

**- Ofsted pre-registration visit –  
Advice for newly registering childminders**



Ofsted visit newly registering childminders at the end of the pre-registration process to check they are suitable to work with children, understand the requirements of the EYFS and Childcare Registers and have suitable premises, resources and equipment to support the needs of a variety of children for whom they might care. Here are some frequently asked questions about what you need to do before and during registration - answered...

**Who are Ofsted?**

The Office for Standards in Education, known as Ofsted, is a legal body, authorised to register and inspect childminders by the Government. If you want to work as a childminder you must be registered with Ofsted.

Ofsted work within legislation including the Children and Families Act 2014 and have the power to grant you registration, close you down, investigate complaints against you and give you actions to improve if they think you are not doing your job properly.

**What if I live in Scotland or Wales?**

- If you live in Scotland you will have to register with the Care Commission. You can find out more via the Scottish Childminding Association here - <http://www.childminding.org>
- If you live in Wales you will need to register with the CSSIW. To register you will need to meet the National. Minimum Standards for Childminders

**Please note** - the following answers to frequently asked questions are for English Childminders registering with Ofsted...

## **How do I know if I have to register with Ofsted?**

You must, by law, register as a childminder if you want to look after...

- At least one child (not related to you) AND...
- For more than 2 hours a day AND...
- In your house AND...
- For money.

If you are unsure, contact Ofsted and ask! You can phone them on 0300 123 1231 or email – [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **What can I register as?**

You might be registering as...

- A childminder – you want to care for children in your own home. You can work with up to 2 other childminders in your own home and still be called a childminder;
- Home childcarer – you want to care for children in the children's own home. You will probably want to be a nanny;
- Childcare on domestic premises – if you want to look after children in another childminder's home with other childminders and their assistants. There will be 4 or more of you working together;
- Childcare on non-domestic premises – you need to register as a nursery.

**Please note** – this guidance for is childminders registering on the early years (EYFS) register.

## **Is there just the one register?**

No, there are 2 registers...

- The Early Years register – which takes children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (which I find easier to think of as going up to the end of the child's reception year at school);
- The Childcare Register – which is split into 2 parts, the compulsory part and the voluntary part;
  - The compulsory part – takes children from the end of the Early Years register to age 7;
  - The voluntary part – takes children from 8 to 17 years old.

So, if you want to look after...

- Babies, toddlers or pre-schoolers – you need to be registered on the Early Years register;
- Children in Reception class at school - you need to be registered on the Early Years register;
- Children in Year 1 and above (up to age 8) at school - you need to be registered on the compulsory part of the Childcare register;
- Children aged over 8, including teenagers - you might wish to be registered on the voluntary part of the Childcare register.

### **Are the registers different?**

Yes they are different. Both registers are legal documents.

They agree on most things such as keeping children safe and healthy – but with the EYFS you need to provide activities for them and support their learning and development.

### **Is there an appeals process if Ofsted turn me down after the pre-registration visit?**

Yes there is... if you receive a letter informing you that your application has been rejected, Ofsted will also enclose a leaflet telling you how you can lodge an appeal against their decision, which must be followed up within 14 days of receipt.

### **What if I change my mind?**

You can withdraw your application at any time – any fees you have already paid will be lost.

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### **Useful links for more information...**

This useful **free** checklist from Childcare.co.uk will guide you through the pre-registration process –

<http://www.childcare.co.uk/information/setting-up-a-childminding-business>.

Childminders need to prepare for the visit by reading through and answering the questions in Ofsted document 120151 (Sept 2012) -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childcare-registration-form-early-years-register-preparing-for-your-registration-visit>

### **The focus of the pre-inspection visit is to –**

Check your understanding of the statutory documents –

- The EYFS 2014 –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

- The Childcare Register 2014 –

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/factsheet-childcare-requirements-for-childcare-register-childminders-and-home-childcarers>

**Other documents** you need to be aware of include –

- Early Years Outcomes – used to check children are making good progress –

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/237249/Early\\_Years\\_Outcomes.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/237249/Early_Years_Outcomes.pdf)

- Development Matters guidance - used to support you when writing your planning and to help note the children's learning characteristics –

<http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2012/03/Development-Matters-FINAL-PRINT-AMENDED.pdf>.

- Safer Food Better Business for childminders –

<http://multimedia.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/sfbbwebfriendlychilminders0513.pdf>

- SEND Code of Practice –

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/398815/SEND\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice\\_January\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf)

- Prevent strategy –

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf)

- British values –

<https://www.childcare.co.uk/information/teaching-british-values>

- Working together to safeguard children –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2>

- Disqualification by Association rules –

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/362919/Keeping\\_children\\_safe\\_in\\_education\\_childcare\\_disqualification\\_requirements\\_-\\_supplementary\\_advice.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/362919/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_childcare_disqualification_requirements_-_supplementary_advice.pdf)

- Data protection – before you start working as a childminder you must be registered with the Information Commissioners Office as a data handler. Registration costs £35 and is renewable annually –

[www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk).

**Note** – the focus of the pre-inspection check has changed over recent months (April 2015) - Ofsted inspectors want to make sure that childminders are 'ready to go' with everything in place to start their childminding business. It is very important you well organised for your pre-registration check because you will not get another visit from Ofsted for up to 30 months after registration unless something goes wrong and your name is flagged up eg a complaint is made against you.

## **There are different types of care you might offer including –**

### **Before and after school care**

This is also known as 'wrap around care'. Check what provision is available at your local schools and the cost. Many breakfast and after school clubs are hugely subsidised and you would not be able to compete on the hourly rate.

However, some parents prefer their children to come to a house rather than an institutionalised club so it is always worth advertising your services and seeing if work is available.

**Holiday clubs** - again check local prices and availability. You might be able to offer a more flexible service, including say early starts, late finishes and tea in your price, but it is best to ring round and find out what is out there first.

**Care for little ones** - this is the most popular type of care provided by childminders and you will need to be flexible - to start with while business builds, at least. Parents often look at cost first, followed by proximity to their work and whether they gel with the childminder they are visiting, so you need to get your prices right. It is a good idea to find out potential demand from local businesses and whether they will advertise you when the time comes.

The Government now gives parents nine months paid maternity leave, which has led nationally to a raising of the starting age for enquiries from around three to nine months. This is making a difference to the amount of baby business out there and should be taken into consideration.

You will also not be able to immediately offer the funded places that nurseries and pre-schools can offer (the Government pays them to care for the children). You will be newly registered and not considered established enough until you have at least one Ofsted inspection under your belt. Also, some areas do not allow childminders to access the funding so there are significantly less three year olds in childminding care than previously. However, if you are prepared to be flexible and do half days, you might be able to pick up work collecting children or dropping them off at their other settings.

**Weekend work** - some childminders choose to work weekends. However, this type of working can have significant implications on family life and must never be taken on without full family consultation.

It is recommended that you write a business plan as part of your pre-registration process. This will help you to consider lots of different areas of provision for the future including sustainability and marketing strategies you might use.

Think through the type of care you are going to offer and be ready to discuss it with your inspector.

## Preparing for Ofsted

Before Ofsted come to visit it is a good time to think about how you will run your business...

- Write your menus;
- Write your routines including outings, meal and rest times and play;
- Think about resources to support children's learning and development and write a wish list;
- Write a welcome booklet for parents which sets out your terms and conditions. This is a document you can give parents when they have been to see you;
- Set your prices after checking the going rate in your area for the various services you will provide. It is always useful to run your fees policy past someone who has been working as a childminder for a while – they might spot things you haven't thought about such as how to charge for bank holidays, sickness of you or the child etc;
- Find out from your bank whether you need a business account or not;
- Consider how you are going to do your observations, assessments and planning for the children;
- Investigate insurance options;
- Network with other local and national childminders;
- Check your toy boxes and make sure you have a good range of multicultural, disability and natural resources. Plus you need open-ended things for children to use in role play... browse catalogues for ideas and make your own or become the car boot seller's best friend for a few weeks;
- Think about any necessary big investments and budget for them. Depending of course on the children you take on, you might need a high chair, double or single buggy etc;
- Look at paperwork you will need (as required by the EYFS)...
  - o Contracts – long and short term;
  - o Child information forms;
  - o Incident and accident sheets;
  - o Complaints and compliments book;
  - o A record of the name, home address and telephone number of the provider and any other person living or employed on the premises;
  - o A record of the name, home address and telephone number of anyone who will regularly be in unsupervised contact with the children attending the early years provision;
  - o Attendance register (showing exact times of arrival and departure)... etc.
- Think about how you will advertise yourself once you are registered and design some leaflets / posters / postcards to display once your certificate arrives.

**Note** - as you write your paperwork, make a list of where you are storing it, so that it is easily accessible when you have your Ofsted inspection - most childminders put together a folder of evidence.

## **During the pre-registration visit...**

Your pre-registration visit can last a few hours – it is the inspector's opportunity to check you out before you start working with children. Your inspector might ask you about –

**Your house and garden** – your inspector needs to check that they are suitable for children. S/he will look round the house and garden and ask you questions about safety eg how will you make sure children cannot get into this cupboard? How will you secure your gates? How will you keep children safe from knives? Do you intend ironing when children are present? How will you effectively supervise children between rooms or if one child wants to go outside? What would you do if a fence came down in the wind? How will you keep children safe near your pond? Some inspectors look in upstairs rooms eg bathroom and bedrooms and most will check you have locks on any doors which will not be used for childminding.

**If you rent** your property, you need to ask permission from your landlord to childmind from the premises.

Some landlords do not understand that you will be fully in control of the children and need Ofsted checks and insurance before being allowed to childmind and will say no, imagining their house full of chaos and smashed paintwork. It might be worthwhile, when you write to them asking permission to childmind, if you include information in your letter about the professional nature of your future business.

Other landlords will refuse because your contract with them clearly states 'no businesses to be run' from their property. In this case, you are unfortunately unlikely to get them to change their mind, but at least you have found out at the start of the process.

**If you are in SAFA accommodation**, they are usually very accepting of childminders – there are a lot of services childminders on the Childminding Forum – [www.childmindingforum.co.uk](http://www.childmindingforum.co.uk). Even so, you should ask them first as it is not a given, depending on which base you are living on.

**If you own your house**, you need to check whether your deeds say you can run a business from home. If you are not sure or you cannot find a copy of your deeds, you should go back to the solicitor who did the conveyancing when you bought your house and check with them first.

There is no point investing time and effort, starting on the road to becoming a childminder, if you cannot get permission to use your premises for the job! Plus, if you do start working and a neighbour takes it into their head to inform someone you are illegally running a business from home (which happens, especially if you have boundary issues or noisy cars / parents / children) then you are likely to be closed down.

## **Planning permission**

Theoretically, every childminder requires planning permission to change the use of their home to a business... however it is usually accepted that, as long as the childminder stays within the '6 children' Ofsted rule, planning permission is not required.

This is because Department of the Environment advice to local authorities (dated 2005) says that childminders do not normally need to apply for a change of use to allow them to work from their homes.

## **Other considerations include...**

**Building Regulation approval** – if you intend to use the whole of your downstairs for childminding and live upstairs for example. This would mean you were, in effect, turning your childminding business into a nursery and there would be implications about change of use. Similarly if you make any changes to the layout of your home to accommodate your childminding business, you should check the implications for building regulations first.

**Waste management** – some local authorities treat childminders as businesses which need a separate waste management arrangement either with them (paying a fee each month) or with a private contractor. Similarly, if you apply for an extra-large bin to fill with children's nappies and extra food packaging you will probably be charged for it to be emptied.

**Business rates** – if you use rooms in your house exclusively for childminding (not for home or family use) you will be liable for paying business rates. These are assessed by the Inland Revenue.

**Gas, electricity etc** – if you apply for a change of use to accommodate extra children you might be charged business rates (a higher tariff) on your monthly bills such as gas, electricity, water, phone, internet, mortgage etc.

**Deeds / rented property** – check you are allowed to run a business from your house. If you have a landlord, get permission in writing from them first. They might ask you for extra rent to cover any additional costs such as insurances for childminders working from their property.

**Food hygiene registration** – Ofsted will register you with your local food hygiene department. You need to make sure your kitchen is suitable for storing and preparing food for children – and you might need to take a training course and have a visit from a food hygiene inspector... Local Authorities vary (some inspect childminders and some don't).



## **Your house - making your business work**

Working from home is never going to be easy - as your new business takes over your house, your garden etc. Before you start the registration process you need to look critically at your house and garden and ask yourself honestly... are they suitable for running a childminding business?

### **Do you have an outside play area?**

It is compulsory under the statutory requirements of the EYFS to offer children daily outside play activities and that's a lot of trips to the park if you don't have a garden. Ideally there should be free access to the garden but if that is not possible, you will need to show Ofsted how you intend to enable children to use it on a daily basis.

Can children get into your garden easily? - many registering childminders ask about putting playrooms upstairs and how workable it will be. The answer from established childminders is to consider outside access - do you want to be walking up and down stairs constantly with 2 or more children throughout the day? How will you manage their needs if they want to go outside?

Make sure your garden is clear of dangerous plants with this link - <http://www.safekids.co.uk/HarmfulToxicPlantsChildren.html>.

### **Do you have places for children to eat, play, rest and sleep?**

You need a table big enough for you, your family and any childminded children to sit comfortably for meals - don't worry about equipment yet, you can consider that later. For now you just need to think about the practicalities of space.

If you care for a disabled child, s/he might arrive with a walking frame or in a wheelchair. The legal wording of the Equality Act 2010 (which is statutory for childminders) states that you must be prepared to make 'reasonable adjustments' to your home to cater for disabled children.

For now, you need to consider whether you will have the space to accommodate a variety of children's individual needs;

- You need enough floor space for children to play without falling over each other;
- You need somewhere for children to sit and be cosy or sleep if they are tired;
- You all need to sit to eat and drink;
- You need at least one small table and chairs for crafts and things like playdough.

You can find more information about floor space and help for doing your calculations in this document on the Childminding Forum in free resources -

<http://www.childmindinghelp.co.uk/freeresources/Free%20downloads/space-requirements-eyfs.html>.

**Can you cater for the children in your kitchen?** You need to think about how you are going to use your kitchen. Is it big enough to cater for lots of children? Do you keep animals / pets in there during the day (they might need to be moved)? Let this guide you when you are working out how many children you can look after at one time and how much money you might one day earn.

**Do you have storage?** Children arrive with coats, shoes, book bags, lunch boxes, spare wellies, sun cream, spare clothes, nappies, baby wipes... and some babies arrive with very big bags! If you care for a disabled child, he might arrive complete with walking frame or special buggy for outings... it all has to go somewhere!

Look critically at your home and discuss it with your family / partner if relevant. You might need to be prepared to put up coat hooks, buy a unit or have boxes or trays in your hallway... or convert an unused bit of space into a cloakroom.

**Is your toilet accessible?** You need to consider whether children can get to and use your toilet and hand washing facilities easily and safely.

You might be looking after children who are potty training, older children who are incontinent, children with medical conditions which make toileting difficult for them or children who simply do not like going upstairs by themselves.

Ask yourself whether your toilet area is suitable for them.

**Previous childcare experience** - do you have any experience of working with children – and how you think that will help you in your role as a childminder?

Previous childcare experience is not essential – but it will make the childminding learning curve easier for you if you have an understanding of child development and what makes children tick.

**Impact on your family** - you will be working on your own much of the time and your inspector might talk to you about the impact of your job on your home and family life. Is your family happy with their home being turned into a mini nursery - with posters on the wall, other children's artwork displayed on the fridge, toys and games they might have long grown out of on the shelves?

How will your partner cope, when they come in from a day at work and find their house taken over by little people eating their tea - and making the inevitable mess? What about your children - is there room for your children to put their own special toys out of the way during working hours?

Your inspector will want to find out about who lives in the house / who will be in the house when you are working. Every over 16 in the household must have a DBS check before you start working and from Sept 2014 the DBS will need to be renewable (which currently costs £13 a year – 05.2015). More information about the DBS check here -

<http://www.childmindinghelp.co.uk/freeresources/Free%20downloads/dbschecks.html>.

**Note** – it is very important that you contact Ofsted and inform them if any new person moves in or stays over at your house. They might ask for a DBS check for the person and an EY2 form completing or they might not – but they do need to be told.

### **Your children and potential conflict**

Childminding can impact on your family life. Your children, used to having you all to themselves, now have to share you with lots of other children – and share their toys and house space.

This can affect some children more than others - some can become very clingy and find it hard to interact with the new children who are playing with their toys and taking up their parents' time. Other children benefit hugely from your childminding business and throw themselves wholeheartedly into the activities you have planned.

If your starting childminding coincides with your child starting another setting eg nursery or pre-school, they might react in different ways such as forgetting to use the toilet or taking a step back in their language development. This is a very common reaction to too many things happening in their lives at a time. You will find that extra targeted support to meet their changing needs and lots of parent time out of working hours will help them to adjust.

Your child might also have to deal with a child who arrives for care and hits, kicks or bites them - you need to reflect on how you will handle these behaviour challenges before you start childminding. Could you cope in this situation? Unwanted behaviour is very common especially at the start of the childminding relationship as children are settling in and finding their place in the hierarchy of the household... you will need to think about this as you write your behaviour management policy and procedures.

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## **Damage to your house and property**

Childminded children do sometimes break toys, damage your property etc. For example, a childminded child might do a lovely drawing - in pen - on your wall... they might be a budding footballer and kick a ball so hard against your fence it breaks... they might be helping parents to decorate at home and think they can help you too by pulling the wallpaper off your dining room wall.

Other children might wilfully damage your property because they are unhappy at being left with you while their parents go out to work. Therefore, as well as making sure your household insurance covers you for accidental damage while childminding you must also think through how you will handle such incidents.

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## **Animals / pets etc**

If you have pets you will need to make sure they have the correct vet's paperwork and that they are safe around children. As part of your paperwork process, you will also need to risk assess them. At your pre-registration inspection, the Ofsted inspector will ask you to show how you can keep children safe from pets and pets away from children while you are working...

A childminder friend has 2 dogs and she was told that she had to partition off part of her garden to make them a run which keeps them totally away from the children.

Another childminder was recently actioned because... Ofsted arrived as she was letting children into the house. She was a bit flustered what with an inspector on the doorstep and children in buggies, needing the loo etc. A child who was new to her provision ran into a room unsupervised, with her dog. Now her risk assessment said that children would not be unsupervised with the dog, so by the child doing what he did, without her intervening, she had 'failed to keep the child safe'.

We have a fish tank and have to seal the lid, make sure wires are out of the way and risk assess where the food is stored.

There are lots of things you can do to keep children and animals safe, so that they are not a barrier to you working as a childminder. However, you do need to think it all through and if you have a pet (especially if it is known as dangerous to children) you need to have safety procedures in place.

## References

- Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014) and related documents
- E-book 56 'Pre-Registration Childminders' and e-book 25 'Paperwork for the EYFS' (© 2008 - 2015) from Knutsford Childminding and the references therein.

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