

## Working in Partnership with your Childminder

Once you have chosen the right childminder and your child is settled in, you begin the next stage of working in partnership with your childminder. The benefits of effective partnership working are:

- Your child's learning and development will be maximised due to consistency at home and at their childminders
- An ongoing relationship built on mutual trust and respect and where each side feels confident to discuss any concerns before they escalate into bigger issues
- The childminding arrangement is less likely to break down

You know your own child best and there will be knowledge that will help your childminder care for your child that s/he won't learn about your child through the childminding arrangement. You are not just handing over your precious child to the childminder where you have no input for the time s/he is there. Your childminder will expect and welcome your continued interactions and joint decision making about every aspect of your child's time spent there. Your childminder will have routines in place that have to meet the needs of all the children. It may be for example, that if your child has lunch at around 11.30 at home, but the childminder is collecting another child from pre-school at 11.30 then your child may need to have lunch a little later on these days.

### Conversation

Effective partnership working will mostly be achieved through regular information exchanges which are normally a short chat at the beginning and the end of each day to share relevant information of how well your child has slept, eaten etc. (age dependent), any activities they have enjoyed and anything important to the child such as grandparents coming to visit or getting a new pet etc.

If someone else is going to be collecting your child each day or if you don't have much time when you collect your child your childminder may ask if you would like a home/childminder diary that you can both use. Some families value the home/childminder diary so they can share with other family members and others like to keep them to give to their child when they are older.

### Development Files

As mentioned in the 'Documentation Explained' part of this pack, your childminder will build a development file if your child is under school age. The development file will consist of photographs (if you have given permission), observations of your child

which are linked to the areas of learning in the EYFS and the next steps or plans that the childminder will put in place to help your child develop further.

Most childminders send home the development file regularly so that you have more time to look over it and share with other members of your family. You are likely to be invited to ask to see it at other times too.

Looking through this will help inform you of all the different things your child is enjoying and what they are learning. It can also show any areas of learning where your child is achieving more than expected or could benefit from some extra help. Where extra help is needed, you can discuss the best steps/activities to use with your childminder so you can both carry them out as this will have the biggest impact on your child's continuing development. Continued regular discussion and observations by the childminder will monitor how the child's development is progressing.

Your childminder will be asked on inspection to show that s/he is sharing information about your child's learning with you and about any input you have. You are likely to be asked to sign to say you have seen the file and/or to ask you to add details about what your child has enjoyed or learned while they are with you, so the childminder can use this information to help plan for your child. For example, if you tell the childminder that your child has enjoyed a visit to a local farm, the childminder may introduce other activities, stories, puzzles and outings related to farm animals to keep your child's interest and extend their learning about animals.

Some childminders will create their development files using a software system they have signed up to rather than using paper documents. These software systems allow parents to log in at anytime to see the development information about their child. They also allow parents to make comments and give feedback.

### **Meals and snacks**

You will already have discussed who will provide meals and snacks for your child and any foods you don't want your child to have for religious or health reasons before your child started with the childminder. Part of the ongoing information you will share will be how well your child has eaten and any foods that your child is refusing (70% of young children have a period of time of being fussy eaters), or any new foods your child has tried or enjoyed. Children can also develop allergies at any time in their life so if your child develops an allergy or a reaction to a certain food or drink, or if they decide e.g. they will become vegetarian, then it is important that this information is shared.

### **Parent Feedback**

Your childminder may provide annual questionnaires or have a comment box available where you can share your views on what you are happy with and any suggestions for improvements that would benefit your child or you as parents. However, your childminder would welcome any comments or suggestions you have

at any time. A good relationship between parents and childminders is such that there is a short period of time each day for discussions, so do bring up anything you need to during these times rather than wait for the more formal feedback process your childminder has in place.

### **Emergency Back-up Arrangements**

Where possible childminders are expected to plan for the care of minded children in an emergency. Most childminders will arrange a mutual agreement with a local childminder who is known to the children. When this isn't possible, sometimes a neighbour or a member of the childminders family agrees to be this emergency contact. When needed, the emergency back-up will only care for the child for as long as it takes you (or someone else you authorise) to collect your child. You will be asked if you are happy with this arrangement and may be asked to sign permission for the back-up childminder to have your contact details. If you would rather be contacted yourself in the event of an emergency, you can arrange this with your childminder.

### **Holiday/Sickness cover**

If your childminder has an agreement with another registered childminder for emergency cover, sometimes these childminders would be able to offer you cover for if your childminder is sick or on holiday. This would be a separate arrangement between you and the back up childminder and could only happen if the childminder has the space in ratios for your child(ren).

### **Weaning**

This is an important thing to discuss with your childminder. You and the childminder will know when baby is showing signs of being ready for solid foods (they need to be able to sit up, support own head, and appear not satisfied with just milk), and this is the time to introduce how you want to wean your baby. You may have chosen the traditional methods of introducing puree into your baby's diet, or you may choose baby led weaning or a combination of both. Discuss this with your childminder and decide who will provide the foods used. You may prefer to bring your babies own dishes and cutlery for this so that they are familiar for your baby during this period of change. You can then both monitor how the weaning is going introducing each new step at the same time to aid consistency for your child.

### **Potty Training**

Potty training is another step towards independence that you will work with the childminder to help your child achieve. It may be helpful for you to start the potty training at home when you can fully concentrate on this for a few days before s/he goes to the childminder. Many parents arrange this over a bank holiday weekend or during school holidays so that school runs etc. don't have to be carried out during this important time. Your childminder will want to know details about how you manage potty training at home so that it can be as familiar as possible at the

childminders home too – this will make it easier for your child to achieve. Things to consider are:

- Does your child use a potty or the toilet? (perhaps with a family seat or child seat attached)
- If using a potty, does it stay in the room with the child to be visible and easily accessible or does it stay in the bathroom/cloakroom?
- Do you ask your child if they need to use the potty at regular intervals or does the child ask?
- How much help does your child need with clothing?
- Do you dress your child fully during this time or just wear pants on their lower half to make it easier and quicker to manage? If they are fully dressed, does clothing pull up and down easily for them to manage themselves when they get to that stage? (buttons, belts, braces and dungarees make it harder for children to be independent)
- Does your child look at a book while on the potty to encourage them to sit there?
- Does your child empty/help empty the potty after use?
- Do you encourage your child to wipe after using the potty even if they only do a wee?
- Do you encourage your child to wash hands after using the potty to help build healthy routines from the beginning?
- Do you use any reward systems such as star charts for successful potty use? If so, would you like the childminder to have a similar system or would you like to take your child's star chart with him/her so there is one record of their success?
- Do you take a potty with you when you go out? Does your child wear normal clothes or training pants when they go out/go in the car or go have a nap?
- Do you want to take his/her own potty to the childminders, or are you happy for the childminder to provide?

### **Managing behaviour**

Your childminder will have a policy on how s/he manages behaviour and will have chosen if this policy is in writing or not. You will have been shown/given a copy of the policy if it is in writing. If it isn't you can ask your childminder to explain the policy, which is likely to include several strategies such as distraction, having clear and realistic boundaries and role modelling the behaviour they wish to see.

Managing behaviour is about managing both wanted and unwanted behaviour and helping children learn the 'behaviour' rules that families and society expects them to live by. The ways that childminders do this will vary depending on the age and understanding of the child.

Your child will learn the behaviour rules more quickly and easily when what happens at home and the childminders is as similar as possible. Discuss with your childminder any rewards and sanctions you use at home. If you use star charts for particular areas you are concentrating on it would help if the childminder does this too.

**Please note:** Consistency between home and childminder is the key to success for all aspects of children's learning and development but there is one area where this is not possible. Parents are not breaking the law if they smack their children, but childminders are not permitted to smack children or threaten any punishment that could adversely affect a child's well-being. If you are a parent who uses smacking, you may wish to talk to your childminder about the instances when you would smack your child and ask what they use for these instances. It might be you could consider changing what you do to reflect the ways that the childminder would use?

Your childminder won't tell you of every time your child makes a mistake in their behaviour while they are learning the behaviour rules. Similarly, they won't expect young children to be 'good' all day long as they will expect children to make mistakes in the same way they will when learning any other skill. They will inform you of any instances where another child gets hurt or if significant or repeated instances of unwanted behaviour have been unable to be managed by the procedures in place. If a childminder has to physically restrain a child to help prevent them hurting themselves or others, then the childminder would create a written record of the incident and parents informed as soon as practicably possible, but preferably on the same day.

### **Changes in the child's life**

Many events in a child's life are exciting and happy occasions. Some changes can affect their well-being and behaviour. This may be for a short period of time or longer lasting. It is important that you let your childminder know of anything that may have an impact on your child so that s/he knows best how to help your child through whatever is concerning or affecting them or look out for signs that your child is worried about something. Children are all different and are affected differently by events in their life and children react differently in different situations. Your child may show changes in their well-being or behaviour at either the childminders home or your home - or both. Your childminder may be able to signpost you to support organisations for you and your child during difficult times where relevant.

Things that that may have an effect on your child and would be beneficial to share with the childminder:

- Arrival of a new sibling or step sibling
- Absent parent remarrying (gaining a step family)

- Moving home
- Eviction
- Parents separating
- Loss of a much-loved family pet
- Parents unemployment
- Critical or long-term illness of a family member or close relative
- Loss of a family member or close relative
- Moving out into a new area
- Changing school or nursery

### **Children walking home/ playing out by themselves**

If your child is over 8 years of age and you consent to your child walking home from school unaccompanied by the childminder or playing out unaccompanied you can give permission for this to happen. It is recommended that you give this in writing and that you discuss with the childminder the 'rules' around this. For example, if they walk home from school you may expect them to go straight to the childminders home and not play in a park or stand chatting to friends on the way. If they are allowed to play out, do you have boundary lines of where they can play such as between certain trees or lampposts? If your childminder cares for other children who are allowed to do this, consider any rules or boundaries already has in place as it may be helpful to have similar rules for your child too so that children stay together when out unaccompanied.

### **Summary**

The key to a good childminder/parent relationship is ongoing communication which can happen in a variety of ways. This is what builds a firm foundation for your child's learning and development that can last several years. Many childminders will care for children from babies until they reach secondary school age. The emotional attachment with the childminder and the friendships children develop with other minded children, alongside the support of their loving family can help set them up to build successful relationships throughout their lives.