

Choosing a Childminder

Leave plenty of time

It may not be possible to find the right Childminder straight away. You may also want to give your child plenty of time to settle in with their new Childminder. It is therefore, a good idea to start looking for a Childminder a couple of months before they are needed.

Getting in touch

Childminders are generally very busy caring for children. When you make your initial enquiry it may be necessary to organise the best time to call back. If the Childminder seems suitable then make an appointment to arrange a visit. It is ideal to visit more than one Childminder as they are all different and offer a diverse range of services. This will then provide you with a fair comparison.

Interviewing Tips

To get a better picture of what the Childminder is like arrange an initial visit when the Childminder is working. Remember that it may be difficult to go through all the details as the Childminder's priority is to the children in their care. However, you can always arrange another visit during a quiet time to discuss things further.

Many Childminders will be able to show you all the information about the service they provide. In addition it would be a good idea to write down a list of questions that you would like to ask. This will help prevent you forgetting to ask an important question when in front of the Childminder. Make sure you do not forget to take some paper and a pen to make notes. The Childminder will expect you to do this and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

If possible, then take your child so you can see how the Childminder interacts with them. Think carefully about who is going to visit, as it is important that the whole family are happy with the choice of Childminder.

You should expect the Childminder if they can show you around the part of their home they use for Childminding including where your child may sleep and the garden. When looking at the toys and resources make sure you look to see if everything is safe and clean.

Next Steps

- When you have chosen your Childminder then you must take time to complete the paperwork which is a requirement of the Childminder's regulatory body (Ofsted). This should include a minimum of a Childminding Contract, a Child Record Form and Permission Letter/s.
- If you are signing the contract then make sure you are clear about any retainer fee or deposit that is required to secure your child's space.
- Ensure you are clear:
 - about the amount that you are paying and what the Childminder may require you to provide or additional payment for (e.g. food, nappies, wipes, days out etc).
 - the hours and days your child will attend the setting.
 - the Childminders procedures regarding sickness (for child and Childminder) holidays, lateness, complaints, problems and safeguarding children. Don't feel afraid to ask for a copy of their policies.
 - how to terminate the contract if the Childminder's services are no longer required.

Questions to Ask Checklist

- ❑ What made you decide to become a Childminder?
- ❑ What do you enjoy about the job?
- ❑ How long have you been Childminding?
- ❑ How long do you intend to carry on Childminding?
- ❑ What training have you done?
- ❑ Do you have any formal qualifications in Childcare?
- ❑ Other than the children, is anyone else at home during Childminding hours?
- ❑ Do you have any children of your own?
- ❑ How many children do you currently care for and how old are they?
- ❑ Do you belong to the Trio Childcare Quality Childminding Network?
- ❑ Can I see your registration, Public Liability Certificates?
- ❑ Can I see your Ofsted Report?
- ❑ Have you any references from other parents? If they have not, would they mind if you contacted a parent?
- ❑ Can you tell me about a typical Childminding day/week?
- ❑ What type of meals/snacks/drinks do you provide?
- ❑ How do you deal with unwanted behaviour?
- ❑ Which special occasions and festivals do you celebrate?
- ❑ What would you do in an emergency involving yourself or a child?
- ❑ Do you take the children out in the car and what safety restraints have you got?
- ❑ Do you have suitable car insurance and is your MOT up to date?
- ❑ Do you go on outings and would there be any extra cost to myself?

What identifies good Childminding provision?

A good Childminder.....

- Can offer flexibility in the hours they care for children. Many look after children from early in the morning, late in the evening, overnight or at the weekends. This flexibility fits around parents with shift patterns. Childminders may also be willing to take children to school, clubs and playgroups and to collect them.
- Can be spontaneous, an unexpected snowy or rainy day can be great fun and may provide an opportunity for learning. Equally when children feel tired they can cuddle up on the sofa and take it easy just as they would at home.
- Offers real life activities, meal times, shopping, gardening, cooking, trips to toddler groups, soft play area, library and parks. From these comfortable home life experiences children can learn a host of skills such as: social and language skills, creativity, physical skills, science, maths and an understanding of the world around them.
- Will further their training and development. Qualifications that are recommended are: Level 3 Diploma in Home-based Childcare, NVQ Level 3 in Children's Care, Learning and Development. New opportunities are gradually being created for Childminders to continue their learning and development right up to graduate level.