**Childminders feel uncertain about the future**

A recent national survey from Childminding UK investigated the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Childminding UK is a charity established by and for practicing childminders, offering professional support for those in the field. 166 Childminding UK Members gave their feedback.

**Open or closed?**

Nearly 52% had been open throughout for key workers’ children and vulnerable children. Of the 48% who haven’t been open throughout 34% were asked to care for key workers’ children or vulnerable children but they had chosen to close.

69% of the responses said they were open from June. 48% of them have needed to cap their numbers, prioritising in line with government guidance – but 52% didn’t need to because not all their children were returning yet (or at all).

Of the 31% who were still closed, 36% reported that parents did not want to take up places yet and 26% said they didn’t feel it would be safe to open. 20% said they were planning to open in September. Other reasons for remaining closed were vulnerability of parents’ or childminders’ family.

Nearly half of those who responded said that their children would not be returning to their setting.

**Financial support**

79% have been able to claim some financial support from government schemes. 73% of those who didn’t claim weren’t eligible for any grants or benefits and 10% said that the guidance was too complicated.

Over 80% of all respondents said they had suffered financial hardship and almost 60% said they were now worried about the sustainability of their business. 58% felt that the government advice was not useful. Reasons were that it didn’t recognise the unique role of childminders (82%), it came too late (42%) or it was too confusing (43%).

**Relationships with Parents**

This situation is completely unprecedented so not covered in most contracts. The good news is that most of our respondents (over 96%) had maintained a good relationship with parents. Of those where this had broken down 30% said it was because of disputed fees, 40% were given notice because the child went to alternative provision and 30% because they were not open when parents wanted the place back.

Childminding UK’s Executive Director, Elaine Pitteway, believes that childminders were largely forgotten when the government was assessing the levels of financial support and guidance needed in the sector. “Traditionally, childminders are the last to be considered and this has left many of them feeling undervalued and isolated. It’s worrying that so many don’t feel they will be able to sustain their business; some of these are new childminders who haven’t been eligible for any grants yet have invested in training and start up costs, only to have to close. This could have an impact on the numbers of places available when childminder numbers have dropped so much already.”

“It’s encouraging that, on the whole, childminders have maintained a good relationship with parents and carers. Most have been understanding and supportive and we’ve had some lovely examples of how they have kept in touch.”

“We have kept our members updated every time new or updated guidance has been published; 88% said they have relied on this. We produced a Risk Assessment pack to help childminders open safely and nearly 2,000 childminders have now used it”.

For more information about Childminding UK, please visit <https://childmindinguk.com/>

Ends

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**Notes to Editors:**

A registered charity, Childminding UK was formed in 1991 by a group of working childminders in Northamptonshire. The association is still managed by a team of practising childminders who, as trustees, form the voluntary management committee. Our charity number is 1182575.

Our mission is to offer professional support to all Ofsted registered childminders, promoting high quality home based childcare through education and training. We will support and work in partnership with children and families in every community to ensure that they have access to high quality childcare, enabling children to reach their full potential and keeping them at the heart of all our activities.

We have over 20 years experience of supporting childminders locally and we are now putting all that knowledge into expanding as a national organisation, dedicated to supporting childminders across the country. We have an excellent understanding of the challenges they face and how the role has changed over the years.

The Staff and Trustees work hard for the organisation because we are passionate about the benefits of childminding for individual children and their families. Our training and resources are all designed to help childminders provide a high quality service to the children in their care and our membership package includes advice and support on a personal level.

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