

# SCMA BRIEFING SHEET

## Everything You Need to Know About SCMA

SCMA has developed this range of briefing sheets in response to the main questions we receive through our Helpline (01786 449063) which is open Monday to Friday, 10 am to 4 pm.

**This briefing sheet provides background information about SCMA and details the Associations Vision, Key Priorities and main activities.**

### An Introduction to the Association

Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) was first set up in 1985 and has been working to support childminders, parents and others with an interest in childminding with information.

The Association seeks to promote childminding as a quality childcare service. Through our members, Elected Members, volunteers and staff, Scottish Childminding Association strives to give information on how the highest standards of childminding can be achieved. We work towards our Vision Statement and Key Priorities which are:

**“Quality childminding...building confident children within a family childcare experience”**

- Raising the profile of childminding and the work of the Association
- Improving the quality of childminding
- Recruiting and retaining professional, quality childminders

The Association is a company limited by guarantee. The Executive Board is made up mainly of childminder volunteers who are Elected Members from the 32 local authority areas in Scotland that they come from. There are also co-opted members who come from other childcare interest areas, a Convener and a Treasurer.

The Association has over 4,750 members including a cross-section of childminders, parents and local authorities.

### Activities

The Association conducts the following activities to support its members:

#### A Voice For Childminding

- We respond to local authority and central Government policy on childcare, and lobby to seek a better deal for all those involved in childminding, including parents.
- We represent childminders at local level at Early Years and childcare meetings and liaise with SCSWIS throughout Scotland.
- We help to inform legislation relating to childminding and were involved in consultations on the Public Services Reform Act 2010.

#### Insurance

- We have negotiated a comprehensive Public Liability Insurance which is tailor-made specifically for childminders.
- We work with a national insurance provider to offer childminders comprehensive home and motor insurance policies.

#### Training

- As we are an accredited Branded Learning Centre our training is accessible through ILA200 accounts. We co-ordinate training centrally and run this locally, dependent on demand. This includes Induction and post-registration training.
- We collaborate with local authorities and colleges to access appropriate training opportunities for childminders, to enable childminders to attain further skills and qualifications.
- We hold an annual conference which enables participants to share experiences and skills and develop new contacts.

## Information and Guidance

- SCMA produces material to help childminders develop skills and knowledge appropriate to delivering a quality service.
- SCMA's Helpline is operated from our Head Office in Stirling (open Monday to Friday, 10 am to 4 pm on **01786 449063**) for childminders, parents, local authority workers and SCSWIS staff.
- You can also ask for information online at **www.childminding.org**.
- Briefing sheets are updated annually to provide information and answers to commonly asked questions which discuss issues that affect childminders. Contact Head Office for copies or request them by email.
- The quarterly Childminding magazine is sent to all our members.

## Support

- We encourage the setting up of local groups and area networks for mutual support.
- We have a network of Childminding Development Officers who operate throughout Scotland providing local support, information and training needs.
- We support parents in selecting a suitable childminder, ensuring a positive relationship between them and the childminder is established.

## Improving quality

SCMA aims to promote childminding as a quality childcare service and to this end has developed a quality assurance initiative for its members which includes a Code of Practice. The initiative ensures that all our learning opportunities are monitored and evaluated, incorporating the Scheme of Excellence Award, which is credit-rated and levelled on the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework.

## Membership

Membership of SCMA entitles members to four *Childminding* magazines a year; access to a comprehensive childminding insurance service including childminder's public liability insurance; business aids and a broad range of publications; and access to a nationwide support system of local Childminding Groups and Network Forums. Membership also includes free legal representation, please contact Marketing Services for more information on **01786 445377/option 1**.

Membership is not restricted to childminders, parents and local authority workers, in fact anyone with an interest in childminding is welcome, however our primary membership is childminders. Around 85% of childminders working in Scotland are members of SCMA.

## Future Developments

The ability of childminders to contribute effectively, in line with current government strategies, depends ultimately on the investment in training and support which is made available to them. The development of SCMA's Quality Assurance Initiative ensures that SCMA can be responsive to and an integral part of current childcare initiatives. It is important that childminders are enabled to provide the quality of services requested to complement and strengthen local authority provision.

The Association offers local authorities proposals to support childminding in their area, promoting childminding as flexible, accessible and affordable, offering continuity and stability. A number of new services have been set up and this development work will continue to be a priority for SCMA.

SCMA play a very active role in responding to government policies, aligning our work with National Outcomes and policy frameworks. The Association will continue to work effectively over the coming years to ensure that childminders are kept well informed of developments. SCMA will continue to lobby to ensure childminding is recognised as a quality childcare choice.