



Childminding IS IT FOR YOU?

Your Plan-Your Future



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CHILDMINDING IS IT FOR YOU?

An Introduction

Childminders provide approximately 80% of childcare in Ireland. They offer a much needed service to parents/guardians in employment, education and training. The role of the Childminder is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for the children in their care in a home-based setting. Childminders play a valuable role in the lives of children, parents and employers.

This information booklet has been compiled to:

- ◆ Help you to increase awareness of the professional role that you play in providing a quality, flexible and accessible childcare service;
- ◆ Give guidance on issues such as helping a child settle into your home;
- ◆ Provide suggestions with regard to the nutritional needs of the developing child;
- ◆ Provide information on making your home safe and secure;
- ◆ Assist you in promoting your professional childcare service to parents/guardians.

child's
play

Nutrition

One of the basic principles of healthy eating is to eat a variety of foods. Future health and well-being is determined by experiences in childhood and good nutrition is part of this healthy foundation.

Young children need regular small nutritious meals and snacks daily, as they need more energy for their size than adults do.

Talk with parents and agree:

- ◆ The quantity and types of food children eat;
- ◆ What, if any, treats are to be provided for example: sweets, crisps, biscuits;
- ◆ Any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies;
- ◆ The children's mealtimes.

You may need to clarify the extent to which you are expected to provide, prepare and cook the children's food.

Points to Consider

- ◆ Fresh fruit should be offered frequently;
- ◆ A variety of fresh or frozen vegetables will add colour and texture to a meal as well as vitamins and minerals;
- ◆ Keep processed meat products such as fish fingers, sausages etc. to a minimum;
- ◆ Sugary snacks and drinks spoil the appetite and are not good for children's teeth;
- ◆ Give children enough time to eat.



Business side of Childminding

Childminders mainly work from their own home. Childminding is a business and as such Childminders are self-employed. When looking at childminding as a business the following needs to be considered:

A Contract/Working Agreement between the Childminder and Parent/Guardian

This should eliminate any misunderstanding regarding overall care of the child, medical requirements, dietary requirements, pay, working hours and annual leave. Sample contracts are available from some of the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations.

Insurance Cover

Childminders must have adequate insurance cover for children in their care as ordinary household insurance may not be adequate. Extra Insurance may be required for outings.

Car Travel

- ◆ Childminders must notify their motor insurance company that they are childminding and ensure that they have adequate cover for carrying the children in their care;
- ◆ Childminders must hold a valid drivers licence and the car must be regularly serviced and maintained;
- ◆ Seat belts must be worn at all times.

Book-keeping

As a Self-Employed Person the Childminder should:

- ◆ Keep records of income received from each child;
- ◆ Keep records of monies spent on the childcare business;
- ◆ Keep records of receipts of all monies spent as Childminders can offset a portion of their running costs against their overall income;
- ◆ Set up a separate bank account for the childminding business;
- ◆ When making any payments by cheque, keep the stub as a record;

An accountant or qualified professional can give advice on book keeping, taxation and statutory obligations for a self-employed person.

Play Activities for Children

Many day to day domestic routines and activities provide a wealth of learning opportunities, both indoors and outdoors. At other times, you may need to introduce particular activities and resources to ensure that children benefit from a wide and varied range of experiences.

Questions to ask Yourself:

- ◆ Have you a variety of freely available toys, in good condition and suitable for the ages of the children?
- ◆ Do the toys comply with EU Safety Standards i.e. Kite mark, CE mark?
- ◆ Are the toys suitable for the age and stage of development of the children you care for?
- ◆ Does your routine provide the children with a range of opportunities and experiences that include:
 - ◆ Active play;
 - ◆ Quiet, restful activities e.g. books, stories, puzzles, songs, rhymes, music and story-telling;
 - ◆ Imaginative play e.g. dolls, houses, cars, farm sets, dressing up, drawing, painting, play-dough, sand & water;
 - ◆ Building blocks, e.g. wooden blocks, duplo, lego;
 - ◆ Appreciation of nature;
 - ◆ Food activities;
 - ◆ Daily household activities;
 - ◆ Outdoor play in a secure area;
 - ◆ Trips to local parks, shops and other places of interest.

Television can be a useful tool, however it is not a substitute for personal interaction or a range of interesting and stimulating activities that will support child development. The time spent watching television should be agreed in advance with parents.



Notification

A Childminder caring for more than three pre-school children in their own home is required to notify this information to the Health Board. There are some exemptions to this as stated under Section 58 of the Child Care Act, 1991.

A single handed Childminder should look after no more than six children including his/her own who are under 6 years of age and no more than three should be under 1 year of age.

For information, advice and support Childminders should contact the Mid Western Health Board to access their local Pre-School Inspection & Information Service or their Childminding Advisory Officer.
See Contact Information.

Out of School Care

Many Childminders will provide care for school age children. The different needs of the older child should be taken into consideration when planning activities that will support their emerging independence.

The children should look forward to going to a warm, welcoming, safe and secure home environment where they can relax after their school day.

Children should be encouraged to make their own decisions, express their own needs and ideas and to take responsibility for their own actions. Think of ways that would allow children to become involved with task-orientated activities e.g. assisting in preparing meals, setting the table, etc. It is also important that the children learn to share and take turns.

Other considerations for School age Children:

- ♦ Older children enjoy games where rules apply providing them with the opportunity to negotiate with each other and resolve disputes;
- ♦ Children enjoy working together and making things, art and craft materials should be freely available;
- ♦ Older children enjoy time and space to chill out after the school day;
- ♦ It is advisable to have an agreement with parents/guardian regarding homework;
- ♦ Children enjoy watching television and playing computer games but care must be taken that their viewing time is monitored and the duration has been discussed and agreed with the parents/guardians;
- ♦ Some children like to change out of their school uniform, an agreement needs to be made with parents/guardians.

What is a Childminder?

A Childminder offers home based childcare to one child or a small group of children. Childminders provide a professional service where children are treated with respect and are shown love, affection, security and friendship.

Skills of a Childminder

The Childminder should:

- ♦ Respect and acknowledge that parents are the primary carers of their children;
- ♦ Be aware that children need to feel welcomed, respected, safe and secure;
- ♦ Be sympathetic, tolerant, kind and act fairly;
- ♦ Have knowledge and experience of working with children;
- ♦ Have first aid training and be able to deal with emergencies;
- ♦ Understand the developmental needs of each child;
- ♦ Relate well to both children and parents;
- ♦ Be able to listen effectively to the children.

Professional Role of a Childminder

- ♦ Consider participating in child care training at every opportunity which will give greater self confidence in your skills and the service you provide;
- ♦ Have a professional approach to working in partnership with parents/guardians;
- ♦ Provide activities and play opportunities that contribute to the individual child's experiences, learning and development;
- ♦ Provide equality of opportunity for all the children;
- ♦ Be aware that some children may have special needs and work in partnership with parents to ensure that each child's individual needs are supported.