

New Government Survey Report 2024



Introduction

About Childminding UK

Childminding UK has been supporting childminders for over 30 years. Formed in 1991 by and for working childminders in Northamptonshire, we now support childminders across the country. A registered charity, (Charity Number 1182575) we are the only national organisation that solely supports childminders and the only early years organisation that has achieved the Princess Royal Training Award for ‘Ensuring high quality childcare through training and support’. All staff are experienced childcare professionals and have also been childminders themselves and our trustees are working childminders or have knowledge of childminding, so we have an excellent understanding of the sector.

Table of Contents

- 02 About Childminding UK
- 03 Background
- 04 Methodology
- 05 Key Findings
- 09 Survey Results
- 22 Summary and Recommendations



Part one

Background

The previous government's expansion of what is termed 'FREE' childcare, is aimed at encouraging and enabling more parents to work. And work is one of the most effective ways of families moving out of poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has reported that we have 1 and a half million more people living in poverty than 20 years ago, with nearly 1 million children living in such dire poverty they are classed as destitute.

It is estimated that £28 billion would be generated for the economy if more women were able to work.

However, the number of childminders has been significantly reducing over the last several years with more leaving the childminding sector than are registering. Ofsted's 'Main findings: Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2024' states that:

“The number of childminders registered with Ofsted had decreased by 1,340 (5%) since 31 March 2023, to 26,500 providers. The decline was lower than in previous years, in part, due to the lower number of leavers.”

The childcare workforce is on its knees with some providers limiting the number of 'FREE' places they can offer. Outstanding nurseries and preschools have closed because they can't afford to continue, or they can't get suitable staff. Childminders tell us that they will have to close the outstanding setting they have put their hearts and souls into because they can't make ends meet as the expansion rolls out.

Childminders often feel unheard in childcare policy and that they are not considered as professional as others in the early years workforce in spite of all following the EYFS framework. It is vital for the future of childminding and parents' choice that the decline in childminder numbers is taken seriously.

With the recent change in government this is the ideal time to look at the current childcare policy, the policy changes that were planned but not yet implemented and what the childminding workforce say they need within policy, in order to be sustainable, and attract new childminders into the sector.

Part two

Methodology

Childminding UK currently has almost 1,300 members. We invited members and non-members to complete a survey from July 19th until August 4th and received 502 responses.

The focus of the survey was on:

- Childminders being able to draw down funding for related children
- Enabling settings to charge top up fees for FREE places
- The reintroduction of Children's Centres
- Monthly payments from Local Authorities to aid sustainability
- Changing the narrative around government funded childcare places
- Reversing the decision to remove the requirement for Introductory Training for pre-registration childminders
- Reversing the relaxation of ratios
- Ensuring those on Universal Credit are not financially penalised
- Government engagement with the early years workforce
- Removing barriers to childminding from rented properties or those with mortgage covenants that ban operating a business from the home
- Speeding up the childminder registration process
- Views of the separate EYFS documents



Part three

Key findings

Childminders being able to draw down funding for related children

An overwhelming **95%** of respondents stated they would welcome being able to claim FREE childcare hours for related children as they can in Wales and as their nursery counterparts can.

Enabling settings to charge top up fees for FREE places

80.5% of respondents think they should be permitted to charge top up fees for FREE places where the Government payment is below their usual hourly rate. Only **12%** stated they didn't think the Government should allow this.

The reintroduction of Children's Centres

Many childminders used Children's Centres for networking and support for themselves, as well as safe and stimulating places for the children's development needs. Our survey showed that over **73%** of respondents would welcome the new government reintroducing them.

Monthly payments from Local Authorities to aid sustainability

Childminders tell us that being paid termly for FREE childcare places, puts strain on their family finances as they have to pay their mortgages and other bills monthly.

83.3% of respondents would like to be paid monthly by their Local Authority.

Part three

Key findings continued...

Changing the narrative around government funded childcare places

Parents are told by government information that their eligible childcare will be FREE, thus causing issues when childminders need to request a sustainability or consumables payment. Over **73%** of respondents indicated they would like the term 'FREE childcare' changed.

Reversing the decision to remove the requirement for Introductory Training for pre-registration childminders

Prospective childminders can now choose if they complete any Introductory Training before applying to register or not. Over **97%** of respondents are already registered and over **51%** indicated the Government should remove this relaxation. One respondent stated 'Childminders should be fully trained and should be seen as equals to all early year practitioners'.

Reversing the relaxation of ratios

Almost **55%** of respondents would like the relaxation of ratios reversed and cite concerns about children's safety and the reduction in the quality of care that may result. **34.5%** are not suggesting this is reversed, but state that care needs to be taken when self varying to ensure all children's needs can be fully met.

Part three

Key findings continued...

Ensuring those on Universal Credit are not financially penalised

Two areas formed this survey feedback. The first about the discrepancies between what HMRC and Universal Credit allow for childminders expenses and the second about those on Universal Credit losing benefits where Local Authorities only pay termly. Assuming not all respondents are entitled to Universal Credit themselves, there is strong support for ensuring that those who are, will not lose out financially due to government departments not having universal cohesive arrangements with **80.5%** and **77.9%** support respectively.

Should the Government engage with the early years workforce

92.2% of respondents said they feel the Government should engage with the early years workforce, or organisations such as Childminding UK, when creating childcare policy. **80.5%** indicated that the Government should view childminders in the same professional capacity as others in the early years workforce.

Removing barriers to childminding from rented properties or those with mortgage covenants that ban operating a business from the home

Many prospective childminders are prevented from childminding due to restrictions from landlords or covenants on mortgages stating no-one can operate a business from the premises. **78.7%** of respondents would like the Government to remove these barriers to enable more childminders to be able to register.

Part three

Key findings continued...

Speeding up the childminder registration process

Although only **2.6%** of respondents are in the registration process, a hefty **72.9%** of all respondents feel that the Ofsted registration process would be beneficial if quicker.

Views of the separate EYFS documents

Childminders have had time to work with the new childminder version of the EYFS. **76.9%** said they were happy with the separated version with **12.4%** saying they aren't happy with it. Some stated that the separation is a step backwards in portraying childminders as different and lower value than group settings.



Part four

Survey results

The survey paints a clear picture of areas of policy that childminders feel would make their settings sustainable and make them feel a valued part of the childcare workforce to secure the future of childminding. The Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson has said that the Government is keen to engage with the workforce and that change can only be made by working with the sector (DfE open meeting for the workforce 16/7/24). Overwhelmingly, the childminding community want to be heard by government and measures put in place to raise the profile of childminding to equal that of group settings.

83.7% of respondents have been registered for over two years and 24.9% of those for over 10 years, showing the depth of experience in the views we have collected.

Would you welcome the Government permitting childminders to claim funded hours for related children as childminders in Wales can and as their nursery counterparts can?

95% of respondents feel that childminders should be permitted to provide funded places for related children. Many grandparents register to care for grandchildren alongside other children too, providing a valuable service to their community. When related children reach funding age, parents are not entitled to funding unless they move their children into another setting. As the rollout of FREE childcare extends to babies over 9 months, we will lose the potential childminders who registered initially to be able to care for their grandchildren, potentially reducing childminder numbers further by impacting on the numbers registering. Furthermore, if those same grandparents were to work in a group setting, they could still care for their grandchildren, even though it is the same legislation that is preventing them doing so as a childminder. In Wales, registered childminders can now care for related children, giving parents full choice of who cares for their child(ren).

Part four

Survey results continued...

- ▶ “I am a professional childminder with EYT, I want to be on a level field with nurseries and not seen as second class childcare. I also want to be able to care for my grandson through the voucher scheme but unfortunately I can’t so my son has to use another childcare setting to get the 30 hours !!”
- ▶ “Really hoping the rules will change for looking after family and getting funding. I have lost 4 family children to other childminders as couldn’t claim their funding. “
- ▶ “Childminding family members that are rated Good and Outstanding should get funding to look after children as long as they child mind for non-family members alongside them.
- ▶ “I was heartbroken when I had been paid from universal credits and then when my daughter in law was made redundant and could no longer claim to pay me. My Granddaughter who had been with me since birth was now 3 years old and had to leave me and go to another setting to be able to claim the funding. Broke her heart, my heart and my daughter in laws too. I am one of 2 childminders in my town who is outstanding. It was awful... She went down hill.”
- ▶ “Funding should be available for grandchildren”

Should the Government allow top up payment for the ‘Free Childcare’ hours?

80.5% of respondents say the Government should allow top up fees for FREE childcare places, with only **12%** saying this shouldn’t be changed and **7.6%** saying they didn’t mind either way. Funding rates are determined by nursery ratios which for three-and four-year-olds is a 1:8 ratio. Childminders are not permitted by law to care for eight children. Most relied on privately funded children to make up the shortfall, which will not be possible as the FREE childcare extends to babies of nine months. The Government communications inform parents they are entitled to FREE childcare and this makes it difficult when childminders ask for voluntary sustainability or consumables payments.

Part four

Survey results continued...

- ▶ “Shropshire council are one of the lowest funded counties and that reflects in our 3&4 year funding being underfunded. We then have to charge a consumables rate to the parents to be able to recoup any deficit, this is why it's not FREE Childcare...We are the ones that lose out!”
- ▶ “I don't think funded hours should have a per cent deduction such as (Childminding Agency) Tiney take 12% from all earned money this includes funded hours which don't cover the cost hourly for practitioners/childminders as it is”
- ▶ “Funding for childminders would work better if we were given the average of the age groups. Here in Surrey we would then get £8 an hour regardless of age. Much easier to manage with a few children.”
- ▶ “Not happy with the funded amount and provider agreement. We should be allowed for a top up as for 3 and 4 yes its very less.”
- ▶ “Funding rates for childminders should not be based on nursery ratios - if I have three 1 year olds now claiming funding in two years (when they are 3) my pay would drop by nearly 50%”
- ▶ Childminder ratios do not change regardless of the children's ages, and therefore funding shouldn't either”

Would you like the Government to bring back Children's Centres?

Childminding can be isolating. Many childminders used Children's Centres for networking and support for themselves as well as safe and stimulating places for the children's development needs. Our survey showed that over **73%** of respondents would welcome the new government reintroducing them. **15.5%** indicated they wouldn't like the Government to bring back Children's Centres and **11.2%** said they didn't mind either way.

Part four

Survey results continued...

Would you like to be paid monthly by your Local Authority for funded places

Childminders tell us that being paid termly for FREE childcare places, puts strain on their family finances as they must pay their mortgages and other bills monthly. 83.3% of respondents would like to be paid monthly by their Local Authority. As the FREE childcare is rolled out, more childminders will only care for funded children meaning their income is totally reliant on Local Authorities payment schedules. The Government guidance for Local Authorities states that childminders should be paid monthly if they choose this, but many are not offered this option. Only **8.4%** of respondents didn't want to be paid monthly.

Would you like the term 'Free Childcare' changed?

73.1% of respondents would welcome a change of terminology from FREE Childcare, with only **20.1%** not wanting this change. **48%** would like it changed to Government Supported Childcare and **46.4%** would like it changed to Subsidised Childcare, both options implying that parents may need to pay something towards their childcare. **32.3%** would like the word FREE changed to 'funded'. Other suggestions received are:

- ▶ "government subsidised childcare"
 - ▶ "Funded but specify the amount e.g. £500 per term per child towards your childcare bill at your Ofsted registered provider. (thus cm charges normal fees and it doesn't equate to amount of funded hours) paid to parents as a use it or lose it credit to Tax Free childcare amount reducing admin burden on provider. "
-

Part four

Survey results continued...

Should the current government remove the relaxation for childminders to undertake childminder introductory training?

In January the Government removed the requirement for EYFS training for prospective childminders. But childminding isn't just about knowledge of the EYFS. Childminders must carry out every role that a full team in a group setting carries out including having to set up and manage their business, HMRC requirements etc. Sector specific training can fully prepare for this role. This question resulted in a mixed response with **51.5%** saying yes and **47.7%** saying no. Respondents were also invited to voice their views on why they indicated as they did. Additional comments didn't represent these percentages. One said they weren't sure they understood the question, but they felt that training is vital.

▶ "I'm confused what this means but I think childminders should be required to undertake training"

Of the rest, only two comments supported the relaxation of requirement:

▶ "If a childminder can demonstrate a clear understanding on their registration visit then there is no need. If it becomes compulsory then it should be free"

▶ "I had a level 3, Diploma and 26yrs of experience in E.Y, but my LA informed me that they couldn't help unless I took the course at a unnecessary cost after already occurring set up costs"

The remaining responses were clearly in support of mandatory Introductory Training equipping childminders to provide high quality care and education for children and the perception and public message the relaxation brings childminders in relation to other early years roles.

▶ "There is a lot more to us childminders than people think!!"

▶ "I think childminders should either have training or have a minimum level 3 ey qualification"

Part four

Survey results continued...

- ▶ “Childminders should be fully trained and should be seen as equals to all early year practitioners.”
- ▶ “Completely cancelling and relaxing training may bring some risks. Untrained custodians may lack the necessary professional knowledge and skills in caring for children, which can affect their safety and quality of development.”
- ▶ “Because if it is not strict, then the safety risks of children will become larger”
- ▶ “To keep a level of professional standards, childminders MUST be trained”
- ▶ “It would mean that anyone could become a childminder and not have the training. Being a childminder isn’t an easy “babysitting” job, We have to be Ofsted inspected like nurseries and also adhere to the EYFS. It is a highly skilled job where we teach the children social skills and ready them for school. Not only that, we run our own business, doing tax returns, planning, accounts, invoicing, training - first aid, safeguarding, CPD. Having a course highlighting how to run a childcare from home business would be best so that we, as childminders can be the professionals that society or the government doesn’t see us as!”
- ▶ “I worry about the level of care if new childminders don’t know the basics of childminding. It makes current childminders look less experienced and unqualified which isn’t the case.”
- ▶ “I believe it is important that ALL childminders have some form of “education/ training” in childminding, this will help ensure everyone know what is expected, needed and should be offered as a professional childminder. Otherwise anyone will think it is an easy job and anyone can do it. It could have a negative impact on our constant battle to be seen as professional childcarers”
- ▶ “Childminders are professionals and should need training prior to starting work. Even if they come from a nursery setting they need to be sure they know what is expected of them.”

Part four

Survey results continued...

- ▶ “This totally takes away from the professional status of our job. Childminders need to have some kind of training otherwise I feel we will have no retention of minders”
- ▶ “removing the introductory training is wrong as it makes childminders appear less qualified than nursery staff.”
- ▶ “This sends a message to the market that a childminder will be a lower-quality option for early years care and education, therefore impacting the fees that childminders can attract and diluting their professional status.”
- ▶ “How can we be taken seriously as early years education without training?”
- ▶ “If it were relaxed, it would be much less professional.”
- ▶ “Training underpins every aspect of the role. Childminding will be devalued if no one has to take or have any form of quality assurance or qualifications , it will deem the role to be one of babysitter. Knowledge and continual CPD is paramount for all of us not just the new starters. The role of childminder is more complex as we wear “every hat “ and deal face to face everyday with every situation - so no, the government should not remove mandatory entry basic training.”
- ▶ “It goes back to how it was many moons ago. Just because it is difficult to find the adequate spaces for children does not mean cutting corners. Perhaps cheaper/free funding of these courses but definitely need access to training, You have to invest personally in any business. From what you hear, its not the training people get frustrated about it is the DBS and medical time scales.”

Part four

Survey results continued...

Should the current government reverse the relaxation of ratios?

Although the recent relaxation of ratios cited nursery ratios only, childminders are able to self varyate their numbers and over half of respondents feel that this should be reversed as it causes confusion on what is now permitted by Ofsted. **54.7%** would like this reversed with only **36.6%** stating this shouldn't be reversed. Many don't see this as a simple yes or no decision and state there are multiple factors that need to be considered.

- ▶ “Whether the policy of relaxing the ratio should be reversed depends on multiple factors and requires comprehensive consideration. The UK government is expanding its childcare program with the aim of providing more support for working parents, promoting employment, and meeting the growing demand for childcare services. However, the implementation of this policy may face some challenges and issues. On the one hand, relaxing policies may help increase the number of daycare places, provide services to more families, alleviate the burden on parents, especially for those who need to work, and better balance work and family responsibilities. On the other hand, it is also necessary to pay attention to whether childcare service providers can meet quality standards”.
- ▶ “I think the ratios were too tight and we should be able to choose to vary the ratio (within limits) based on our circumstances and abilities.”

One stated there is a lack of clarity between central government policy and the Local Authority interpretation of such.

- ▶ “There is a lack of clarity on how many children we are allowed and for what reason. Ofsted, via their Facebook page told me I can have four for any reason, my LA advisor said I can't. EYFS needs to be clearer.”

Part four

Survey results continued...

Some agree that childminders should be able to determine their ratios.

- ▶ “It should be at our discretion, we know our children, and what is safe, and if we are able to provide quality care “
- ▶ “I think there should be a maximum still enforced, but sometimes situations arise where I need to have an extra child. If we properly train childminders they should know their own capabilities as to how many children they can safely care for, so a little flexibility is good”
- ▶ “There should be some flexibility if minders can meet each child’s needs i.e. 4 under 5 of no other aged children”
- ▶ “I feel as a childminder I would make the correct decision on if I could mind 4 EYFS children instead of 3”

Others stipulate the financial difficulties facing childminders as a reason for increasing their ratios.

- ▶ “I have been childcare for over 30 years, 15 of them as a minder. I know my limits and how many children I can care for at any one time. I am more than capable of looking after the 3 under 5, in fact I do most days. If it was reduced it would no longer be financially viable for me to work.”

Other respondents stated concerns over practice that may impact on the quality of care and education children could receive as a result as well as childminder burn out that could result in childminders leaving the profession and impacting on available spaces.

- ▶ “Several minders I know are taking advantage of the relaxation/ not understanding it and are taking 6 EYFS every day. Plus more under 8’s after school.”
- ▶ “Lots of my families attend 2 days...now needing more days due to funding and moving from 15 hours to 30. Ratios need to be flexible for continuity of care but not just to take on more new children...quality is inevitably impacted.”

Part four

Survey results continued...

- ▶ “I do believe it is possible to look after more than 3 under 5s. However, you would have to know them well. I can imagine less experienced childminders might not be able to judge whether it would be a good idea to look after more than 3.”
- ▶ “There is wiggle room already but think that from a financial point of view there maybe temptation to take on more children”
- ▶ “Having some flexibility for existing children and families is useful without applying for variations and waiting for certificate, but not to be used for a pile them in and charge less scenario to make the same overall money, without recognising extra work load & exhaustion”

Should the Government ensure that Universal Credit recognises the same childminding expenses that HMRC do? And “Should the Government ensure that childminders in receipt of Universal Credit are not penalised financially if their Local Authority only pay termly for funded hours?”

While we can assume that not all survey respondents are in receipt of Universal Credit themselves, **80.5%** of respondents think that Universal Credit should recognise the simplified childminding expenses that HMRC agree. Only **10.7%** disagreed. **77.9%** feel that childminders shouldn't have Universal Credit payments affected if their Local Authority only make funded payments termly.

Childminders tell us that they are losing hundreds of pounds each month due to the HMRC childminding expenses not being recognised. Others tell us that termly Local Authority payments completely wipe out their Universal Credit payments making it unviable to continue childminding. Some have even been told by Universal Credit staff to go and find other work as childminding isn't viable. The results of this survey show that most respondents feel that those on Universal Credit should not be penalised financially because of government policies around claiming benefits.

Part four

Survey results continued...

“Should the Government engage with the early years workforce – or organisations such as Childminding UK who support the workforce, when creating childcare policy?”

Childminders tell us they feel unheard and ignored in policy and think that policy and regulations do not reflect their role as professionals equal to their counterparts in group settings, thus affecting the public's perspective of professionalism and skills of the childminding workforce. The results of this survey clearly show that childminders want this to change, and Childminding UK is eager to work with policy makers to help this positive change. A huge **92.2%** of respondents want the government to engage with the childminding workforce and only **7.8%** don't think they should.

“Should the Government view childminders to the same professional level as other early years practitioners?”

80.5% of respondents agreed that government should view childminders as professional as other early years practitioners. Only **14.5%** disagreed. Comments supporting this include:

- ▶ “The government should respect this profession equally”
- ▶ “We need more recognition as early years educators and not just childcare - we have to follow the EYFS as well as other early years settings but health visitors and even politicians push nursery as the gold standard for early years education which seems belittling to the hard work we do.”
- ▶ “Its important childminders are recognised as professionals with qualifications and skills and not just as childcare/babysitters.”

Part four

Survey results continued...

- ▶ “Childminders have the potential to offer the gold standard of early years education and childcare, with low adult:child ratios, child-led environments and experiences, close attunement and deep attachment to birth children and parents/carers. However, they have historically been branded as ‘glorified babysitters’ so we need Government and professional associations to prevent a two-tier system emerging and to promote the professional status of home-based education and care”
- ▶ “We are Early Years Practitioners and some of us are highly qualified so we should be seen as the professionals we are!!”

Removing barriers to childminding from rented properties or those with mortgage covenants that ban operating a business from the home

Many prospective childminders tell us of difficulties in obtaining landlord permission to childmind or that their mortgage conditions prevent them from operating a business from home. Our survey showed at **78.7%** of respondents support removing barriers that prevent people entering childminding. Only **11.7%** didn't agree.

- ▶ “How can the gov realistically overturn all the restrictions on childminding in ‘homes’ when not even LA planning departments can make their minds up if a childminder needs planning permission to operate and set maximum child numbers to attend and not based on EYFS floorspace etc? The differences between freehold and leasehold, housing association and mortgage companies etc. And yes, I do childmind from a private house which has a restriction covering some of the building and garden which my solicitor at purchase said didn't apply to childminding!”

Part four

Survey results continued...

Should the Government speed up the childminder registration process?

The registration process is rightly a rigorous one, with many different elements coming together to enable a decision on suitability to be reached. The current process takes around 10 weeks, but applicants must receive DBS check results before applying meaning most applications will take around four months minimum to complete. This is a long time for those who need to earn an income sooner, making childminding not a viable career option for them. **78.7%** of respondents feel the registration process should be speeded up, in spite of only **2.6%** of survey respondents being pre-registration childminders.

▶ “Government should speed up the childminder registration process”

Are you happy with the recent separation of the EYFS into a Childminder Specific version?

The announcement that the previous government was planning separate versions of the EYFS for childminders and other settings was met with much worry that the requirements would be reduced for childminders, resulting in fostering the view that childminders are not as skilled or professional as other early years practitioners. There was some relief when the childminder version showed that the requirements hadn't been 'dumbed down' but instead only included the specific information childminders need.

76.9% of respondents stated they are happy with the new childminder version of the EYFS and **12.3%** said they weren't happy. The comments received showed the concerns around the separation and the perception it may foster.

▶ “It just continues to make the assumption that childminders do not have to do the same work as nurseries or other childcare settings. It makes us look less professional.”

▶ “Splitting the EYFS into 2 documents took away the years of work that childminders were identical to every other EY setting as we all followed the same EYFS. Why were we split off again to be seen as the poor babysitter relation to the EY education system?”

Part five

Summary & Recommendations

Summary

The response to this survey shows views from a range of prospective childminders to those who have been minding for over 10 years. In an early years climate which has unprecedented reduction in childminder numbers and parents being offered more FREE childcare than ever before, careful consideration needs to be taken to ensure the change our new government states is essential, takes into consideration the sustainability and well-being of the workforce as well as the needs of parents and the wider economy.

Childminders generally do not feel heard by government or the wider public. The perception that childminders are of lesser value and competence than nursery settings is disappointing and demoralising, when childminders overall have received a higher than average **97%** of good and outstanding grades compared to the overall figure of **96%**. Relaxation of requirements to undertake introductory training before registration further enhances the view that childminders are not expected to meet the same standards as nurseries and so don't need training.

Involving childminders or organisations that support childminders in policy discussions can help ensure childminders voices are heard and given consideration in policy creation and changes. This in turn will encourage more to engage when asked.

One of the biggest concerns childminders have are the arrangements around FREE childcare, parents not understanding that this is largely underfunded and that settings are not simply being greedy if they ask for voluntary sustainability or consumables payments. A simple change of terminology and messaging from government would undoubtedly make the message clearer for parents and easier for both settings and parents when they are asked if they agree to pay more to cover where there is a shortfall.

Part five

Summary & Recommendations continued...

Childminders generally do not charge different hourly rates for children of different ages. Funding amounts are based on nursery ratios, meaning that childminders can lose 50% of their funding once a child reaches the age of 3 years, making them unsustainable or making difficult decisions to give parents notice so they can instead replace a 3-year-old with a younger one who attracts a higher hourly rate. Children need sustainability and secure attachments with significant adults, which are at risk with current policy.

The other major issue is that childminders are discriminated against because they are prevented from being able draw down government funding for related children. The requirements of registration are the same regardless of whether children in the setting are related or not and so there doesn't seem a valid reason to prevent this when relatives working in nursery do not have this same restriction, even though it is the same legislation being applied differently for childminders. Other parts of the UK do permit childminders to do this. This would be an easy change for government to implement that wouldn't cost any public money but would enable parents to have full choice of who cares for their children, in line with Article 3 of the United Convention on the Rights of the Child 'The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children'. It would also secure all the grandparents and other relatives as prospective childminders who are providing a service in their community alongside caring for their relatives.

While we assume that not all respondents have had difficulties with landlord or mortgage covenant issues, or with Universal Credit payments being penalised, there is overwhelming support for the Government to step in and ease these issues for those who are affected. If successful, this will enable more childminders to register and more to afford to stay in a job they love. While it would be more difficult to influence private landlords to allow childminding in their premises, it should be more achievable to align different government departments such as Universal Credit, HMRC and Local Authorities.

Part five

Summary & Recommendations continued...

While most respondents are happy with the Childminder version of the EYFS, many are still concerned about the message this send to parents looking for childcare and the wider public when Childminding UK along with other organisations have spent many years working to raise the profile of childminding as a profession.

Local Authority process that only allow termly payments are causing financial hardship for childminders that will only increase as FREE childcare is rolled out to younger children. It is currently the children whose parents pay privately for their childcare who are enabling childminders to pay their household and childminding expenses in between Local Authority payments.

Recommendations

- Increase the amount of funding to fully cover the cost of a childcare place, or change the narrative around what the government call 'free' childcare places to 'subsidised places' so that parents are aware the funding doesn't cover all the costs of a childcare place
- Allow providers to charge a top up fee to cover any shortfall in government payments
- Ensure that all Local Authorities offer monthly payments to childminders
- Align the childminding expenses that are allowable with HMRC to Universal Credit claims to prevent childminders losing benefits
- Ensure those eligible for Universal Credit payments are not financially penalised if they only receive termly payments from their Local Authority
- Set funding rates for childminders based on childminder ratios and not nursery ratios, to help ensure continuity of care for children when they reach 3 years of age
- Enable childminders to claim funding for related children, as they do in Wales and as nursery counterparts do

Part five

Summary & Recommendations continued...

- Work with landlords, housing developers and others to provide the message that childminding is different to running other businesses from home and should be excluded from any rental agreements or covenants attached to mortgages
- Regularly engage with childminders and organisations representing childminders to ensure childminders feel heard and considered in childcare policy
- In messages about early years, ensure childminding is included and portrayed to the same professional standards as other early years settings
- Remove the relaxation for childminders to decide if they complete Introductory Training - or change the requirement to ensure training in the business element of childminding is completed if potential childminders have a current and relevant qualification or experience
- Bring back Children's Centres as a support and networking environment for childminders and a safe engaging learning environment for minded children
- Speed up the Ofsted registration process to encourage more into the childminding community



