

Trio Connections



Childcare Choices

~ Childminder

Answers to many frequently asked questions about childminders

What is a childminder?



Why choose a childminder?

Helpful advice on what to look for when choosing a childminder

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What is a Registered Childminder?

Registered Childminders are **professional** child carers, who work in their own homes to provide care and learning opportunities through play for other people's children in a family setting. They must be registered and inspected by either a Childminder Agency or Ofsted in England or CSIW in Wales. All childminders have a legal duty to follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – the same framework that governs nurseries and pre-schools.

Childminders are generally self-employed and are responsible for their own tax and national insurance.

Whether registered with an Agency or Ofsted, all Childminders will have had a **minimum** of:

- An enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (as must everyone else aged over 16 who lives or works in the Childminder's home).
- Childminders registering after September 2014 must register all over 16s associated with the provision (see above) with the DBS update service which means their DBS will be routinely checked
- First Aid training specifically for children and babies (12 hour Paediatric First Aid).
- Introductory Training
- Their home inspected by a Childminder Agency or Ofsted to ensure it is safe and secure for children.
- Their own Public Liability Insurance
- A completed medical check

Childminders are usually registered to care for up to three children under 5 and three children aged 5 to 8, including their own children. They may also look after older children up to the age of 16.

Childminders Registered with an Agency

Childminder Agencies were introduced in September 2014. The Agency is registered, inspected and graded by Ofsted. They are a one stop shop that registers childminders, provides their training, supports them to improve their practice, inspects them and offers business support and advice. They may provide a service to parents/carers who want to find a quality childminder to care for their child. In their first year of registration, Childminders that are registered with a Childminder Agency will be visited a minimum of 2 times and in subsequent years at least once although Agencies may decide to visit more



frequently. Reports will be produced which will be shared with the Childminder and parents. Childminders that are registered with agencies have to commit to a minimum professional development time of 16 hours per year. Childminder Agencies may choose to give childminders an individual grade.

Trio Childcare Connections are a Registered Childminder Agency – Ofsted Registration Number [CA000005](#). **Trio Agency Registered Childminders:**

- are only registered if Trio believe they have the potential to be **good or better** – only good is good enough
- must undertake a **minimum of 20 hours professional development (training) per year** (not necessary for Ofsted Childminder)
- have a named Agency contact that they can go to for **advice and support** (no equivalent for Ofsted Childminders)
- will receive a Trio **monitoring visit within 6 months of registration** (no equivalent monitoring/support from Ofsted for its childminders)
- will receive **monthly contact from Trio** (no equivalent contact from Ofsted for its childminders)
- will receive a minimum of **two visits annually** - one of which will be an **annual inspection** (Ofsted registered Childminders are generally only inspected once every inspection cycle – 4 years).

Childminders Registered with Ofsted

Rather than being registered with a Childminder agency, Childminders could chose to be independently registered with Ofsted (they cannot be registered with both Ofsted and an agency). If registered with Ofsted, they will be inspected once per inspection cycle (every 4 years) and childminders will be given an 'outcome/grade'. Inspections would be available for you to view if you have the registered childminders Ofsted Unique Reference Number (URN). Childminders that are registered with Ofsted do not need to commit to a minimum number of hours of professional development.

Trio Childcare Connections believe in choice for Childminders and therefore as well as being a registered Childminder Agency, they offer advice and support to independent Ofsted registered Childminders both through some Local Authority agreements and also individual Childminder membership.



Why Choose a Registered Childminder?

Childminders have the advantage of being able to offer the most flexible and stable form of childcare. Whether for babies, pre-school or older children, full time, part time or unsociable hours, childminders can generally fit into a family's existing routine offering wrap around care to and from pre-school, primary school or after school activities.

Childminding suits children's needs at every stage of their life.

It is possible for your child to stay with the same Childminder from birth, to starting senior school. Siblings can be cared for together which makes life easier and helps your children feel more secure. They have a continuity of care that is not matched by any other form of childcare. This allows your child to build strong and lasting relationships with their carer who offers a welcoming home from home environment, making your child feel comfortable, safe and secure. Childminding also allows parents to form a stable, ongoing relationship with their child's carer.

Childminders can also offer funded sessions for 3 & 4 year olds and qualifying 2 year olds.

You may be able to get help with payments for childcare with your childminder through Childcare Vouchers or Working Tax credit. Further details can be found at:

www.gov.uk/childcare-vouchers-better-off-calculator

www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/tax-credits

www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs.

Finding a Childminder

You can find out the details of Registered Childminders in your locality through the following:-

Family Information Service

The National Association of Family Information Service

www.daycaretrust.org.uk/nafis

Ask for details of local Childminder Agencies and also of independent Ofsted registered Childminders

Children's Centre

Ask at your local Children's Centre to see if they have a notice board for Childminders, if they keep details of local childminders or if there is a Childminder's Drop in you could attend to meet local childminders.



Word of Mouth Ask friends, family or work colleagues if they can recommend a Childminder. Other parents at the pre-school or school may be able to suggest a Childminder. If the Childminder hasn't got a place available they may know of another Childminder who does.

Internet Search Look on the internet for Childminder Agencies in your local area

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted You will be able to carry out a search for childminders' reports within a certain distance of a given postcode. You will also be able to search for Childminder Agencies in your area – and their Ofsted reports.

Trio Trio Childminder Agency currently registers childminders in Swindon, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire. For details of their registered Childminders, visit:
<http://www.triochildcare.co.uk/page.aspx?p=trioagencycms>

Choosing a Childminder

Remember – choosing a childminder is a very personal thing. Recommendations are important, but your child is unique and the childminder must suit you and your family.

Many Childminders will be able to show you lots of information about the service they provide. In addition it would be a good idea to write down a list of questions that you would like to ask (see checklist at the end of this document). This will help prevent you forgetting to ask an important question when in front of the Childminder. Make sure you do not forget to take some paper and a pen to make notes. The Childminder will expect you to do this and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Leave plenty of time It may not be possible to find the right Childminder straight away. You may also want to give your child plenty of time to settle in with their new Childminder. It is therefore, a good idea to start looking for a Childminder at least a couple of months before they are needed.



Getting in touch Childminders are generally out and about during the day and are too busy caring for children to be able to have long conversations on the phone and therefore keep your initial enquiry short and organise a time it would be best to call back. If the Childminder seems suitable then make an appointment to arrange a visit. It is ideal to visit more than one Childminder as they are all different and offer a diverse range of services. This will then provide you with a fair comparison.

Interviewing Tips To get a better picture of what the Childminder is like arrange an initial visit when the Childminder is working. Remember that it may be difficult to go through all the details as the Childminder's priority is to the children in their care. However, you can always arrange another visit during a quiet time to discuss things further.

If possible, then take your child so you can see how the Childminder interacts with them and to see how they fit in with any other children. Taking a partner will also save time in the long run or arrange another appointment for them to meet the Childminder. Their input is important too.

You could also ask the Childminder if they can show you around the part of their home they use for Childminding including where your child may sleep and the garden. When looking at the toys and resources make sure you look to see if everything is safe and clean.

There is a useful checklist at the end of this document for you to print and take with you when you go to meet the childminder.

Next Steps

When you have chosen your Childminder then you must take time to complete the paperwork. This should include a minimum of a Childminding Contract, a Child Record Form and Permission form(s).

If you are signing the contract then make sure you are clear about any retainer fee or deposit that is required to secure your child's space.



Ensure you are clear about:

- The amount that you are paying and what the Childminder is providing inclusive of their fee (e.g. food, nappies, wipes, days out etc).
- The hours and days your child will attend the setting.
- The Childminder's procedures regarding sickness (for child and Childminder) holidays, training days, lateness, complaints, problems and Child Protection. Don't feel afraid to ask for a copy of their policies.
- Emergency back-up procedures the Childminder has in place.
- How to terminate the contract if the Childminder's services are no longer required.

What identifies good Childminding provision?

A good Childminder.....

- Can offer flexibility in the hours that they care for children. Many look after children from early in the morning, late in the evening, overnight or at the weekends. This flexibility fits around parents with shift patterns. Childminders can also be willing to take children to school, clubs, pre-schools and playgroups and to collect them.
- Can be spontaneous, an unexpected snowy or rainy day can be turned into a learning experience. Equally when children feel tired they can cuddle up on the sofa and take it easy just as they would at home.
- Offers real life activities, meal times, shopping, gardening, cooking, trips to toddler groups, soft play area, library and parks, from these comfortable home life experiences children can learn social and language skills, basic science and maths.
- Will further their training and development. Qualifications that are recommended are: Level 3 Diploma in Home-based Childcare, NVQ Level 3 in Children's Care, Learning and Development, Level 3 Diploma Children and Young People's Workforce (Early Learning and Childcare), Level 3 Early Years Educator. Childminders will also extend their knowledge through continual professional development training in areas such as child development, activity ideas etc.
- Some childminders are registered to provide funded sessions, for eligible 2 year old children, or for 3 and 4 year olds, if the parent wishes to use the funding to pay for (some of) the time their child spends with the childminder.



Useful contacts

Foundation Years For information about the Early Years Foundation Stage:
www.foundationyears.org.uk/early-years-foundation-stage-2012

Family Information Service The National Association of Family Information Service
www.daycaretrust.org.uk/nafis

OFSTED 0300 123 1231
www.ofsted.gov.uk
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may also be interested to read some real life stories from childminders and parents about childminding: www.triochildcare.co.uk/families.aspx

A useful checklist for you to print and take when you meet the childminder is given on the next pages:



Questions to Ask Checklist

Business Questions:

- Are you registered with a Childminder Agency or Ofsted (ask to see report)?
- If you are registered with an Agency what additional services do they offer to parents (for example, this could include billing, emergency alternative childcare) and what are their criteria for Childminder membership?
- Can I see your Registration and Public Liability Insurance Certificates?
- Does your car insurance cover business use? Is your MOT in date?
- Is your first aid course up to date?
- Have you any references from other parents? If they have not, would they mind if you contacted a parent?

Notes:

General Childminding Questions

- What made you decide to become a Childminder?
- What do you enjoy about the job?
- How long have you been Childminding?
- How long do you intend to carry on Childminding?
- What training have you done? Do you have any formal qualifications in Childcare?

Notes:

A typical Childminding Day

- Can you tell me about a typical childminding week? What sorts of activities do you do with the children?
- How do you deal with unwanted behaviour?
- Which special occasions and festivals do you celebrate?
- What would you do in an emergency involving yourself or a child?
- Do you take the children out in the car and what safety restraints have you got? Do I need to provide a car seat?
- Do you go on outings?
- Do you do school pick-ups? If so, where?
- How would you follow my child's routines and interests?
- Are the children able to play outside? Where?
- What do children do while others are sleeping?

Notes:



<p>The setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask to look around! Where will my child sleep? Is there outside space? • Other than the children, is anyone else at home during Childminding hours? • How many children do you currently care for? Ages? Have they got children? • Are you registered to offer funded sessions, eg to eligible 2 year olds; to 3 & 4 year olds? • Do you have pets? Where are these you are working? 	
<p>Notes:</p>	
<p>Meals and Snacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What food do you provide? Can you cater for special diets? • What type of meals / snacks / drinks do the children have? What if my child doesn't like it? • How often do children have meals and snacks? • Are the children allowed treats? 	
<p>Notes:</p>	
<p>Fees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much do you charge and what does this include? • What do I need to provide? (e.g. meals / nappies / wipes) • Would there be any extra cost to myself for outings? • When would I need to pay? • Do you charge a retainer or deposit? • What do you charge if you are sick? What would I need to pay if my child was off sick? • What do you charge if I am on holiday? And if you are on holiday? 	
<p>Notes:</p>	
<p>After the visit, ask yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the childminder make you feel welcome? • Did the childminder welcome your child? • Did you feel at ease? • Did the childminder answer your questions thoroughly? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the childminder listen to you? • Did the childminder speak and listen to your child? • Did the other children seem happy and well settled? • Did the childminder talk with them in a friendly way?
<p>Notes:</p>	

