

Guide to Childminders

What is a Childminder?

Childminders are self employed professional child carers who work from their own homes. If they do so for more than 2 hours a day and/or for payment or other reward, and the children are under 8 years old, then by law they must be registered with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

Childminders are inspected to ensure that they and their house are safe and that the care they provide meets certain standards. They also check that they, or anyone age 16 or over assisting or living with them, have no criminal records that may affect children in their care. Ofsted also inspect the standard of early education offered by the childminder if they are registered to receive the Nursery Education Fund (see the section on the Nursery Education Fund).

Childminders are allowed to care for up to six children under 8 years old at a time, including their own children, but only three of those children can be under 5 years old. Many childminders continue to care for children up to the age of 14 and beyond, thus providing a continuation in care.

Childminders can offer a flexible care service that may be difficult to find in other provision, and can often work outside normal working hours or provide emergency / overnight care.

How much do Childminders charge?

Childminders are self-employed people and therefore their fees will vary. They usually charge by the hour at a rate they negotiate with the parents or carers.

Registered Childminders, Childminding Networks and the National Childcare Strategy

The Government has recognised the vital role that childminders play in the care and education of children. Childminders are increasingly being given new opportunities to attend training courses, to become part of Ofsted approved quality assured childminding networks and to become accredited as providers of early years education that makes them eligible to receive the Nursery Education Fund.

Nursery Education Fund

Registered childminders who are part of an approved childminding network can be accredited as providers of early years education and can receive the Nursery Education Fund for 3 and 4 year olds. This will pay for up to five 2½ hour sessions with the childminder. Ask the childminder if they are registered to receive the Nursery Education Fund.

Choosing a Childminder

Choosing the right childcare for a child is ultimately the parent's or carer's responsibility. Where possible, it is best to go and see two or three childminders. You can tell them about your child or children, your hours of work, any issues you feel strongly about and also observe how they are with other children in their care. Ask them about their family, what they do in a typical day with the children, and their attitudes to managing children's behaviour. You could also ask about how they promote play, keeping children safe and working with parents. Remember, any person who looks after your children has an influence on their development. When you have decided upon a particular childminder it is important to discuss with them the business side of the arrangement. This is likely to include hours, meals, payments, holidays, sickness, occasional days off etc, which should be covered by a contract to avoid any misunderstanding later on. Ask to see their Ofsted registration certificate and public liability insurance certificate.

Will I have a chance to settle my child(ren) in at the Childminder?

Whenever possible try to arrange a few visits with the childminder for you and your child(ren). This will help them become familiar with the new environment. Try leaving your child(ren) for a short time to start with so that they can settle in with the childminder.

What happens if the Childminder is ill?

In such a situation, some childminders have a 'pairing' arrangement with another childminder. If not, then you may have to stay at home or make alternative arrangements.

What happens if my child is ill?

Childminders cannot look after sick children, as infection may spread to other children. If your child becomes ill whilst at the childminder's home they should contact you. Make sure the childminder has a contact telephone number for you at all times.

What should I take to the Childminder?

This would depend on the age of your child(ren). If you have a baby then it is likely that the childminder will ask you to provide the nappies and baby foods etc, while for toddlers a change of clothes would be useful. Some children may appreciate having their favourite toy or comfort object with them.

Is there anything else the Childminder needs from me?

The childminder will need to know your work address and telephone number and also your family doctor's address and telephone number. They will also want to know what illnesses and immunisations your child has had and any allergies or special dietary needs.

Will the Childminder take my child to clinics or playgroups, etc?

The childminder will probably be happy to take your child to a clinic, but will need your written permission. Doctors must also have your written permission before your child(ren) can receive any treatment. If your child already goes to, or will be going to, a playgroup or school it is best to try and find a childminder who lives near that playgroup or school.

If I have any concerns or worries what do I do?

Try to discuss any difficulties with the childminder as soon as they arise and work out a solution. If that is not possible and you are still unhappy contact the Bradford Childminding Network to discuss any problems you might have. Alternatively you can call the Ofsted Complaints Line on **0845 6014772**.

Finding a Childminder

Ring the Children's Information Link on **01274 437503** for an up to date list of registered childminders closest to your home or place of work. This is a free information and advice service available to parents and carers in the Bradford District. See the Useful Addresses section for more contact details.

Special Needs

Bradford Early Years and Childcare Service can provide support to registered childcare settings to enable them to meet the individual needs of a child or young person attending. For further information please phone the Area Special Needs Co-ordinator on **01274 437493**.

Useful contacts:

For a list of childminders in your area contact:

The Children's Information Link
Bradford Early Years & Childcare Service
The Wool Exchange
Hustlergate, Bradford, BD1 1RE.
☎ **01274 437503**
Text 'childcare' to **07781 472076**

Other useful information on childminders is provided by:

Bradford Childminding Network,
Unit 4, South Square Centre
Thornton Road, Thornton,
Bradford, BD13 3LD.
☎ **01274 435288**

For further information on childminders contact:

The National Childminding Association (NCMA),
8 Masons Hill, Bromley,
Kent, BR2 9EY.
☎ **0800 169 4486 / 020 8464 6164**
www.ncma.org.uk