



Report on Survey of
Registered Members in 2012

Analysis & Report
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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 <i>Childminding Ireland – An Overview</i>	1
1.2 Annual Survey of Members.....	2
1.3 Report Outline.....	3
2. Profile of Respondents	4
2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Demographics.....	4
2.3 Childminding Characteristics	6
3. Childcare Practice	11
3.1 Introduction	11
3.2 Terms and Conditions.....	11
3.3 Reflection on Practice	15
4. Level of Access and Interaction with Available Supports	17
4.1 Introduction	17
4.2 Notification and Inspection.....	17
4.3 Experience with <i>Childminding Ireland</i>	18
4.4 Local Connections	20
Appendix 1: Survey of Members 2012	
Appendix 2: Letter to CMI Members	
Appendix 3 Breakdown of Childminding Fees by County	

Acknowledgements

Childminding Ireland would like to thank most sincerely all those Childminders who took the time to complete and return the questionnaire for this report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Childminding Ireland – An Overview

Childminding Ireland is a membership organisation and a Registered Charity. Founded in 1983 by a small group of Childminders, it has grown to become the national body for Childminders in Ireland with members from all 26 counties. The organisation's Mission Statement is as follows:

“Childminding Ireland, as the National Association, is committed to promoting the development of quality in family based care for children by providing a range of services for Childminders, promoting Síolta Quality Standards, developing training for the Childminding sector and promoting the development of local Childminding networks”.

In order to deliver on this Mission Statement, the organisation has four main objectives:

1. To promote high standards in family based care for children, where their developmental, emotional, educational and recreational needs will be met along with physical care.
2. To support and inform all Childminders and parents in the matter of family based care for children.
3. To maintain a code of standards for family based care for children.
4. To encourage the recognition of Childminding as a positive care setting for children.

Childminding Ireland has successfully lobbied for appropriate recognition and inclusion in a number of government policies and schemes. *Achievements* to date include – €15,000 Childminder Tax Relief Scheme, exemption to 'change of use' planning permission for Childminding services, access by all Childminders to Garda vetting, successfully lobbying for the establishment of the national Childminder Advisory Service, inclusion for Childminders in the Free Pre-school Year.

1.2 Annual Survey of Members

This is *Childminding Ireland's* eighth annual survey of Registered Members. It is the only annual snapshot of Childminding and the experiences of Childminders in Ireland.

The aim of the Survey is to:

- Identify and report on trends within the Childminding sector.
- Identify current issues facing Childminding in the delivery of their role
- Establish the type of services members of *Childminding Ireland* wish to be provided with.

A questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was posted to all Registered Members (n=712) of *Childminding Ireland* in November 2012. The response rate was 33% (n=232), similar to the 2011 survey (34%) but higher than 2012 (26%). Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, no individual feedback is given to the participants.

The sample selection consisted of Registered Members actively engaged in Childminding who are members of *Childminding Ireland*. Registered Membership of *Childminding Ireland* requires the following:

- Compliance with the Regulations for Pre-school Services 2006 i.e. notified to the HSE if caring for more than 3 non-related pre-school children
- Insured for Childminding
- Cleared by their GP for undertaking Childminding or Statutorily / Voluntarily Notified
- All household members free of conviction of any offence in relation to a child.

1.3 Report Outline

This report presents the findings from the 2012 Survey with a comparison of the results from previous years. The remaining sections are set out as follows:

- **Section 2:** Profile of Respondents
- **Section 3:** Childcare Practice
- **Section 4:** Interaction with Supports

2. Profile of Respondents

2.1 Introduction

This section of the report presents the main characteristics of the survey respondents including key demographic data such as age, nationality, geographic location and whether they have children of their own. In addition to this data is presented on the length of time the respondents have been Childminding and their level and type of training and qualifications.

2.2 Demographics

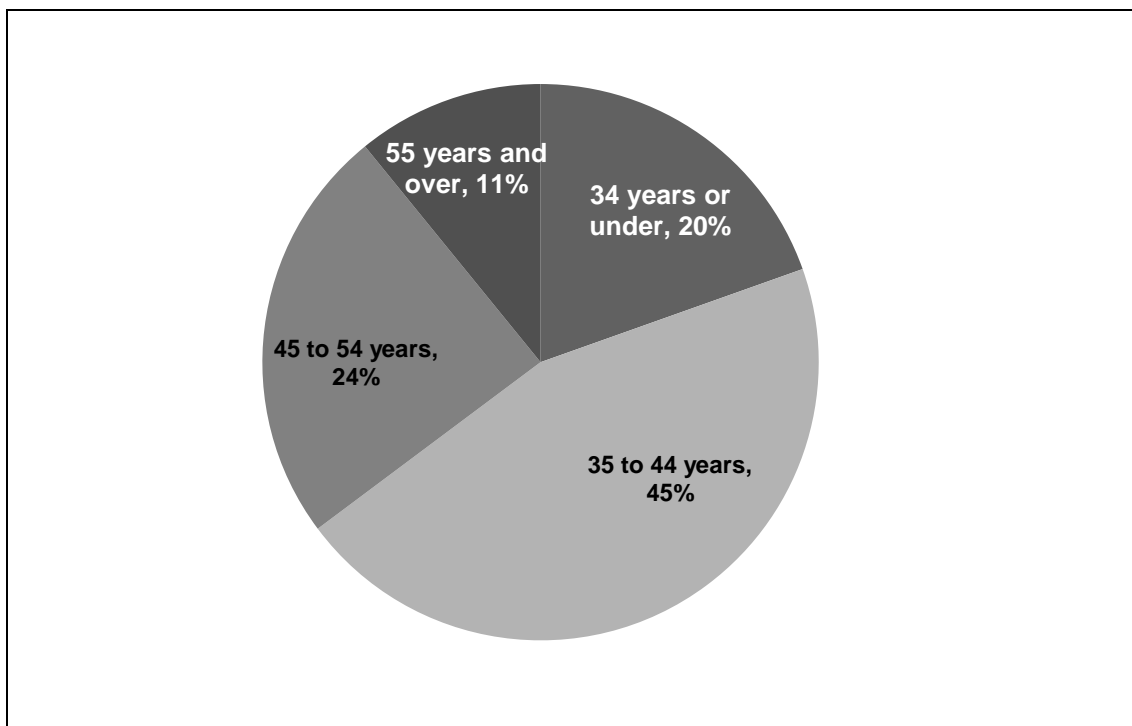
Age

Table 2.1 below shows the age breakdown of Childminders surveyed between 2008 and 2012. As can be seen, the age profile of Childminders responding to the *Childminding Ireland* survey has remained largely unchanged. The largest proportion of Childminders is in the age group '35 to 44 years' for each of the five years (45% for 2012). While Childminders aged 55 years and over remain in the minority group this has increased in the 2012 survey to 11%. The proportion of childminders under 34 years has fallen 2 percentage points to 20% (versus 22% in 2011). While this is not a huge decrease, the comparison with 2008 shows a larger overall decrease of 12 percentage points when this proportion of the sample was 32%. Figure 2.1 presents a pie chart of the age profile of the 2012 respondents.

Table 2.1 Age Profile of Childminders – 2008 to 2012

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
34 years and under	20%	22%	20%	25%	32%
35 to 44 years	45%	47%	48%	53%	48%
45 to 54 years	24%	23%	23%	16%	14%
Aged 55 years and over	11%	8%	9%	5%	6%

Figure 2.1 Age Profile 2012



Nationality

The majority of Childminders responding to the survey were Irish (82%) however; the remaining 18% of the respondents had a diverse range of nationalities. The remaining respondents were British / English; Polish; French; Slovak; German; Nigerian; American; Czech; Indian; Italian; Lithuanian; Portuguese; and South African.

Geographic Locations

Of the 232 responses received, 14 respondents did not state what county they were from. The remaining responses included Childminders from 24 counties with no responses from Leitrim or Longford.

Gender

In the 2012 Survey respondents were not asked for their gender. However, previous years note that the majority (99%) are female with one male response for each of the last three years.

Childcare Responsibilities

Almost 90% of the Childminders surveyed have their own children, the same proportion as reported in the 2011 Survey. While previous years asked respondents what ages their children were, this question was not asked in 2012.

2.3 Childminding Characteristics

Length of time Childminding

Similar to the 2011 Survey, 76% of respondents indicated they were Childminding for 10 years or less (78% in 2011). Respondents Childminding for over 10 years¹ or more accounted for 24% of the total (22% in 2011).

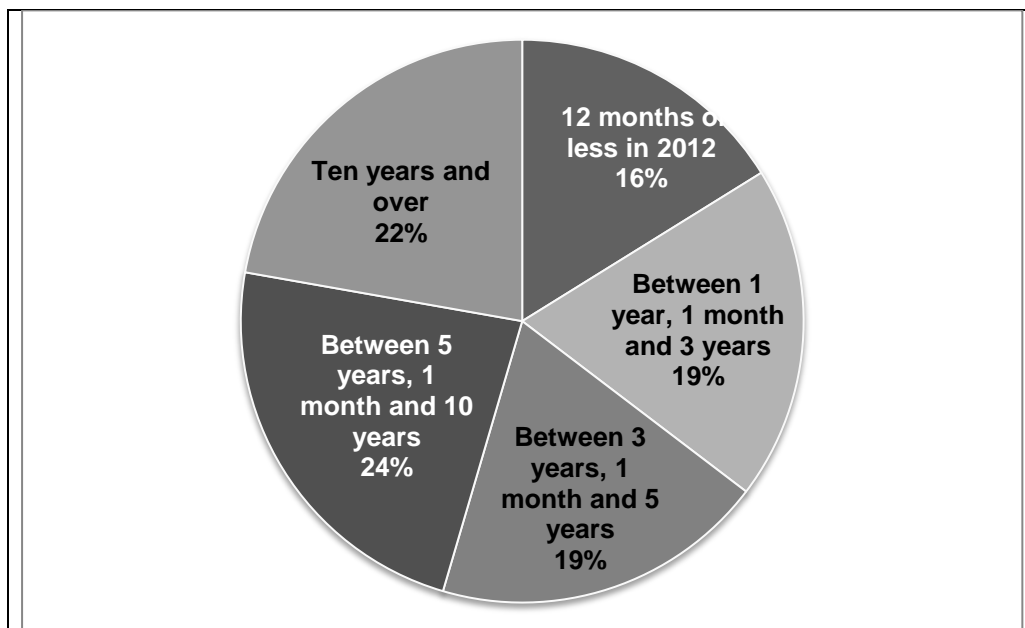
Figure 2.2 presents an overview of the length of time that respondents reported they were Childminding. There was a slightly higher proportion of Childminders reporting that they were Childminding for 12 months or less in 2012 (16%) compared to 2011 (12%).

The remaining respondents were Childminding for - between 1 year, 1 month and 3 years (19%); between 3 years, 1 month and 5 years (19%); between 5 years, 1 month and 10 years (23%) and ten years and over (22%).

The average length of time respondents were Childminding was just over 7 years. There was a wide variation across the range of time reported from 1 month to 40 years.

Figure 2.2 Length of Time Childminding

¹ That is Childminding for 10 years and 1 month or more.



Childcare Qualifications

Respondents were asked to indicate their levels of childcare training, both accredited and non-accredited, with the opportunity to tick more than one answer. Of those who responded 56% indicated that they had a FETAC qualification while 5% indicated that they had HETAC qualification. With regard to Special Needs, 22% indicated that they had accredited training in this area. One fifth of the survey respondents indicated that they had an 'Other' accredited training qualification which included qualifications in Montessori, BA in Social Care, BA in ECCE and in some instances equivalent degree qualifications from other countries.

With regard to non-accredited training, almost 60% of the respondents indicated that they had QAP qualification, a decrease on last year (2011; 70%). However, a higher percentage of respondents in 2012 reported having First Aid at 92% versus 86% last year. Overall, one-fifth (20%) of the respondents had QAP, First Aid and an 'Other' qualification. One-third (32%) indicated that they had an 'Other' non-accredited childcare qualification.

Only 14 respondents out of the 232 Childminders who returned the survey indicated that they had no formal training.

Finally, respondents were asked about the type of non-childcare qualifications they had. With almost 60% indicating that they had a non-childcare qualification the diversity outlined in the 2011 Survey Report continues in this year's Survey. While a number of respondents indicated that they have qualifications related to education (such as a H.Dip. in Education) others outlined that they had Business qualifications (B.Comm. etc.) or Arts degrees.

Type of Care Offered

In many instances, as illustrated in Table 2.2, Childminders offer care for a mixture of age cohorts. A small minority (16%) only mind one of the age cohorts.

Table 2.2 Combination of Age Cohorts Minded

	%
Babies, Preschool children and School-age	55%
Babies and Preschool children	21%
Preschool children and School-age children	8%
Babies only	3%
Pre-school only	9%
School-age only	4%

Overall, 93% of those surveyed said they offered care for pre-school children while 79% stated that they offered care for babies. Two-thirds (67%) of the respondents offered care for school age children.

Number of Children minded per Childminder

Table 2.3 provides a breakdown of the number of children that Childminders said they looked after. At the time of the survey, 58% of Childminders were minding 3 children or fewer - slightly higher than 2011 (53%). The average number of children being minded was 4.

Table 2.3 Number of children minded

Number of Children	%
1 Child	8
2 Children	21
3 Children	29
4 Children	14
5 Children	9
6 Children	11
7 Children or more	7
	100%*
* Rounding applies may not add to 100%	

In total the Childminders surveyed were minding a 857² children between them. Of this number, 12% were between '0 to 15 months', 39% of the children were aged '15 months and 3 years', with a further 23% aged '3 years to school age'. The remaining 26% were 'school age'. The proportion of school-aged children being minded by Childminders in 2012 is considerably lower than 2011 (45%) and may require further investigation.

Special Needs

Just over half of the respondents (51%) said that they offer care for a child or children with special needs. However, only 10 Childminders (5% of those who answered) stated that they currently provide care for a child with special needs. This was slightly lower than the 8% who reported minding children with special needs in 2011.

These 10 childminders care for a total of 13 children with special needs. Eight of them care for one child while the other two care for two and three children with special needs. The nature of special needs were: Autism; Down Syndrome; Epilepsy; Asthma; Cystic Fibrosis; ASD.

² There was a discrepancy between question 13 which asked how many children the respondent was minding (Total = 835) and question 14 (a-d) which asked respondents to state how many children they were minding in each age group (Total = 857). The latter total is used to describe the breakdown in the children's ages.

Vacancies

When asked whether they had any vacancies, 52% of the respondents stated that they had no vacancies which was slightly lower than in 2011 (56% reported no vacancies). A total of 206 vacancies were reported amongst the respondents. Of the 48% of respondents who reported vacancies, 45% had between one and three vacancies, which is broadly similar to the 2011 Survey. The remaining 3% had between four to seven vacancies.

Amongst those who had vacancies (n=111), there were 102 responses to the question regarding the length of time they had the vacancy³. The average amongst these respondents was just over seven months. However, the Median (i.e. below which half the sample falls) was four months. Other respondents gave non-quantifiable answers such as 'ages' or 'never been full' and thus were excluded from this analysis.

Finally, in relation to vacancies, respondents were asked about how they fill vacancies. Those surveyed gave multiple responses to this question with the most frequent response being 'Word of Mouth' (57% of all responses) followed by *Childminding Ireland Vacancy Service* and *Childminding Advisor / CCC* both receiving 13% of all responses. Local advertising and the Internet accounted for 6% and 4% of the total responses respectively.

³ These responses were re-coded in order to calculate the average length of time childminders had vacancies.

3. Childcare Practice

3.1 Introduction

This section of the report looks at the terms and conditions of Childminders work. It provides details on issues that are common to all, such as rates of pay, holiday pay and average hours worked. In addition to this the respondents were asked about whether they were Garda vetted. Finally, this section provides an analysis of the difficulties and challenges faced by Childminders in both the caring and professional elements of their Childminding practice.

3.2 Terms and Conditions

Contract

The majority of respondents, 82%, had a written contract or agreement with parents. This was a decrease on 2011 and 2010 when 85% and 89% of respondents respectively said they had a contract

Rates of Pay

A county-level breakdown of the fees charged by childminders is provided for in Appendix 3. Based on the Tables presented in the Appendix, the following summary is provided:

- The average full-time weekly rate per child (with a meal provided) varied from a low of €116 in Tipperary to €214 in Kildare. The overall national average was €152 (remaining similar to last year €151). The average hourly rate was approximately €4.50.
- The average hourly rate for part-time care⁴ was between €5.20 and €5.40. This was slightly higher than last year when the rate was €5. The highest and lowest hourly rates for part-time services was €10 and €4 respectively.
- The national average nightly rate, although in most instances this service was not offered, was almost €43 with a high of €75 (Dublin) and a low of €20 (Tipperary). Weekend services were also not

⁴ Afterschool is assumed to be 3 hours and pre-school is assumed to be 5 hours.

frequently offered but where they were the fees ranged from €5 per hour to €150 for the entire weekend. The full breakdown of fees charged where a meal is included is provided in Table A.3.1 & A.3.2 in Appendix 3.

Sibling and pre-school discount

The majority of Childminders responding to this survey, 81%, indicate that they give a sibling discount if they mind more than one child from the same family. This was higher than the 2011 survey where 53% indicated they offer a discount. A wide-range of discounts are applied by Childminders with the most popular (similar to 2011) being a 10% discount (accounting for approx. 29% of those who responded yes) followed by a further 16% who give a discount of between 15 and 30%, with another 9% saying they gave a 50% discount. The remaining 31% who indicated that they give a sibling discount gave a variety of monetary discounts such as €1 per hour or €5 per day or per week etc.

Just over one-third (35%) of the survey sample stated that applying a discount for a child attending pre-school or playgroup does not apply to the service they provide while an additional 33% indicated that they do not give such a discount. Only 28% (n=65) of the total survey sample stated that they do give a discount in such instances.

Tax

Respondents were asked were they registered for tax and of those that answered 79% indicated that they were. This is a slight decrease on 2011 when 81% indicated they were registered for tax. Almost two-thirds responded 'yes' when asked whether they avail of the Childminders Tax Relief of €15,000.

Average Hours per Week

There was a huge variation in the hours that Childminders worked from a low of 5 hours and a high of 60 hours per week. On average Childminders worked just over 41 hours per week. Table 3.2 provides a breakdown of the hours

worked by the survey respondents. With 54% of Childminders working 40 hours or more, this is a fall from that reported in 2011 and 2010 (57% and 63% respectively). A larger proportion of respondents were working for 39 hours or less (47%) in 2012 than in 2011 (42%).

Table 3.2 Hours Worked per Week

Hours Worked	% Respondents
20 hours or less	21%
21 to 29 hours	7%
31 to 39 hours	19%
40 to 49 hours	31%
50 hours and over	23%
Total	100%

Childminders were asked whether parents had reduced their hours. While 41% of those who responded said that their hours were reduced, this was a decrease on the proportion reported in 2011 (53%) and 2010 (45%).

Respondents, who indicated that their hours have been reduced, were asked by how many hours. Those that responded to this question, on average reported their hours being cut by just over 11 hours. Table 3.3 is a breakdown of the reported number of reduced hours were cut by.

Table 3.3 Reduction in Number of Hours

Number of hours	% Respondents
Five hours or less	24%
Between six and ten hours	40%
Between ten and fifteen hours	6%
Between sixteen and twenty hours	21%
Over twenty hours	9%
Total	100%

The main reasons that hours were cut was due to the recession with factors such as parent's working hours being cut, or their wages going down and they were relying more so on grandparents etc. In addition to this respondents noted issues such as parents taking up leave entitlements (including maternity leave) or the child transitioning to a new educational phase such as secondary school or pre-school.

Holiday & Sickness (Absenteeism)

In this year's survey, 30% of the respondents stated that they get paid for holidays (versus 34% in 2011). A higher proportion, 65%, responded that they get paid when parents / children take holidays separate to the Childminder's holidays (66% in 2011). There were 62 Childminders (18% of the entire sample) who stated that were paid both for their own holidays and the parents' / children's holidays.

With regard to charging when children do not attend, 66% said they charge the usual rate, a decrease on the 2011 figure (70%). A further 11% said that they charge a reduced rate (a slight increase from 8% in 2011). One-quarter of Childminders (24%) said that they do not charge (a slight increase from 22% in 2011).

Respondents were asked about the level of illness observed in children. Over half of the respondents (56%) said that children in their care were rarely sick (an increase from 46% in 2011). While only 16% responded that the children in their care were sick for less than one week in the year, 23% reported children being sick for '1 to 3 weeks per year'. A minority of 5% (the same as 2011) were sick for more than 3 weeks a year. It may be worth exploring in the future surveys whether this is connected to the child having special needs.

Garda Vetting

A similar proportion of Childminders in 2012 stated that they had Garda Vetting (76%), as those who responded to the 2011 survey (77%). Of those who did not have Garda clearance in 2012, 8% stated that they had applied.

Thus, 13% of those responding to both of these questions stated that they had neither Garda Clearance nor had they applied for it.

3.3 Reflection on Practice

Bringing Children Out and About

Respondents were asked how frequently they bring children out and about. The most frequent response to this question was 'Daily' (38%) followed by 24% indicating that they bring children out and about 'twice a week'. A further 23% of those who responded indicated that they bring children out occasionally. The remaining 14% do not provide outings in their service.

Those who responded 'occasionally' were asked for reasons for this and they indicated that issues relating to the ratio of adults to children, the weather, and homework needing to be completed or the age of the child all being a factor. Other reasons also given by those who said they 'never' bring the children out such as concerns around safety, difficulties bringing out younger children and toddlers and insurance related costs.

Challenges in relation to Professional Practice and Caring

Almost 80% of respondents replied to the question asking them about what they see as the most challenging part of their professional work. In previous years, this question had a list of categories as well as an 'Other' option. However, in 2012 respondents were not given a list of options and therefore the responses were recoded into the categories previously used as well as other common themes. Of those who responded, 12% indicated that they did not have any current professional challenges. In some instances individuals indicated more than one challenge, however the most frequently mentioned challenge related to Negotiating / Dealing with Parents (29%), followed by dealing with paperwork (accounts, child records etc.) by 18% of those who responded. Almost 7% noted challenges to do with the perception that they were not seen as 'professionals' with a further 3% noting issues to do with work-life balance. A third of those who respondent indicated that they had an 'other' challenge with these varying from practical day-to-day issues in the

minding of children, as well as the challenges which the recession present in terms of filling vacancies etc.

Again respondents were asked an open-ended question regarding the caring element of their job and what they perceive as the elements that present a difficulty for them. Three-quarters (75%) of the respondents answered this question. Of those who responded, 62% of the respondents indicated that they did not have any particular difficulties in relation to caring.

Drawing on the categories that were used in the 2011 survey, the most frequently raised issues were in relation to behaviour issues; providing planned activities for children; getting out and about with children; children's eating habits and patterns; children's sleeping habits and patterns.

There was a wide range of 'Other' issues raise (14%) with respondents mentioning issues such as, *the long hours involved in their work* and *balancing their Childminding with their care for their children*. Respondents also referred to issues relating to parents in relation to this question also.

4. Level of Access and Interaction with Available Supports

4.1 Introduction

The final area of results relates to Childminders interactions with supports such as the Pre-school Officer / Health Service Executive, those carrying out inspections and with *Childminding Ireland*. With regard to *Childminding Ireland* respondents were asked a wide range of questions relating to the various communication tools used such as online content and the newsletter as well as preferred methods of communications. Finally respondents were asked about their interaction with the local Childminding Advisory Officer and the City / County Childcare Committee.

4.2 Notification and Inspection

Notified to Pre-school Officer / Health Service Executive

There was a further decrease in the proportion of Childminders responding that they were Notified to Pre-school Officer / Health Service Executive with only 43% responding yes to this question, a decrease from 49% in the 2011 Survey and 51% in the 2010 Survey. Of those who indicated that they were Notified (n=97 and therefore 100%), 79% (n=74) said that they had been inspected.

Three out of ten (30%) respondents indicated that Notification did not apply to them.

Inspection

The majority⁵ of those who had been inspected found the inspection positive with only 4 Childminders indicating that they did not find it positive. Those who did not find the inspection positive felt that it was intrusive and too rigid.

⁵ N=66 – this refers to those who responded yes to Q 36, Q 37 and Q 38. A number of other 'yes' responses are recorded. However, for validity only those responses whereby the Childminder is notified, has been inspected and found the inspection positive are included. Some discrepancies exist where respondents indicated that they had not been inspected but ticked yes here. Either data entry issue or misunderstanding.

However, many respondents felt the inspection was reassuring, helpful, supportive and the inspectors provided lots of useful information.

Voluntarily Notified

The majority⁶ of Childminders responding to the Survey were Voluntarily Notified (80%; n=176). This was a small increase on the 2011 response (77%). Of those who responded that were not voluntarily notified (i.e. 20%), 12% indicated that they were not in the process of being Voluntarily Notified. A further 5% indicated that they were in the process of being Voluntarily Notified.

4.3 Experience with *Childminding Ireland*

Membership of Childminding Ireland

The vast majority of respondents, 97%, indicated that they would recommend membership of *Childminding Ireland* to another Childminder. When asked whether they would welcome a *Childminding Ireland* contact person in their area, the majority of people said they would (87%).

Respondents were asked to state the three reasons why they became members of *Childminding Ireland*. The two most frequently cited reasons related to the group insurance scheme offer provided by the organisation and the provision of up to date information on developments in the area of childcare etc. Respondents also provided reasons relating to their professionalism and the benefits of being a member in relation to this (e.g. they are seen as professional by being associated with *Childminding Ireland*; parents prefer to see them as professional etc.). They also indicated that *Childminding Ireland* provide support for them particularly if they have a problem as there is always someone at the end of the phone, as well the benefit of being able to advertise their services and fill vacancies.

⁶ Eight respondents stated that they were in the process of being Voluntarily Notified while another respondent who had not answered the initial question said they were also in the process of being voluntarily notified.

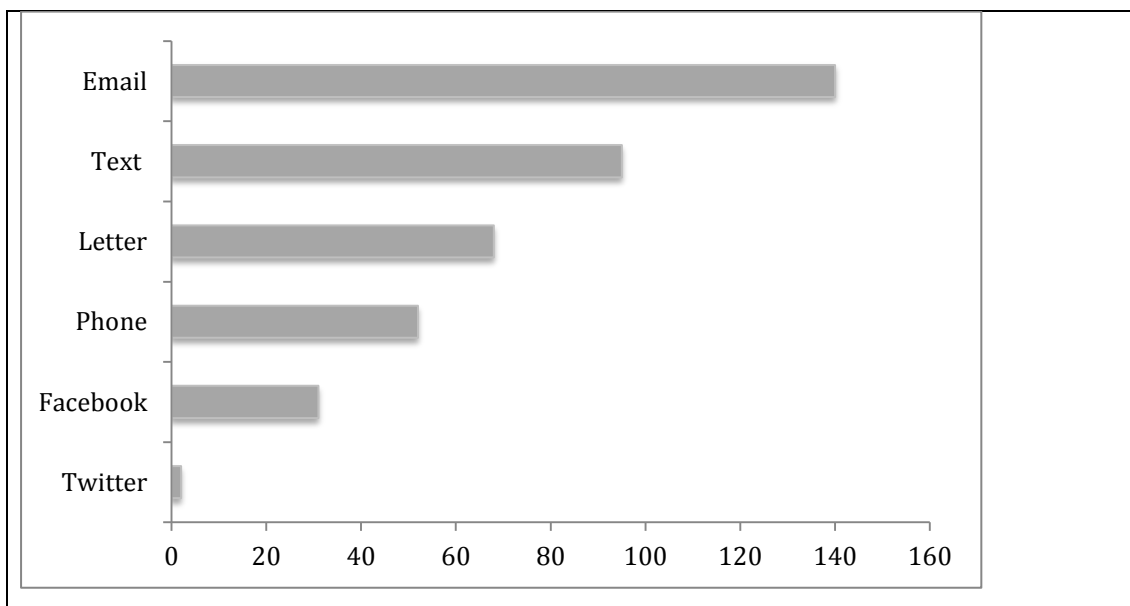
Interaction with Childminding Ireland

Respondents were asked about a number of different sources of information and contact that they receive from *Childminding Ireland*. With regard to the Newsletter, respondents were overwhelmingly positive when rating it. Just over half (51%) rated 'Excellent' while a further 43% rated it 'Very Good'. Only 6% (or 12 respondents) rated the newsletter fair while one respondent rated it 'Very poor to fair'.

When asked about *Childminding Ireland's* office information line in terms of quality of service, 60% indicated that the service was 'Excellent' while a further 35% rated 'Very Good'. Only 9 respondents indicated that this service was 'Fair'.

Childminding Ireland communicates with members in a number of ways. Respondents were asked about their preferred method of contact, and where encouraged to tick all that are appropriate. As can be seen in Figure 4.1, the most popular contact method was *email*, with 140 respondents (60% of the entire sample) indicating that they preferred this method, followed by *text* with 95 responses (or 41% of the entire sample). Both *phone* and *letter* are also popular means of contact with 52 and 68 responses respectively for each of these. Social Media tolls such as *Facebook* (31 responses) and in particular *Twitter* (2 responses) were unpopular means of communicating with *Childminding Ireland* for Childminders.

Figure 4.1 Preferred method of Contact from *Childminding Ireland*



Online Information

When asked about whether they had used the *Childminding Ireland* website, www.childminding.ie, three-quarters (74%) of those who responded said they had. Furthermore, of those who had used the website, 43% rated the information 'Excellent' with a further 45% indicating that it was 'Very Good'. The majority of respondents in the survey (n=127) said that they use the Internet to assist their Childminding business. Over half of the respondents use Facebook (54%; n=121), 64% of whom have liked *Childminding Ireland's* Facebook page. There were only 8 respondents who stated that they use Twitter (3 of whom follow *Childminding Ireland*).

4.4 Local Connections

Childminders were asked about local supports such as the City / County Childminders Committee and the Childminding Advisory Officer (CMAO) as well as Childminder's Network. The vast majority of Childminders who responded to the Survey indicated that they were in contact with their local City/County Childcare Committee / CMAO (88%). However, just under half (42%) were involved in a Childminder's Network.

