

# Finding a Childminder

[pacey.org.uk](http://pacey.org.uk)



## Understand your options

Advice and guidance on finding the right childcare for your child.

## Interview guide

A handy template to use at interviews.

## Questions to ask

All the essential questions to help with your childcare search.



# Choosing a childminder

Looking for a childminder for your child but don't know where to start?

This booklet includes all the helpful information you need to know to find the right childminder for your family. It helps you prepare for an interview with a childminder, features questions you'll want to ask and has a handy checklist at the end.

## Why choose a childminder?

If you are looking for a childcare setting in a 'home-from-home' environment, then a registered childminder could be the ideal choice for you.

Childminders are trained professionals who, like nurseries and pre-schools, must be Ofsted-registered and deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum.

Childminders can offer childcare for all of your children, giving an opportunity for siblings to spend more time together and children to mix with different age groups.



94% of childminders in England are judged good or outstanding by Ofsted

- ✔ Provide personalised, 'home-from-home' care for children of all ages
- ✔ Ofsted registration is compulsory
- ✔ May be able to provide flexible hours as well as overnight care
- ✔ Deliver the EYFS (England)
- ✔ Offer high adult to child ratios
- ✔ Continuity of care – from babies to school years and beyond

In England, early years childcare providers are regulated by Ofsted. It is compulsory for a childminder caring for children under 8 to register with Ofsted.

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# Questions to ask

Use these questions as a guide to help you when you go to visit a childminder. It's a good idea to use the same questions to ask each childminder you visit so you can compare notes. You can print out the handy form at the back to take with you on your visit.

## What experience/qualifications do you have?

There are a number of different training routes that someone can choose to follow to become a childminder, from a pre-registration course to an Early Years degree. However before they can begin caring for children, all childminders must have an Ofsted inspection, at which they are required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

All childminders must hold a current paediatric first aid certificate. More than half of all childminders go on to gain a level 3 early years or childcare-related qualification or higher.

In addition childminders may continue to enhance their skills and keep their practice up-to-date through regular continuing professional development (CPD). They may do this through further training, attending meetings and workshops and accessing peer support programmes. Ask whether the childminder is a member of PACEY.



## Do you work with any other staff?

Some childminders work with assistants, other registered childminders, students or apprentices. This means that they can care for larger numbers of children, as long as there is sufficient space in the setting.

Enquire into the experience and qualification of any assistants and ask if all DBS checks are in place.

Anyone over the age of 16 who lives at the setting, or will regularly come into contact with minded children, will need an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check.

## How many children do you currently care for, and what are their ages?

In England childminders can be registered to care for up to six children under the age of 8 at any one time. They may also care for children aged 8 and over. If they work with assistants they may be able to care for more children.

Getting an idea of the numbers of children cared for and their ages, including the days they attend, can help you get a feel for the setting and what the ages are of the other children that your child will interact with.



### How do you ensure the safety of the children in your care?

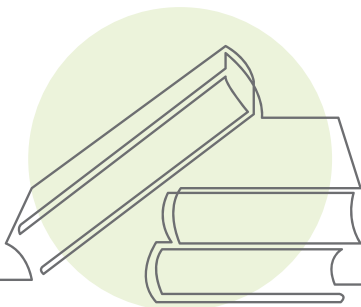
Childminders are required to take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well.

This includes undergoing safeguarding training, managing behaviour and maintaining records, policies and procedures. Ask the childminder about their policies and procedures and how they ensure the safety of the children in their setting.

### How do you support children's learning and development?

Childminders work in partnership with parents to promote the learning and development of all children in their care. They consider the needs, interests and stage of development of each individual and plan enjoyable and challenging experiences for them. All childminders in England deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which is the early years curriculum.

Ask the childminder how they encourage the children to achieve their development goals – and how they will involve you.



### What happens about illness?

It will depend on the details of your agreed contract, but usually payment will still be required on any non-attendance days due to sickness.

If your child or the childminder's own children are ill, they will often inform you and ask that you collect your child or make alternative arrangements. This is to prevent the spread of infection. You may also want to enquire into the childminder's medication policy. Be sure to tell the potential childminder if your child has specific medical needs.

Childminders may have a named emergency back-up childminder or may work with others to cover illness or holidays. In most cases if the childminder is not open for business due to sickness, you will not be expected to pay.

All childminders must have a procedure in place with parents concerning the administration of medicines. These procedures must be shared with all staff and parents.

### Do you have a daily routine?

You may want to ask them about the typical daily routine in the setting. This will give you a good idea of what your child's daily experience will be with them.

Many childminders are active in the local area, taking part in community groups at local children's centres, or regular visits to soft play areas, parks and libraries, so ask about these too.

### How will you keep me updated about my child's progress?

Childminders aim to have an open dialogue with families and carers, and work in partnership with them to ensure all of the child's needs are met and share information on progress and learning. Ask how the childminder will keep you involved and updated on your child's progress – many childminders provide daily learning journals, for example, either in print or online.

### What trips and outings do you take children on?

Childminders often organise trips outside of the setting. For example, they might take the children to the park or to the local library. Trips could also include playgroups, day trips to the museum and meeting up with other childminders. Ask about the safeguarding arrangements whilst the children are out and about.



### Do they own any animals?

As childminders work from their own homes, they may keep pets. If your child has any allergies or fears, ask about any animals that will be in the setting.

Ask to meet any pets and see where they are housed during childminding hours.



### Do you do any pick-ups, drop-offs or pre-school/school runs?

It is not uncommon for a childminder to care for children of varying ages and thus need to pick up and drop off children from nearby nurseries, pre-schools or schools. Ask how the childminder incorporates these trips into younger children's extended learning.

### Do you offer additional care out-of-hours?

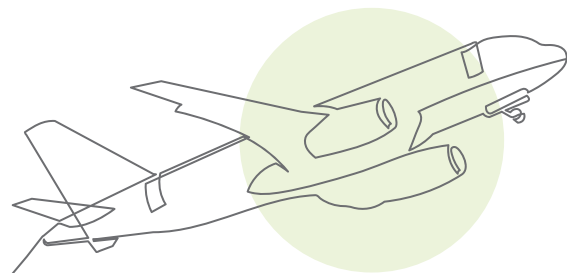
Many childminders can offer a flexible service and may allow for out-of-contracted-hours care, for example, if you're delayed at work or need overnight care. Ask about when this is available, how much they charge for this service and if there are any differences from normal contracted hours care.

### What about holidays?

Make sure you discuss at the initial meeting how holiday arrangements will work, as different childminders have different policies on holidays, including payment.

It is generally advisable to agree upon holiday plans for the year before beginning any arrangement.

Ask the childminder about whether they have a set period for holidays and how they give you notice of any planned holidays.



### Do you provide a settling-in period?

Childminders usually offer a settling-in period where a child can gradually become familiar with the setting and get used to being away from their parents. Ask how the childminder manages this in their setting – childminders are very experienced at dealing with this transition process and can provide great reassurance to you and your child.

### Other areas to discuss

You will know what your child needs from a childcare setting, so make sure you make a list before you visit of any other issues of relevance to your child. For example, you may want to discuss:

- ✓ Your child's food preferences/dietary requirements
- ✓ Your child's nappy and toileting routines
- ✓ Where nappy changing and sleep take place for children in the setting
- ✓ Any comforters your child uses
- ✓ Level of independence
- ✓ Any medical concerns or special needs
- ✓ Any other areas of concern or worry



## Do you offer funded 2-, 3- and 4-year-old places?

All 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds and some 2-year-olds are eligible for 15 hours of government early years education per week.

3- and 4-year-olds of eligible working parents in England are entitled to 30 hours per week of government-funded childcare during term time (38 weeks of the year). This can be 'stretched' across the year to include school holidays and weekends. Whether term-time only or stretched, the maximum in one year is 1,140 hours.

You can take up a funded place with any provider on Ofsted's Early Years Register, including childminders, but it is up to your provider when and if they offer funded places.

Many childminders offer funded hours in partnership with other settings, such as local schools, so ask what their current arrangements are.

To find out if you are eligible for funded hours, go to [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)



## What do your fees include?

If you are taking up a government-funded place (either 15 or 30 hours a week), it is important to note that the rate paid to the childminder by the local authority does not include consumables such as meals, snacks, nappies and wipes. The childminder may charge you separately for these, or ask you to supply them. It may also not cover additional services (outings, classes, emergency cover costs, drop-offs and pick-ups, etc.)

## Do you have any references I can see?

Childminders often receive feedback and comments from previous parents and children. These can give a helpful insight into what parents have liked and what their children might have enjoyed doing with the childminder. Ask to see copies of references, or ask if you can speak to current or previous parents.

PACEY is the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years. We are a charity dedicated to supporting everyone working in childcare and early years to provide high quality care and early learning for children and families.

SearchChildcare is the free childcare directory powered by PACEY. Search for childcare in your area at [searchchildcare.org.uk](http://searchchildcare.org.uk)

# Interview form

Photocopy these pages to interview more childminders

Name:

Address:

Telephone number:

Rate quoted:

Ofsted EY number:

Last Ofsted inspection:

Checklist:

Spaces are available	
DBS checks are in place	
Pets	
Pick-ups/drop-offs – Primary school/Pre-school	
Caters for specific dietary requirements	
Meals and snacks provided	
Current paediatric first aid certificate	
Accepts funded childcare (15/30 hours)	
Shares delivery of funded hours	



Training / Qualifications:

Opening hours:

Comments / additional notes:

Availability from	
Settling in period	
Retainer / deposit?	
References	

Further notes: