

CHOOSING A CHILDMINDER

Childminders are self-employed carers based in their own home. A childminder must be registered with OfSTED Early Years Directorate who will carry out an annual inspection.

Ideal if:

- You need flexible care because of irregular working hours, or shifts which do not fit in with a normal 8am-6pm nursery day. Some childminders will provide overnight care
- You want a home environment where your child can easily form a one-to-one relationship with the carer and mix with children of different ages
- You have children of different ages and want them to be cared for together
- You want childcare that offers continuity: childminders can care for any age of child, and will often collect them from school

Q How many children will there be with a childminder?

A Childminders can care for up to six children, aged under eight, at any one time. Most childminders are registered for three children under five and three children under eight at any one time. They are normally limited to one baby at a time.

The childminder's own children are taken into account and counted in these numbers.

Childminders who work with an assistant may look after larger groups of children.

Q What age range are the children with a childminder?

A Childminders are registered to care for children from 0-8 years but can offer care for children up to 14+ years.

Q When are childminders open?

A Childminders are self-employed and so they decide on their working hours. Most childminders will provide you with childcare between the hours of 8am and 6pm. Some childminders will work early mornings, evenings and weekends as well. You will need to negotiate hours, terms and conditions with the childminder.

Q What about part-time childcare?

A Many childminders are happy to provide families with part-time places for children. They often drop children off at school and pick them up. Childminders can also take your child to a playgroup or pre-school as part of the routine.

Q How much does a childminder cost?

A Childminders are usually paid on an hourly basis, at a rate negotiated directly with the parent. You also need to discuss hours, holiday pay and other terms and conditions. This rate will depend on where you live. The average cost for a childminder for the East Midland area is £139 per week (National childcare cost survey, Day Care Trust 2009).

Q How do I find a childminder?

A First of all, you know your child best – look for a childminder you feel will be suitable for you and your child.

Here are some questions to consider asking:

- How long have they been childminding? How long do they intend to continue?
- What are the ages of the other children they look after – including their own – and which ones will be there at the same time as your child?
- What is the childminder's routine? How often do they take the children out, and where? What age-relevant activities will they do with your child? How much time do the children in their care spend watching television? What kind of food do they provide?
- What is their attitude and policy on key issues like sleep, potty-training and setting boundaries on behaviour? (Be sure that you discuss and can agree on the approach you would like them to take with your child.)
- How does the childminder fit in household chores? Do they shop, or take other children to school while your child is in their care? (There are bound to be some jobs they do while your child's napping, and occasions when they go out to the shops.) But how often, and how will it affect your child's day?
- What other adults will be in the house, and how do those adults feel about the arrangement? If they had to take one child home or to hospital, for example, who would care for the others?

It is recommended that once you have found your childminder and terms have been agreed that a written contract is drawn up.

Always check that:

- The childminder is able to provide a public liability insurance certificate
- They have a first aid certificate
- If your child will be travelling by car, the childminder has appropriate and properly fitted car seats and insurance
- The contract – which you've both agreed – covers hours, hourly pay, illness, holidays, holiday pay, overtime and length of notice to end the agreement

For more information and advice
Contact Leicestershire's Family Information Service on 0116 305 6545 or email
family@leics.gov.uk