

What is a childminder?

A registered childminder is a self employed person who looks after one or more children under the age of eight for more than a total of two hours a day, usually in their own home. Childminders can also care for children over the age of eight. Quality Assured childminders have been through the registration process and have also achieved Quality Assured status through the Local Authority. Accredited childminders can also provide free part time early education places for 3 and 4 year olds.

How are they registered?

Childminders who are caring for children under the age of eight must be registered with OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education). They inspect the childminder to check that the standards relating to health and safety, equipment, care, learning and play are met.

Following registration, OFSTED will inspect the childminder every three years. Childminder inspection reports are available to parents on the OFSTED website www.ofsted.gov.uk Please contact the Family Information Service for the registration numbers of the childminders' reports you would like to see as you will need these to view the reports on the website.

How many children can a childminder be registered for?

A childminder can care for six children under the age of 8. However, no more than 3 of these children can be under five years old and no more than 1 of these children can be under a year old. The childminder's own children are included in these numbers.

What are the usual opening hours?

Most childminders are open from 8am-6pm, although many can be flexible and are willing to do school and nursery pick ups, early mornings, evenings and weekends on request. This will need to be discussed and agreed with each individual childminder.

How much does a childminder cost?

Most childminders will charge either an hourly, daily or weekly rate. The fee will be agreed between you and the childminder depending on the hours you want. It is best to contact the childminder for their up to date charges. Remember to check what is included in the overall cost and agree before signing a contract. You will need to come to an arrangement with the childminder regarding extras such as food, nappies and trips out.

Do I have to pay when I am on holiday?

The matter of payment for holidays or occasional days off is for you and your childminder to negotiate at the start of the childminding arrangement. The agreement reached should be written into a contract to avoid any misunderstanding in the future.

What if my child has an accident or falls ill?

If your child has an accident whilst in the care of a childminder, you must ask to sign their accident/incident book. All childminders must have a policy about the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious, which is discussed with parents.

How do I choose a childminder?

Choosing the right childminder for you and your child is a big decision and it is important that you visit as many as possible in order to make the right decision. The following notes are designed to help you to do this. It is a good idea to ask to see a childminder's registration certificate as specific conditions of registration imposed on individual childminders may vary. OFSTED state that this certificate should be displayed at all times while the childminder is caring for children.

Questions to ask:

- Is the childminder fully insured? Ask to see the insurance certificate.
- What does the childminder charge and what does this include?
- How often do you have to pay?
- What hours does the childminder work?
- What are the procedures around sickness and holidays, including charges?
- Will the childminder supply meals? Will they cater for any special dietary requirements?
- Does the childminder have a car? Are safety belts and children's seats fitted?
- Will the childminder drop off or collect your child from their school or nursery?
- How does the childminder encourage positive behaviour?
- How will the childminder keep you informed of your child's progress?
- How many other children will be looked after at the same time as your child and what are their ages?

Things to look for on a visit:

- Are you and your child made to feel welcome?
- Do the other children look happy?
- Do they play and talk together?
- Do the children appear to have a good relationship with the childminder?
- Does the house appear to be comfortable and child-friendly?
- Are there plenty of books and toys appropriate to your child's age?

Remember, you know what is best for your child. Ask questions and find out as much as you can on a visit and then follow your feelings.

Would you like to know what's happening in Solihull for children and families? Then join our Parent's Network for regular information at www.solihull.gov.uk/parentsnetwork

Solihull Family Information Service

Call: 0800 389 8667

Email: familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk

Web: www.solihull.gov.uk/familyinfo



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