

# CHOOSING A CHILDMINDER



## A Guide for Parents



**National Action Plan  
for Childminding**  
2021-2028

**Childcare  
Committees**  
Ireland



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
Michumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth

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# WHAT IS A CHILDMINDER?

A childminder single-handedly cares for a small group of children in the childminder's own home. Children are welcomed as individuals, they are offered affection and respect and their developmental and recreational needs are met. Childminders offer a flexible service, tailored to each child, thereby helping parents and guardians to balance their work and family commitments.

For many parents choosing the right type of early learning and childcare service is one of the most important decisions they will make, ensuring they select the right type of early learning and childcare that best suits their child and family's needs.

# THE BENEFITS OF CHILDMINDING

There are many unique features of childminding which support children's learning and development:



# TYPES OF CHILDMINDERS

Depending on the number of children cared for, some childminders may be required to register with Tusla, and some will be exempt.

A childminder is exempt from registering with Tusla if they care for:

- 3 or less minded preschool children only
- 6 or less minded school age children only
- or a mix of preschool children and school age children (up to a maximum of 6 children) as set out below:

No. of Preschool children cared for:	Maximum No. of School Age children:
0	6
1	5
2	4
3	3

*\*Childminders should care for no more than 2 babies under 15 months at any one time.*

*Please note: Preschool children are aged 0 - 6 years, School Age children are 6 years+ or when they begin primary school.*

## VOLUNTARY NOTIFICATION

Childminders who are minding 3 or less children may choose to voluntarily notify to their local City/ County Childcare Committee (CCC). Please note, not all CCCs provide Voluntary Notification.

## TUSLA REGISTRATION

Childminders who wish to care for 4 or more preschool children or care for 7 or more children of any age, must register with Tusla, and are subject to inspection.

Childminders who care for a mix of preschool and school age children: The maximum numbers of each that a Childminder can care for at the same time are as follows:

No. of Preschool children cared for: (0-6 years)	Maximum No. of School Age children that can be cared for: (0-6 years)
1	10
2	7
3	5
4	2
5	1

*Please note: Childminders must have adequate insurance and planning permission for the number of children cared for.*

## GARDA VETTING

Garda vetting is an important step in promoting the safety and welfare of children in the childminders care. It can also indicate to parents that the childminder is operating a professional service where the welfare of children is paramount.

Tusla registered childminders are required to have Garda Vetting, however best practice would indicate that all childminders should be Garda Vetted.

The National Vetting Bureau provides vetting for childminders through Barnardos' Vetting Service and Early Childhood Ireland. All members of Childminding Ireland are Garda Vetted.

# TIPS FOR CHOOSING A CHILDMINDER

## FINDING CHILDMINDERS

Start by:

- Considering your early learning and childcare needs, how many days a week and the cost
- Visiting Tusla website, contact your local CCC and/or Childminding Ireland for names and contact details of childminders in your area
- Asking friends, family, neighbours and co-workers for contact details of childminders
- Placing an advertisement in the local newspapers; shops; bulletins; social media etc. and keep an eye out for childminding advertisements

## MAKE CONTACT WITH CHILDMINDERS

- Before contacting a childminder prepare a list of things to discuss
- Consider the time of day when calling the childminder i.e. avoid busy times such as arrival, departure, or lunch time etc.
- Give details of your childminding needs
- Aspects to consider are quality, accessibility and affordability
- There is no need to make a decision straight away

## ARRANGE VISITS TO CHILDMINDING SETTINGS

- Meet a few childminders as this will give a broader perspective on childminding
- Plan an initial visit to the childminder's home, preferably while children are there
- Once a childminder is chosen, plan a second visit at a quieter time to formalise the childminding arrangement

## CONSIDER ASKING THE CHILDMINDER SOME OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- Do they have Garda Vetting? You may ask for evidence of this
- What experience/knowledge/training/qualifications do they have?
- Do they have policies and procedures for their childminding service e.g., illness; administration of medicine; fire safety, behaviour management, etc.?
- Are they registered with Tusla? (unless exempt from registration – see page 3)
- How many children are they currently minding and what ages are they?
- Do they have childminding specific insurance?
- Do they have appropriate car insurance?
- Do they have planning permission if required?

*Please note: \*Planning and Development Regulations provide an exemption from planning permission for: 'the activity of minding no more than 6 children, including the children, if any, of the person minding, in the house of that person for profit or gain.'*

- Are there other adults on the premises while children are being minded?
- What is their daily routine e.g., play activities, meals, outdoor play, television, stories, rest?
- Who provides the meals for the child during the day? Discuss any nutritional needs.



- What toys, play equipment, materials, activities are available to the children?
- Do the children have opportunities to play outdoors?
- What provisions are in place for safe outdoor play?
- What early learning and childcare equipment do they provide e.g., highchair, cots, car seats etc.?
- Where do minded children sleep e.g., consider location, beds, cots etc.?
- If they are unable to care for your child or in case of emergency, do they have an emergency backup person?
- What are their working terms and conditions e.g.
  - hours/days of work?
  - childminding rates?
  - holiday leave requirements?
- What should parents provide to the childminder e.g., nappies, toiletries, all weather suits and wellies etc.?
- What arrangements are in place if a child is sick?
- Do they collect children from preschool/school/afterschool activities?
- Do they have pets?
- Do they take children on outings?
- Are they aware of car safety requirements and do they have appropriate car seats?
- Do they have parent references that you could contact?

*Some childminders may have an information leaflet /booklet about their service which details their opening hours, fees, policies and procedures etc.*

## **A CHILDMINDER SHOULD:**

- Have a genuine love of children
- Build caring, nurturing relationships with children
- Show kindness
- Be professional, dedicated and reliable
- Show empathy and understanding
- Be fun and energetic
- Be competent and capable
- Be an active listener and be able to communicate with both children and parents
- Work in partnership with parents
- Recognise each child's individuality and uniqueness

## **A CHILDMINDER'S HOME SHOULD:**

- Be caring, happy, friendly and stimulating
- Be cosy and warm
- Have appropriate space for indoor and outdoor play and activities
- Be open for you to visit at any time during the day
- Be a safe place e.g., use safety gates; fire guards; safety locks; smoke alarms, attention to hygiene etc.
- Have a secure outdoor area e.g., no access onto road; quality play equipment etc.
- Have a variety of equipment, toys and learning materials that children can freely access e.g., sand / water play, playdough, books, role play / imaginary play opportunities, creativity materials etc.
- Share copies of their policies and procedures with parents

## **PARENTS SHOULD COMPLETE A CHILD RECORD FORM INCLUDING:**

- Child's name and address
- Child's date of birth
- Contact details of parents during the day e.g., home & work phone numbers
- Contact number of family doctor
- Name and contact details of whoever is to be contacted in an emergency
- Details of who can collect your child
- Any medical & dietary requirements
- Permission for outings and any travel in childminder's car
- Permission for photographs

## **CHILDMINDERS' RECORDS SHOULD INCLUDE:**

- Daily attendance record
- Accident/Injury records
- Risk assessments
- Signed agreement for medicine administration
- Fire safety record



- Childminding insurance and appropriate car insurance
- Documentation on training e.g., Tusla Children First
- First Aid
- Childminding fees

*This list of records is not exhaustive.*

## MAKE A DECISION

Remember that it is ok for parents to take their time and not rush into a decision. Parents should review all the information gathered and call the childminder back if there are any questions that were not answered. If a childminding setting is full, put the child's name on the waiting list.

## CONFIRM YOUR DECISION

- Once parents have found a childminder, confirm and agree the terms & conditions of the childminding arrangement.
- A childminding contract stating the childminding arrangement is recommended with parents (cost, hours, sickness or holiday payments, overtime rates or extra charges for food and outings etc).

*This will ensure that the quality of the relationship between the childminder, parents and children will not be impaired by misunderstandings. Both parties should retain a copy of this contract.*

## REVIEW YOUR CONTRACT

It is important for parents and childminders to review the childminding contract annually. This gives both a chance to talk about the child's needs and how the childminding arrangement is going. The signed contract means both parents and childminders agree and are fully aware of the terms of the service.

# CHILDMINDING DURING COVID

In the current climate, it is recommended as best practice that all childminders have a COVID-19 Infection Control Policy to ensure that safe practices and procedures are in place within the setting. Childminders and parents have a responsibility to adhere to the most up to date COVID-19 guidelines to ensure the health and wellbeing of all. Please see: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/>

## WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUR CHILDMINDER

Parents are the primary caregiver and educator of their child and therefore have the responsibility to be involved in all aspects of their lives. Children benefit greatly when the relationship between the parents and their childminder is a positive and respectful one. Parents should share their parenting style, values, and beliefs with the childminders, being open and honest about their expectations of the childminding arrangement and the role that the childminder will play in the child's life.

### THE SETTLING IN PERIOD

Start slowly by:

- Arranging a visit to the childminder's home where parents may stay to support the transition
- Following this visit, children should be left for a short time, increasing the time each day depending on how they are adjusting to the childminder and their new environment
- Allowing children to bring their favourite comforter or toy to the childminding setting. This will help them feel secure and build their confidence
- Talking to the childminder about your child. Let them know your child's favourite games and activities, foods they like or dislike and any fears they may have
- Making contact during the day to check and see how your child is settling in. It can be a daunting experiencing for parents as well so allow time for everyone to adjust to the new arrangement
- Becoming aware of the childminder's routine and activities, this will help parents to talk to their child about their day

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further advice and support on choosing a childminder:

- National Action Plan for Childminding (2021-2028) [www.gov.ie/childminding](http://www.gov.ie/childminding)
- First 5 [www.first5.gov.ie](http://www.first5.gov.ie)
- Tusla [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)
- MyCCC.ie [www.myccc.ie](http://www.myccc.ie)
- Childminding Ireland [www.childminding.ie](http://www.childminding.ie)
- National Childcare Scheme [www.ncs.gov.ie](http://www.ncs.gov.ie)
- HSE Covid-19 Guidelines [www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/](http://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/)



[www.gov.ie/childminding](http://www.gov.ie/childminding)

[www.myccc.ie](http://www.myccc.ie)