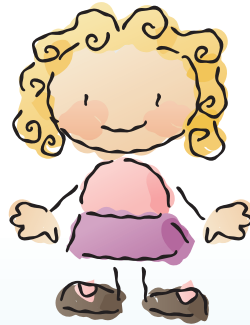


Childminding - Getting Started



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Introduction

The City and County Childcare Committees were established in 2000 to assist in the development of a wide range of integrated, high quality, accessible and affordable services for children throughout Ireland. Childminding has always been supported as an integral part of childcare in Ireland. However, since the implementation of the National Childminding Initiative, more time and resources have been allocated nationally and locally to continue supporting the childminding sector.

Childminders are encouraged to notify their local Health Services Executive Pre-school Officer or to Voluntary Notify their local City/County Childcare Committee, whichever is appropriate.

All childminders, whether they are notified to the HSE or to the City/County Childcare Committee, can take advantage of the many supports available, such as:

- assistance when setting up a childminding service, including support visits to the home by the Childminding Advisory Officer;
- ongoing support for established services;
- ongoing training specific to childminding;
- guidance in record-keeping and developing policies;
- assistance to access funding;
- mutual support through a local network of childminders;

Childminding is valued as another option for parents when choosing the type of childcare that suits the needs of their family. Childminding represents the largest type of childcare used by families in the country today. Whether you are a grandparent minding your grandchildren, an aunt/uncle caring for nieces and nephews or a person minding children for neighbours in your local community, we are there to offer help and to support you.

This document was developed in collaboration with the City and County Childcare Committees of Dublin, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin. We would like to acknowledge Galway City and County Childcare Committee for sharing the information in their Childminders Support Pack.

Contents

Section 1:	What is Childminding?.....	4
Section 2:	The Legal Aspects of Childminding	7
Section 3:	Commonly Asked Questions	9
Section 4:	Childminding Tax Exemption	13
Section 5:	Useful contacts.....	14



Childminding - Getting Started

1. What is Childminding?

A Childminder offers single-handed, home-based, small-group childcare providing the following services throughout the day:

- Educational activities, developmentally appropriate for the mixed ages and stages of growth of the children; daily activities and routines are varied, allowing for successes and challenges.
- Meeting each child's nutritional needs, being aware of allergies, dietary needs, cultural practices, developmental needs, etc.
- Promoting equality and respecting diversity, by encouraging each child's individuality and sense of identity.
- Providing a safe, clean, well-maintained and varied environment where the children feel at home.
- Providing toys and equipment that are safe, well maintained and developmentally appropriate for each child.
- Providing for each child's sanitary, hygiene and health needs in a respectful and nurturing manner.
- Setting up and maintaining a professional and confidential record keeping system.
- Supporting parents by developing a welcoming, non-judgemental relationship in which both the parents and the Childminder are partners in the child's daily care.
- Continuing to develop as a professional by attending on-going training, availing of support through networking, etc.

Does Childminding Suit You?

A childminder is often a parent or spouse maintaining a household as well as operating a home-based business. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have adequate space in my home to provide opportunities for play, indoors and out, places for children to sleep, eat, change nappies, etc.?
- Are others in my family supportive of my plans and aware of the implications for everyone in the home, including noise, untidiness, wear and tear, a constant busy atmosphere, parents coming and going, etc.?
- Are others in my family prepared to share my time and their own family home with other children?

- At the end of a busy childminding day will I have the time and energy to devote to my own family and our household needs as well as time to prepare for the next day?
- Am I aware of the importance of finding time for myself, in order to provide balance in caring for minded children, my own family and myself to avoid stress, fatigue and burn out?
- Am I free from criminal offence, investigation or court proceedings?

Often individuals decide to set up a childminding service without realising the full impact on their home, their family and themselves. If, after considering the issues raised above, you are interested in providing a childminding service, read further to find out the supports available to you from the City and County Childcare Committees.

The Role of the Childminder is to:

- Care for a small, mixed age group of children (max. 5 pre-school children including his/her own, see pg. 7). It can be an all-year-round service, offered in the minder's own home. The hours of childminder vary according to the needs of the parent.
- Provide a safe, warm, secure, friendly and welcoming environment for the child and the parent.
- Understand the rights and needs of the children and respect their race, ethnicity, gender, religion and culture.
- Provide stimulation for the child through a variety of play activities that are age and stage related and that will contribute to the overall care and development of the child.
- Develop a working relationship with the parents and families. A 'Working Agreement' should be drawn up to avoid any confusion regarding the care of the child and the terms and conditions for work.
- Promote a trusting working relationship. It is the Childminders responsibility to inform the parents or guardians if for any reason they are unable to work. Childminders should give parents adequate notice of any annual leave, maternity leave or other leave that they wish to take, in order for the parents to make alternative arrangements. If for any reason the Childminder wishes to end the contract the parent should be given adequate notice to enable them find suitable alternative childcare.

Childminding - Getting Started

- The childminder must acknowledge that the parent is the child's primary carer. However, it is important that both the Childminder and parent work in partnership to provide for all of the child's needs.

The Skills of a Childminder

Many skills are required to develop and deliver a childminding service. Childminders should:

- Work in partnership with parents. Respect and acknowledge that parents are the primary carers of their children.
- Be able to listen effectively to the needs of the child and parent.
- Be sympathetic/tolerant/kind.
- Be fair with their minded children – and with their own children.
- Be understanding - sometimes minded children may feel they have 'just been left there'.
- Develop a good relationship with the children in their care.
- Take care of themselves. For example, by having a good diet and exercise routine, taking time out for relaxation.
- Provide a safe, secure, stable, friendly and learning environment for the children in their care.
- Be safety conscious and ensure the home is safe, warm, clean and hygienic for children.
- Respect all children as unique individuals with their own needs.
- Be able to identify the interests and strengths of individual children and build on them by providing a variety of play activities and experiences to enhance their learning and development.
- Be aware of how they can promote the development of each child in their care.
- Be professional in their approach.

Adopted from: Best Practice Guidelines for Childminders

Compiled by: The Lagan Family Daycare Network

2. The Legal Aspects of Childminding

There are two types of Childminders – those who are required to notify the Health Services Executive and those who can voluntarily notify their City/County Childcare Committee.

The Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations and Explanatory Guide state the following in relation to the Childminder:

Notified Childminders

- A Childminder is defined as a person who single-handedly minds pre-school children in the Childminder's home for a total of more than 2 hours a day
- A Childminder caring for 4 or more pre-school children is required under the Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 to notify the Health Services Executive.
- A Childminder should look after no more than 5 pre-school children, including her own pre-school children.
- No more than 2 children should be less than 15 months old. Exceptions in relation to numbers under 15 months can be made for multiple births or siblings.
- A Childminder should have a telephone and a second person must be available to cope with emergencies.

If you are required to notify your childminding service, request an application form from the Pre-School Department of your local Health Services Executive.*

Definition of A Pre-School Child

A child that has not attained the age of 6 years and who is not attending a primary school or a school providing an educational programme similar to a primary school.

Definition of a School-Age Child

A child who is attending a school-age service on a regular basis outside of normal school hours.

* see *Useful Contacts* at the back of this book.

Childminding - Getting Started

Childminders Exempt from Statutory Notification

Currently, the following childminding services are exempt from the provisions of the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006:

- Those who care for school-age children.
- Those who care for pre-school children of the same family and no other children from any other family (other than the minder's own children).
- Those who care for relatives.
- Those who care for no more than 3 pre-school children of different families (other than the minder's own children).

It is recommended that these childminders Voluntarily Notify their service in order to avail of the supports this system can offer.

Voluntary Notification

Childminders who are not required to notify the Health Services Executive should Voluntarily Notify to the City/County Childcare Committees. The National Guidelines for Childminders outline the Voluntary Notification procedure. Copies of these guidelines are available from the local City/County Childcare Committee.

To Voluntarily Notify, contact the Childminding Advisory Officer through the local City/County Childcare Committee for further information*.

By Notifying or Voluntarily Notifying, Childminders can avail of the training, information, networking and other supports that are provided through City and County Childcare Committees

Childminders are recognised for their important role in Childcare in Ireland and they are the preferred choice for many parents. The steps many childminders take to develop their service as one promoting quality childcare are commendable.

Voluntary Notification is acknowledged as being one of these steps.

* see Useful Contacts at the back of this book.

3. Commonly Asked Questions

What is a pre-school child?

A pre-school child is a child who has not attained the age of 6 years and who is not attending a primary school or a school providing an educational programme similar to a primary school.

How many pre-school children may I care for in total?

Childminders can care for 3 pre-school children before they are required to notify the Health Services Executive (HSE) of their service. Childminders who care for 3 children or less can voluntarily notify their local City/County Childcare Committee of their service. Once childminders care for 4 pre-school children or more they are then required to notify the HSE Pre-school Officer.

How many school-age children can I care for?

Currently, there are no regulations for the care of school-age children. A childminder can care for up to 6 school-age children. However it is recommended that a childminder adheres to best practise in promoting quality childcare. Childminders caring for school-age children can Voluntarily Notify their childminding service to the local City/County Childcare Committee.

What happens if I do not notify the HSE and I am caring for more than 3 pre-school children?

Or

What happens if I am notified as a Childminder to the HSE and I care for more than 5 pre-school children?

In both of these situations you are in breach of the regulations. Your childminding insurance may become invalid. The regulations should be seen as a means of assisting you, the Childminder, in offering a quality service mindful of the health, safety and wellbeing of children in your care.

Can I legally mind more than 5 pre-school children?

If the exemptions previously outlined on pg. 8 do not apply to you and you wish to care for more than 5 pre-school children, you are required to notify the HSE as a full daycare or part-time service and must meet the criteria set out in the 'Regulations' for such services. Development Officers at the City/County Childcare Committees are available to advise and assist you in expanding your service in this manner. It is also suggested that you consult your local Pre-School Service in the HSE.

Childminding - Getting Started

Why should I Voluntarily Notify?

The Voluntary Notification system allows exempt Childminders to show families that they are offering a formal, professional service for the children in care. It shows that they take their work seriously and strive to provide the best quality service. Voluntary Notified Childminders receive one-to-one support from their local Childminding Advisory Officer, including up-to-date information on training courses and workshops.

How do I Voluntarily Notify?

Contact your local City/County Childcare Committee who will forward you the Voluntary Notification Support Pack and will put you in touch with your local Childminding Advisory Officer

What are the benefits of Voluntary Notification?

Voluntary Notification benefits Childminders who wish to operate to high standards and to have their work valued and their contribution to the childcare sector recognised. All childminders and potential childminders can avail of the training, information, networking and other supports. Voluntarily Notified Childminders can choose to have their names included on a list which is made available to parents.

How do I apply for Garda Vetting?

Garda Vetting is available to those who childmind in the home through Barnardos Vetting Service, which is a stand-alone service of Barnardos based in Cork City. Please contact your City/County Childcare Committee or Barnardos for further information.*

What training is available for childminders?

Childminders should contact their local City/County Childcare Committee for details of accredited and non-accredited training available. Useful training for Childminders includes the Quality Awareness Programme, First Aid, Fire Safety Awareness, Keeping Safe Child Protection training, etc.

What about Planning permission?

Currently, Childminders are exempt from the need to obtain planning permission for their childminding service from their local council.

** see Useful Contacts at the back of this book.*

What policies and procedures should I have in place?

As a Childminder it is recommended that you develop certain policies and procedures, for example:

- Confidentiality Policy
- Health & Safety Policies including a Safety Statement
- Child Protection Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Positive Discipline Policy
- Partnership with Parents Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy

What records should I keep?

It is recommended that you keep particular records regarding the children in your care, for example:

- Attendance Record
- Child's Information Record (including illnesses, etc.)
- Daily Routine
- Menu Plans
- Medicine Administration Form
- Accidents and Incident Records
- Income for the purpose of the Childminder's Tax Exemption

Support and information is available from your local City/County Childcare Committee on developing policies and procedures and record keeping. Please see *Childminding: Moving On* included in this pack for further information.

Childminding - Getting Started

Where can I obtain Childminding Insurance?

Home: Specific Childminding insurance is available. The City/County Childcare Committees have details of various providers. Some home insurance companies will also amend existing policies to cover the care of children within your home. As with all insurance policies, familiarise yourself with the policy to be satisfied that the policy provides the cover that you want.

Car: if transporting children in your car, it is very important that Childminders contact their car insurance company to confirm that they have adequate insurance cover.

What is the going rate for childminding? How much should I charge?

You should decide your own rates. Prices should be established according to the service offered, e.g. provision of food and toiletries, numbers of children from same family, qualifications, insurance, length of care per day/week, etc. You should consult existing Childminders through your local network.

A Working Agreement helps to clarify fees, terms and working conditions between the parent and Childminder.

Must I pay tax?

All income should be declared to the Revenue Commissioners. Whether you pay tax or not is dependent on your earnings. There is a Childminders Tax Exemption available.

As a Childminder how do I find children to mind?

All notified childminders have the option of being included on the City/County Childcare Committees list. This list may be made available to parents seeking childminders or the Childminders Advisory Officer in the County Childcare Committees may contact those on the list informing them of parents request for a childminder.

Advertise in your local area. Word of mouth is usually a very successful way of informing parents in your locality.

4. Childminders Tax Exemption

Childminders who have notified their local City/County Childcare Committee can avail of the Childminders Tax Exemption on their income from childminding.

Details of the Scheme

- The exemption applies only to Childminders who are registered with the tax office as self-employed.
- The childminding service must be provided in the Childminder's own home.
- The Childminder may mind up to 3 children (under 18 years) at any one time, excluding the Childminder's own children. A Childminder could conceivably mind 3 children in the mornings and 3 different in the afternoon and still qualify.
- The gross annual income from childminding must not exceed the specified limit (currently €15,000*). A childminder could conceivably have an income from another source, and still avail of the exemption for their childminding income as long as the childminding income did not exceed the limit.
- If 2 people were minding children in the same premises, the limit would be split between them. Each childminder would not be entitled to €15,000*.
- A Childminder wishing to avail of the Childminders Tax Exemption must notify his/her service to the local City/County Childcare Committee. He/She will receive a letter stating she has notified her service to the Committee. This letter should be kept on file by the Childminder for future reference.
- A Childminder must submit an Income Tax Return each year, even if there is no tax liability.
- In 2010 responsibility for collecting PRSI for self-employed persons (class S) changed from Department of Social and Family Affairs to the Revenue Commissioners.

Please note that the general rate for the self-employed was increased from 3% to 4%. Therefore a childminder will have to pay a social insurance contribution of 4% of all income or €253, whichever is greater. This is her contribution towards such benefits as Old Age Contributory Pension, Maternity Benefit, Bereavement Grant, etc.

If a Childminder does not apply for the Childminders Tax exemption or is earning over €15,000* gross per annum, then her income is fully taxable. However, a Childminder is entitled to deduct a variety of expenses which she may have incurred in earning that income before tax is applied, e.g. toys, equipment, food, etc., specifically provided for the children being minded.

* These figures may be subject to change

Childminding - Getting Started

5. Useful Contacts

City/County Childcare Committees

Dublin City Childcare Committee Ltd

Office 2.13 Distillers Building,
Smithfield, Dublin 7

Tel: 01 873 3696

Fax: 01 873 4488

Email: info@dccc.ie

Web: www.childcareonline.ie

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Childcare Committee

5A Woodpark
Sallynoggin

Co. Dublin

Tel: 01 2368030

Fax: 01-236 8012

Email: info@dlrcountychildcare.ie

Web: www.dlrcountychildcare.ie

Fingal County Childcare Committee

Abco Kovex Building
Swords Business Park
Swords, Fingal

Co Dublin

Tel: 01 807 7660

Fax: 01-807 7669

Email: info@fingalcountychildcare.ie

Web: www.fingalcountychildcare.ie

South Dublin Childcare Committee

Civic Offices
Ninth Lock Road
Clondalkin
Dublin 22

Tel: 01-4570122

Fax: 01-457 0322

Email: info@southdublinchildcare.ie

Web: www.southdublinchildcare.ie

Local Childcare Resource Services

Dublin North West

Dublin North West Local Childcare
Resource Service

Ballymun Whitehall Area Partnership
North Mall

Ballymun Town Centre
Dublin 11

Tel: 01 8423612

Fax: 01 8427004

Email: childcareinfo@ballymun.org

Dublin North Central

North Central Local Childcare
Resource Service

Northside Partnership

Coolock Development Centre
Bunratty Drive

Coolock

Dublin 17

Tel: 01 8485630

Fax: 01 8485661

Email: info@childcarebureau.ie

Dublin South Central

South Central Local Childcare
Resource Service

Ballyfermot/Chapelizod Partnership
4 Drumfinn Park

Ballyfermot

Dublin 10

Tel: 01 6235612

Fax: 01 6230922

Email: info@childcareinfo.biz

Dublin South East

South East Local Childcare Resource Service

Rathmines Pembroke Community Partnership

11 Wynnefield Road

Rathmines

Dublin 6

Tel: 01 4965558

Fax: 01 4965590

Email: teresa@rpcp.ie

Dublin Central

Central Local Childcare Resource Service

Tolka Area Partnership

27/28 Annamoe Terrace

Cabra

Dublin 7

Tel: 01 8683806

Fax: 01 8686134

Email: bernie.hughes@tap.ie

Childminding Ireland

9 Bulford Business Campus

Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow

Ph: 01 2878466

info@childminding.ie

www.childminding.ie

Barnardos Garda Vetting Service

The Bowling Green

White Street, Cork

Ph: 021 4547060

vetting@barnardos.ie

www.barnardos.ie

Pre-School Officers

Dublin North

Teresa Farrell

The Cottage

2 Church Road

Swords

Co. Dublin

Ph: 01 8402835

Teresa.farrell3@hse.ie

Dublin North West

Maire Farrell

Community Services

Rathdown Road

Dublin 7

Ph: 01 8825164

Maire.farrell@nahb.ie

Dublin North Central

Carmel Murrin

Community Services

Rathdown Road

Dublin 7

Ph: 01 8825164

Carmel.murrin@nahb.ie

Dublin West

Michelle Corcoran

Cherry Orchard Hospital

Ballyfermot

Dublin 10

Ph: 01 6206300

michelle.corcoran@hse.ie

Dun Laoghaire

Catherine Fenton

Loughlinstown Health Centre

Loughlinstown Drive

Loughlinstown

Dublin 18

Ph: 01 2822122

catherine.fenton@hse.ie

Childminding - Getting Started

Dublin South

Deirdre Kelleher
The Maltings Business Park
54-55 Marrowbone Lane, Dublin 8
Ph: 01 454 4733
deirdre.kelleher1@hse.ie

Local Revenue Offices

<http://www.revenue.ie>

Fingal

Block D
Ashtown Gate
Navan Road
Dublin 15
Tel: 01-8277000

Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown

Lansdowne House
Lansdowne Road
Dublin 4
Tel: 01 632 9400

City Centre

9/15 Upper O'Connell Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01-865 5000

South City

85-93 Lower Mount Street
Dublin 2
Tel: 01-647 4000

North City

9/15 Upper O'Connell Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01-865 5000

South County

Plaza Complex
Belgard Road
Tallaght
Dublin 24
Tel: 01-647 0700

Resources

Childcare (Pre-School Services)

Regulations – regulations – available online from The Department of Children and Youth Affairs website at: http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/Child_Care_Pre-School_Services_Regs_2006.pdf

National Guidelines for Childminders

– available online from The Department of Children and Youth Affairs website at: http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/childdcare/guidelines_for_childminders.pdf

Department of Children and Youth Affairs

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