

Childminding Myths



“ Negative assumptions about working in childcare can be frustrating for childminders, who know only too well the commitment and dedication that goes into the work they do. If you are considering using a childminder here are some common childminding myths dispelled ”



Myth: Childminders are not regulated or inspected

Fact: In England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales childminding services are regulated and inspected by the inspectorate or body who has the legal responsibility for this in each country.

The age and number restrictions for childminders vary by country but are designed to ensure the needs of children are paramount.

England - Ofsted

N. Ireland - local Health and Social Care Trust

Scotland - Care Inspectorate

Wales - Care Inspectorate Wales

In the Republic of Ireland a review is underway to look at creating an appropriate quality assurance system. Republic of Ireland currently have TUSLA Child and Family Agency.

Myth: Childminders are just babysitters, children just play and don't learn as much with a childminder

Fact: Play is an essential ingredient to support children to think and make sense of the world around them. The value of play is understood by childminders who will have a daily routine in place to ensure children's learning and development needs are being met.

This includes a range of stimulating activities, including creative play, messy play, outdoor play, reading, storytelling, role play and music. Childminders may take children on regular trips; depending on the hours a child attends a setting; and participate in groups and activities within the local area.





Myth: Childminders can look after as many children as they want at any one time

Fact: The maximum number of children that can be cared for by a childminder, including the childminders' own children and any others they are responsible for, is limited depending on the age of the children and the space available to ensure that the needs of individual children are met.

This is set by the inspectorate or body who has the responsibility for this in each country.

Myth: Childminders are unqualified

Fact: Many childminders are highly qualified professionals and are committed to their personal development. As part of the process to register as a childminders they will have had to evidence their knowledge of child development and will have records of training and qualifications undertaken to share with those looking to use their service.





Myth: Childminding is only for women

Fact: Although the childcare and early years sector as a whole is dominated by women, an increasing number of men are choosing to become childminders.

Many of these are fathers who see childminding as a career option that allows them a better work-life balance and the chance to be their own boss. Many families value male childminders as positive male role models for their children and it is not uncommon to see couples working as co-childminders.

Myth: A childminder will replace the parent/s in a child's affection

Fact: Some parents, especially mothers returning to work after maternity leave, have concerns that a childminder will form a closer bond to the child than they do which adds to the emotional concerns of leaving a young child. The reality is that childminders understand that a child's relationship with parent/s is paramount and are never seeking to replace them. Childminders have experience of working in partnership with parents and have a key role to play in supporting smooth transitions between the home and the childminder setting and attachment with the child. The likelihood is that a professional bond will grow between the family and the childminder over time which supports all involved and ensures better outcomes for children.





Myth: A childminder works for me (the parent)

Fact: Childminders are self-employed and enter into a contract with the parent to deliver a childminding service. This arrangement creates an equality between childminder and parent allowing for the best interests of the child to be considered.

In practice this means the parent pays a fee for the childminding service provided and the childminder is responsible for managing their own tax and insurance. More information about this can be obtained from the national organisations that support childminding.

Myth: I can't use a childminder to help with childcare costs

Fact: There are a variety of ways that parents are now helped with the cost of childcare. Conditions vary across the UK and Ireland, but in general support for childcare costs may be available if you are using a registered childminder in the UK. In the Republic of Ireland the system for registration of childminders is being reviewed, and it is hoped that state supports will be more widely available as a result. Tax systems vary, but within the UK this includes the childcare element of working tax credit and universal credit as well as the newer tax free childcare. Some parents are also still able to access childcare vouchers which can be used to help with childcare costs with childminding services. Most variation in entitlement is with funded hours through government funded programmes for childcare and education.

For some parents this amounts to a considerable number of hours, (up to 30 hours for 3 and 4 year olds in England, up to 30 hours currently in some areas of Wales with expansion planned by 2020 and increasing up to 30 hours in Scotland by 2020). There is variation between UK countries on how this funding can be used to support the costs of childminding by families, further information is available from the national organisations that support childminding. In the Republic of Ireland, parents using the service of a Tusla registered childminders are eligible to apply for the 'September Measures' of the Affordable Childcare Scheme.





Further information:

England and Wales

PACEY (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years)

www.pacey.org.uk

Northern Ireland

NICMA (Northern Ireland Childminding Association)

www.nicma.org

Republic of Ireland

Childminding Ireland

www.childminding.ie

Scotland

SCMA (Scottish Childminding Association)

www.childminding.org