

For Parents with Disabled Children

Much of the information in the 'How to Choose the Right Childminder for your Child' will be as applicable for children with additional needs as for any other child. Childminders will aim to meet each child's individual needs and balance those needs alongside the needs of other children cared for. For children with more severe needs, there are other considerations to be taken into account too - both by the childminder you are considering and you as parents in order to make sure that all children can be kept safe and their learning and development catered for. This document aims to help understand some of these considerations when you are choosing a childminder for your child.

Ratios

- The maximum number of children a childminder can care for is set by law. Some children need more support than others and when this is the case, the childminder needs to consider if the needs of the child will reduce the number of other children they can care for at the same time. When this is the case, the childminder will need to determine:
 - Can the needs of this child be met alongside caring for other children or does the child need a 1:1 ratio. If a 1:1 ratio is needed and the childminder already cares for other children then they are unlikely to be able to offer a place for the child
 - Can the childminding business survive if there is less money from childminding fees coming in?
 - Can parents pay for any vacancies the childminder can't fill due to the child's needs?
 - Is there any funding available to pay for any vacancies the childminder can't fill due to the child's needs?

Access

If your child uses a wheelchair, you will need to make sure that the house is accessible but also that once inside there is room to move around and that toilet or changing facilities are available on the ground floor. It is possible to hire portable wheelchair ramps if you are unable to obtain one permanently.

Specialist Equipment

If your child needs any specialist equipment, you will need to consider if this can travel with the child or if there needs to be a second set of equipment at the childminder's home (consider the space available and storage for when the child doesn't attend). If a second set of equipment is preferred, will this be provided for your child or will you need to fund it as a family? Will the childminder need any specific training in using any specialist equipment or can you train him/her to use it?

Training

It isn't always necessary for childminders to have additional training to meet children's needs as sometimes parents can give all the information needed.

Where training is needed you need to determine if this is needed before the child can start or can be completed once the childminder is caring for your child. For example, if you have a young child who is learning Makaton sign language to communicate, but only has a few signs they use, you could teach the childminder those signs and the childminder could attend training once the child has started to give them a more in-depth knowledge of Makaton.

If your child needs any procedures such as physiotherapy while with the childminder, or your child needs medication that requires medical or technical knowledge then the childminder must be trained before s/he is allowed to do this. It may be worth taking to your child's specialist nurse or medical team to see if they are willing to train the childminder or are able to signpost you in the right direction to get this training.

Working with other professionals

Depending on the age and needs of your child and the amount of time they will spend with the childminder, it may be beneficial for any professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists, physio therapists or Portage workers to also visit your child while they are attending the childminder. This will help the childminder to understand (and be shown how) any exercises or activities your child needs to do and perhaps build them

into the childminding day. When this happens, childminders will show their records of the child's development with the other professionals to help further plan for your child's ongoing progress.

Development files

Childminders usually only create development files for children under pre-school age, but for many children with additional needs, their development and learning sit at a level lower than their actual age. Some childminders use development files to monitor an older child's progress using the same areas of learning they use for younger children but creating smaller steps in their planning to help the child achieve. If you would like your childminder to do this, discuss whether you would like a complete account or just any areas where your child may be receiving help such as communication and language. These records are also useful if your childminder is working with any other professionals regarding your child treatment and progress.