

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

How many children may childminders look after?

The maximum number of children under 8 years of age who can be cared for by a childminder is limited to 6 children at any one time (including the childminder's own children). A childminder may not mind more than 3 children under 5 years of age of which only one can be under 1 year. The certificate will state how many children a childminder will care for. In special circumstances childminders can apply to Ofsted for a variation of numbers to allow for continuity of care.

How do you find a childminder?

- The Families Information Service (FIS) Milton Keynes provides free, impartial, up to date information on childcare and early education provision for parents, carers, childcare providers, employers and others.
- Recommendations from other parents, family and friends
- Sure Start Children's Centres
- Childminders own websites
- Yellow pages/Thompson's local directory
- www.childcare.co.uk

How do you choose a childminder?

Where possible visit several childminders and talk to them to see if the service they are offering is suitable for your child and your needs. Compile a list of questions you may want to ask and make notes as you go along. This will be a useful reminder for you and also places the arrangement on an organised and professional footing from the start.

More information follows...

Some points to consider?

- Always go to an OFSTED registered childminder – ask to see their registration certificate.
- You may wish to take your child with you when you on your first visit.
- Check they have up to date public liability insurance cover, ask for proof.
- Look at the accommodation, is it safe, is there room to play?
- Are there toys and books around?
- Ask how many other children are in their care.
- If other children are there, are they happy, settled and busy?
- Will your child fit in?
- Ask about the childminders typical day, do they take the children shopping, attend toddler or playgroup, go on visits or outings etc.?
- How do they deal with unacceptable behaviour?
- How do they ensure the children in their care are treated with equal concern?
- What training or experience do they have in looking after other people's children?
- What plans do they have in the event of an emergency?
- Which school or playgroup do they take children to?
- What hours are available, are meals, snacks etc. provided and how much do they charge?
- Do you need to provide any equipment such as a buggy?
- Are there any extras to pay e.g. overtime. sickness or holidays?
- When do you have to pay?
- What safety equipment is used – including car restraints?
- Is there appropriate car insurance cover?
- What pets do they have?
- What happens if your child is ill – will they contact you?
- Will they mind a sick child?
- Will you be able to meet the rest of the family?

How do you settle your child with a childminder?

Try to arrange several visits with the childminder for you and your child, some childminders may charge for this time. This will help them to become familiar with the new situation. Try leaving your child for a short time to start with, so they gradually get used to being left with the childminder.

How much do childminders charge?

All childminders are self-employed people, having responsibility for their own income, expenses, equipment, tax and national insurance. They set their own rates, therefore charges will vary from area to area and will be a private agreement between you and the childminder. Some childminders may charge an administration fee and deposit. A retainer fee may be charged if a space is available but not required until a later date. A retainer is non refundable.

Contracts

You should always have a legally binding contract with the childminder that states the hours, fees, overtime rates, fees for non-attendance, meals provided, length of notice to be given etc. agreed by you both, signed and dated by both, with a copy for each party.

Do you have to take anything to the childminders?

If you have a young baby the childminder may ask you to bring food, nappies etc. Make sure your child is dressed adequately for the time of year – the childminder may want to take your child out during the day. A change of clothes and shoes is essential.

What other information will the childminder need?

Telephone numbers, names and addresses of:

- your place of work
- your doctor and health visitor
- an emergency contact numbers
- what illnesses and immunisations your child has had
- any allergies
- what your child does / does not like to eat

- your child's daily routine
- any pet words or names
- whether toilet trained
- able to use a cup
- use a fork spoon knife to feed themselves
- anything other information that will help your child to settle.

What happens if your child is ill?

Childminders do not look after sick children, as infection may spread to other children and their families. If your child becomes ill whilst in the care of the childminder you will be contacted. Permission will also be needed to administer any prescribed medicine to your child.

What happens if the childminder is ill?

It is your responsibility to make alternative arrangements, though some childminders help to make arrangements between you and another childminder to cover for them.

What do you do if you are not happy about things at the childminders?

Try to discuss any difficulties as soon as they arise to work out a solution. It is not a good idea to move your child from one person to another unless you really have to – children need stability and consistent care. If you are unable to resolve your difficulties and they relate to the quality of care, contact [OFSTED](#).