when an Ofsted inspector will ask you some questions based on the national standards to make sure you'll provide a suitable environment for children. (Your local authority will give you a copy of the national standards and explain if you have any queries about them. They are also explained in your application pack).
- 4.** Contact your local authority to enrol on an introductory childminding course (Introducing Childminding Practice (ICP) or equivalent) and first aid training. You can do these either before you start childminding or within six months of registering. They're normally free.
 - 5.** Pay the £14 fee to register as a childminder with Ofsted. Then, once you've got your Ofsted registration certificate (between three and six months while the checks and inspector's visit are made) and insurance, you can start work as a registered childminder!

Why do I have to take out insurance?

You'll need to take out insurance to cover any accidents that children in your care may have and any legal costs you may face as a consequence. There's a variety of organisations that offer insurance. Ask at your pre-registration briefing for more details.





WHAT ABOUT TRAINING?



- Although many childminders do have childcare qualifications, you don't have to have any to apply to become a childminder. You'll need to complete a short registration course and first-aid training within six months of being registered. After that your local authority, local childminding group and the National Childminding Association (NCMA) will let you know about other courses locally and how you can take your career further
- Training can lead you to jobs in other areas of childcare – such as work in a crèche or a day care centre. Once you're registered as a childminder you can apply to be additionally approved as a home childcarer, which means you can take care of children in their own home, if that suits you better – or your children have grown up, or your lifestyle changes, for instance
- You may be able to take advantage of the training courses the Sure Start Unit's 'Business Success for

TIP

It's recommended that childminders attend child protection and equal opportunities courses every few years, so you keep your knowledge current.

DO I HAVE TO REGISTER AS A CHILDMINDER?

- Yes, the law says that if you're looking after children under the age of eight in your own home for a total of two or more hours a day for reward, then you have to be registered with Ofsted as a childminder. It's quite straightforward – and there are plenty of benefits for you. You'll have the support of dedicated workers within your local authority, who will help you access training and other support.



Why does everyone in my home need a criminal record check?

Everyone over the age of 16 who lives or regularly visits a childminder's home has to go through the check so that all children who are looked after by childminders are safe and come into contact only with suitable adults.



Childcare' programme offers – free business support training to childcare providers through a series of workshops and training seminars supported by guides. Visit the Sure Start website for more details

- You can become part of an approved childminding network, giving you the support of a network co-ordinator and other childminders. It also gives you the opportunity to build specialist skills that let you become an accredited childminder offering early education – or a community childminder caring for children with special needs
- You could go through a quality assurance scheme in your home – such as the NCMA Quality First quality assurance scheme for individual childminders, or a local scheme – offering further evidence to parents of your professional expertise.

If you are a registered childminder and are interested in becoming a **home childcarer**, you'll need to complete a short workbook within six months of applying. See the back of this leaflet for details of information leaflets.

IS THERE ANY HELP OR SUPPORT AVAILABLE?



There's free help available for new and existing childminders, so you need never feel alone. Such as:

- Support from childminder groups or networks in your area – or the **'Support Childminder' scheme**, where an established childminder will listen and provide practical help in setting up your business. Contact your local authority to find out if there is a scheme planned for your local area
- From your local Early Years team within your local authority – there are dedicated workers who work with local childminders
- Advice on developing your business skills from:
 - Your local authority's business support officers
 - The Sure Start website at <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/suresstartservices/sustainabil>
 - <http://www.suresstart.gov.uk/suresstartservices/sustainabil> ity/businesssupport – to access training materials and book onto a workshop
 - The Sure Start free helpline – ring 0800 294 2904



- Information and support from the National Childminding Association (NCMA), a national charity and membership organisation for childminders
- A start up grant, a government-funded scheme which gives new childminders help with start-up costs to help you set up your business – such as buying toys, equipment and insurance. Contact your local authority for more details
- A sustainability grant (if you live in an area of disadvantage) to develop marketing and related skills to fill your childcare places, or funding to help you cover the costs of having unfilled places. The exact resources available depend on your local authority
- Your own copy of 'Birth to three matters: A framework to support children in their earliest years', which gives you information on child development, advice on what works well, examples of play activities to promote play and learning, and help with planning, resources and meeting diverse needs. See the end of this leaflet for how to get a copy.



WHAT ABOUT THE FINANCIAL SIDE OF CHILDMINDING?

- Childminding is a valuable self-employment option if you want to set up in a business that will give you a flexible, fulfilling, varied and challenging profession. The amount you earn will depend on how many children you look after, for how long and for how much
- As a childminder, like any self-employed person, you can deduct business-related expenses from your income before you pay tax. Expenses can include toys, play materials, the cost of outings, food and drink, together with a proportion of the childminder's housing, heating and telephone costs. If you choose to become a home childcarer you may be employed by the parents, (depending on the terms of the contract you have), so different tax and national insurance contributions will apply. Contact the Inland Revenue for more information – details at the back of this leaflet



- There are now several schemes that offer parents financial help with childcare. They encourage more parents to return to work – and so may increase your business:
 - Many working parents are eligible for financial help and can access up to 70% of what you charge through tax credits up to certain limits – so making your services more affordable

HOW MANY CHILDREN COULD I LOOK AFTER?

You can look after up to six children under eight, including your own. No more than three of the six children should be under five and normally no more than one child can be under one.

In certain circumstances approved by Ofsted, childminders may be registered to care for two children under one – as long as they can show that they can meet the varying needs of all the children being cared for, and that they can provide continuity of care. Looking after brothers and sisters or twins may be such an exception, for example.

You can also care for children over eight providing this does not adversely affect the younger children's care.

- The Care to Learn scheme for teenage parents is only available to parents using registered childcare. It's worth up to £5,000 per child per year to parents aged 16 to 18 who are in education or training, which makes your business an attractive option for them. You can find out more by visiting <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/caretolearn> or by phoning 0161 234 7269.

- You may also be able to register as a childminder and still claim some benefits, even though you'll be self-employed – or you may be better off claiming Working Tax Credit. Contact the Inland Revenue for more information. Their details are at the end of this leaflet. If you're on Income Support and you're thinking about claiming tax credits, ask a Jobcentre Plus adviser for advice to see if you'd be better off.



WHERE DO I FIND OUT MORE?

Childcare Link Service – phone free on 0800 0 96 02 96 or visit the web site at www.childcarelink.gov.uk – for contact details for your Children’s Information Service and local authority.

Children’s Information Services (CIS) – for information about childcare provision in your area, details of pre-registration sessions and support during and after registration.

Local authority (LA) – for details about start-up and other grants and to enrol onto introductory childminding/first aid courses.

Ofsted helpline – phone 0845 601 4771 – charged at local rate. Web site at www.ofsted.gov.uk/about/childcare – for more information about the registration and inspection of childminders.

Inland Revenue – phone 0845 300 3900 – charged at local rate, visit the web site at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk or call in at any Inland Revenue Enquiry Centre – for details of tax credits. Phone 08459 15 45 15 for advice on tax and national insurance.

National Childminding Association (NCMA) – Phone NCMA’s Information Line on 0800 169 4486, open Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm, email info@ncma.org.uk or visit their web site at



www.ncma.org.uk – for support and information on childminding including insurance and quality assurance schemes and details of membership.

Daycare Trust – Phone 020 7840 3350 – campaigns for good quality, affordable childcare and provides information and advice on childcare issues.

Sure Start Unit – Phone 0870 0002288 or visit the web site at <http://www.surestart.gov.uk> – for more information about childminding as a career, including stories of other people who have set up as childminders, the ‘Business Success for Childcare’ programme, grants available, the ‘Birth to three matters’ pack, the national standards and more information about becoming a home childcarer.

Sure Start free helpline – ring 0800 294 2904 for more information on the ‘Business Success for Childcare’ programme.

PROLOG – Phone 0845 602 2260, charged at local rate, or email dfes@prolog.org.uk – for more copies of this leaflet (reference: THINKINGCM), the Home Childcarer pack (reference: HC07) and the ‘Birth to three matters’ pack (reference: BIRTH) or the ‘Work with children’ leaflet for a taster of other jobs in childcare (reference: CRWORKWITH).

