

How to Choose the Right Childminder

It is really important that you and your child are happy with the childminder that you choose. Some parents will have word of mouth recommendations to help. Others need to find details of childminders in their local area. Each Local Authority produces an online list of all their registered childcare providers including childminders.

Find your [Local Authority](#)

It is recommended that you consider visiting more than one childminder before you choose the one you would like to care for your child.

Start by contacting the childminders you wish to visit. Discuss the days and hours your child needs care for and ask if the childminder has a vacancy to suit what you need. Some childminders will have a parent leaflet they can send you either by email or in the post or will have a website they can guide you to for more information about their service. Others will wait until you visit to give you this information.

Arrange a suitable time to visit. The childminder may ask you to visit first of all when there are no minded children present so s/he can give you and your child their full attention – or they may ask you to visit during minding hours, so you can see the setting in operation from the beginning. Take your child to this first meeting as how they react and how the childminder interacts with your child will give you valuable information about any future relationship they could build.

Think carefully about what you want to know before you go – remember that you know your child best and know what you want for them. Make a list to take with you if it helps. Expect the childminder to have a file that contains lots of information to show you, but most of the information will be covered by discussion.

Things you should see:

The childminder is likely to have documents ready to show you.

- Their Registration Certificate

- Public Liability Insurance Certificate
- First Aid Certificate and other training certificates.
- The rooms/areas they use for childminding
- The toys and activities provided (or a discussion about what is available if it is not all out)
- Blank copies of paperwork you will need to complete such as parent contracts, consent forms, all about me forms etc.
- Inspection report which shows the grade the childminder was awarded. (Newly registered childminders will not have had an inspection so won't have a grade or an inspection report)
- Policies and procedures

What you should ask/discuss:

These may not all apply and this list isn't exhaustive so add anything that you need.

- How many other children does the childminder care for when your child will be attending? What ages are they?
- What toys/activities are readily available?
- Will the childminder take your child out and about to the park or to groups?
- Any dietary requirements your child may have
- Are snacks or meals provided or are parents asked to bring?
- Any cultural or religious practices you wish the child to follow while with the childminder
- What fees does the childminder charge?
- What do the fees include and are there any extras that you will need to pay for?
- The hours needed and if you need care all year round or just during term time. Will you be expected to pay the childminder for the place if your child is ill or on holiday and if so is this full fee or a reduced fee?
- Does the childminder have any back up arrangements with other childminders who minded children know that could be made if the childminder is ill or takes a holiday?
- How is behaviour managed? Does the childminder have house rules and do they fit with what you do?

- Who else lives in or regularly visits the childminder's home? Are they present during minding hours?
- Does the childminder have any family pets and if so, do the children have access to them? (you can ask about any safety precautions that are in place as this should be covered on the childminders risk assessment)
- If your child has any allergies
- If your child has any fears such as dogs, balloons etc.
- If your child is being weaned, you may wish to discuss how you do this - do you use baby led weaning or traditional weaning or a combination of both?
- If your child is being potty trained you may wish to discuss the methods your child is used to
- Does the childminder provide Government funded places for 2, 3 and 4year olds? (childminders have to register separately to provide this). More information about if your child may be eligible can be found on the Government website [Childcare Choices](#). Even if your child hasn't yet reached the age where they may be eligible, it is worth thinking ahead so that your child doesn't have to change childminders when they reach this age.
- Does the childminder take and collect children from any local pre-schools, nurseries or schools?
- If your child has additional needs, you will need to know if the childminder has the training/ skills/ equipment needed to cater for his/her needs
- Does the childminder have all the equipment needed to care for your child (car seats, high chairs, travel cot, buggy etc.)
- Your child's routines regarding sleep and feed/meal times etc.

You may want to visit more than once before you make your mind up. Often parents tell us they get an instinct on which is the right childminder for their child even if they visit others who seem equally skilled and experienced.

Please consider contacting any childminders you visit but don't choose for your child to let them know. They would rather hear from you so that if they get calls from other prospective parents they know whether to take this further or not.