

REGISTRATION PROCESS FOR PROSPECTIVE CHILDMINDERS - GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

The Children (NI) Order 1995 states the main purposes of registration are as follows:

- To protect Children
- To provide reassurance to persons using independent services who are arranging for their children to be looked after by someone who is not a relation and may be a stranger
- To ensure that services meet acceptable standards
- To ensure that people wishing to provide services for the children do so within an agreed framework.

Definition of a childminder

Childminders are self employed day care providers who work in their own homes to provide care and play for other people's children in a family setting.

They may offer this service all year round for the full working day. Childminders are required to register when they look after one or more children aged under twelve for reward on domestic premises for two hours or more in a day.

Who is required to register?

Under the Children (NI) Order 1995 you are required to register with your local Trust if you wish to provide a service as a childminder, set up a day nursery, playgroup, out of school club, crèche or a holiday club. Approval is also required if you wish to be a Home Child Carer.

Under the current legislation you do not need to be and will not be registered if:

- You are minding for less than two hours in any one day
- Not minding for reward
- Wish to care only for children of relatives
- Minding in the child's own home. In such circumstances you may wish to consider an Approved Home Child Carer Assessment. (Information on this process is available on the Trusts website under an Approved Home Child Carer or can be obtained from the Early Years Team).

Do I have to pay to become registered?

Currently there is no charge for the registration or inspection process and vetting. If this changes in the future, you will be notified.

What do I have to do to become registered and how long will it take?

There are three parts to the registration process. These include training, vetting and assessment. The receipt of the application form is the start of the registration process and decisions about the application will normally be reached within three months. Delays in registration may occur if you are not in the position to proceed with all aspects of registration at the time of applying.

Part one - Training

If you have not already done so, you will need to contact your Trust Early Years Team and advise them that you are interested in becoming a registered childminder. All applicants will be invited to attend a Pre-Registration Briefing Session which will provide you with information on the role of the registered childminder, the registration process and a brief introduction to what is involved in running your business. The purpose of this event is to enable you to make an informed choice before proceeding to registration and attendance is compulsory. Following the information event, if you still wish to proceed you will be given an application form and all necessary vetting forms and will be able to proceed to the mandatory training.

Pre-Registration Training is mandatory for all applicants regardless of previous qualifications, in the following three areas

- (a) Safeguarding and Child Protection
- (b) First Aid
- (c) Health & Safety

The training provided will be introductory and will require additional training within the first year of registration. Some of the training may be provided on-line whilst other training will be face to face. Training will be held during the day or evening and may require you to travel between Trusts.

Full completion of the introductory training will be required before you can continue with your registration. Completion of the additional training will be required within the first year of registration to enable your registration to continue.

Part Two- Vetting

The Trust under Article 124(i) and (ii) of the Children (NI) Order 1995 has to satisfy itself that you and other people living or working on the premises are “fit” to care for or to be in the proximity of children under twelve years. Consequently, all members of the household over the age of ten years will be subject to the following checks for which you will be asked to give consent. NB All children under age 10 will be included in social services checks.

- Criminal Records under the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Legislation. **All convictions including spent convictions will be disclosed as will any pending convictions.** These are called Access NI Checks
- Social Services Records - to include Family and Childcare, Family and Child Consultation Service (Child Psychiatry), Mental Health and Community Addictions. This will cover all previous addresses.

Please note that under the Disqualification for Caring for Children Regulations (NI) 1996, there are a number of offences that preclude an individual from becoming registered. These include offences against children and/or threat of injury to another person. Only in exceptional circumstances will this disqualification be lifted by the Trust. This applies to all household members over the age of ten i.e. if a husband/partner has a conviction for a disqualifiable offence; this disqualifies his wife/partner from becoming a childminder.

In addition allegations of aggressive behaviour including domestic violence which have not resulted in criminal proceedings will be investigated by the Early Years Team and may result in registration being refused.

- Identity checks must be undertaken for all those subject to checks. Proof of identity will be required when completing an Access NI form.
- You will be asked to complete a medical report, countersigned by your GP. This will also be required for your partner and any cost incurred will be the responsibility of the applicant.
- You will be asked to provide the names of two referees, one of whom must be your current or most recent employer.
- A Health Visitor reference will be obtained if you have a child under the age of five.

Any issues arising from the checks or medical which requires investigation will be discussed in the first instance with the individual involved on a confidential basis. Consent for this information to be shared with the applicant however will be subsequently required. This process is applicable to all household members and regular visitors over the age of 18. Please ensure that all household members and regular visitors are aware of this process and the possible implications for them.

All issues including medical information which will have a bearing on the “fitness” of the applicant and/or household members under the Children (NI) Order 1995 will be brought before the Early Years Panel for a decision regarding registration.

Applicants residing in rented accommodation must satisfy themselves as to their landlords consent to mind on the premises.

Part Three

Social work visits will be undertaken during the registration process to assess the home for safety and to assess suitability and fitness of the applicant under the Children (NI) Order 1995. When undertaking this assessment the social worker will have regard to the following;

- Previous experience of working with children and training attended
- Ability to provide warm and consistent care
- Attitude to people of different religious and racial backgrounds
- Physical health
- Mental stability, integrity and flexibility.

Your home and garden will be assessed for its suitability and safety. You will be required to provide play materials and equipment suitable for the ages and number of children you propose to mind. Please see attached Health and Safety checklist which will help you to prepare for your assessment visits. Preparation for those visits can be made by reading the Childminding and Day Care for Children under age 12 – Minimum Standards (see page 6).

A registered childminder may mind a maximum of six children, including three under compulsory school age. This includes your own children. A final decision in this regard is based on the size of the premises and the applicants experience, knowledge and personal circumstances. If wishing to mind in excess of this number, up to a maximum of eight children, the childminder must appoint an “approved assistant”. A separate policy document is available by contacting the Trust. You must also consult with the Local Planning Department and seek their consent to mind more than six children (evidence of this consultation will be required). To be approved, the individual will be subject to the usual vetting checks including a medical, an assessment by the registering social worker and will be required to attend introductory training. You may wish to employ an assistant to assist with short-time limited tasks only without an increase in numbers. If so this person will also require approval through vetting and training but will not be assessed by a social worker

How do I apply?

You can contact your local Early Years Team who will provide you with an information pack **OR** you can apply on-line after you have attended the Pre-Registration Briefing Session. All the necessary forms are available to download and can be returned by post or on-line. It is important that all household members and regular visitors complete all relevant forms, not just the applicant.

Please note however that the Declaration of Health form must be counter signed by your GP and therefore cannot be returned on-line. Also in order to process your Access NI check, your ID must be verified at the Early Years team office. This will therefore require all those associated with the application ie applicant, partner, household members over 10 years, assistants and regular visitors to present at the office. Please see the Enhanced Disclosure Certificate Application form for Access NI which will tell you what ID documents are required.

Sharing your information

We will process any information we have about you in accordance with the law, and, in particular, the Data Protection Act 1998. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 you can request in writing any information we hold about you.

What happens next?

We will acknowledge your application, advise you of the arrangements for training and begin to carry out all the necessary checks. Once the checks have been complete, the application will be allocated and a social worker will contact you to arrange to visit you at your home to assess your ability to care for children as previously outlined.

It would be helpful if you have read the required safety requirements for your home and make any necessary changes as this will speed up the assessment process. The social worker will want to see all of the premises, not just the rooms you intend to use for childminding.

The social worker will also need to see any furniture, equipment and toys you plan to use to assure that they are safe and appropriate for the ages of children you intend to mind. You will be expected to provide the standard of care as outlined in the "Childminding and Day Care Standards for Children under age 12" - Minimum Standards, and it is therefore vital that you familiarise yourself with this document which can be downloaded from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety website at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk and the Health and Social Care Board Implementation Guidance which can be found at www.hscboard.hscni.net.

What happens following the assessment?

The completed assessment report is presented to an Early Years Panel or Social Work Manager and if approved, a Certificate of Registration will be issued. This Certificate is your proof of registration and outlines the conditions of your registration such as the number of children you may care for and the records you must keep. The certificate is a legal document and will remain valid until:

- Any of the conditions of your registration are changed, added to or removed either as a result of a request by you or because the trust decide to make changes
- The Trust cancels your registration
- You resign your registration
- You move house (the Trust must be advised of any move beforehand and your new home will need to be assessed)

Will I require insurance?

You will be required to hold public liability insurance upon registration and separate insurance may be required if you have an assistant. For those childminders involved in the transportation of minded children, "business cover" must be included in your car insurance policy. It is also important that the company who provides your usual Buildings and Contents Insurance is informed that you are a registered childminder. Insurance can be obtained through NICMA or other insurance providers.

Refusing Registration

If there are grounds for refusing registration, these will be discussed with you and put in writing to you. If you still wish to proceed with your application, then the matter will be brought before an Early Years Panel. The Panel may refuse your registration or may grant it, adding additional requirements to your Registration Certificate. Decisions made by Panel can be appealed and you will be guided through this process if the situation arises.

Withdrawing your application

During the process, you may change your mind about continuing your application to register. You must advise the Trust of this in order to stop the registration process.

What happens once I am registered?

Under the Children (NI) Order the Trust will have a duty to inspect you and your premises at least once a year to ensure that you are compliant with the requirements that will be outlined on your registration certificate and meeting the standards as required in the "Childminding and Day Care Standards for Children under age 12" - Minimum Standards.

Your ongoing suitability to provide care for children will be assessed and you will be encouraged to attend further training. Additional inspection visits may also take place at any time and any complaints or concerns passed to the Trust will be addressed with you. Your registering social worker will also be available to provide support and you must inform the Trust of any proposed changes to the household membership or structural changes. Contact details for the Trust Early Years teams are provided below.

NICMA - The Northern Ireland Childminding Association is a membership organisation and registered charity working to support and develop quality home-based childcare and learning for the benefit of children, families and the community. For childminders, NICMA provide training and quality assurance, information, insurance cover, advice and support and a vacancy advertising service.

Health and Safety Checklist for Childminders

This is a list of safety issues that will be addressed at the time of registration. If you proceed with your application, please use this list to address the issues in advance of the assessment visits.

Indoors	Yes	No
a) Nursery fireguard for open gas, coal or electric fires		
b) Low temperature surfaces on radiators/ guards		
c) Hearth hazard made safe		
d) Stair gate/s		
e) Safety film or glazing on all glass doors		
f) Safety film or glazing on all accessible windows		
g) Cords inaccessible on all blinds		
h) Pull Cord Safety		
i) No tripping hazards to include floor coverings		
j) Vertical balustrades with gaps of no more than 100mm		
k) All windows locked or restrictors in place		
l) All external doors locked with safe access to keys		
m) Cooker safety with use of back rings		
n) Freezer locked or inaccessible		
o) Locks on low cupboards		
p) Tumble dryer/washing machine off at mains		
q) Short kettle flex and other leads		

r)	Knives out of sight and reach		
s)	Cleaning materials kept out of reach and view of children		
t)	Alcohol kept out of reach and view of children		
u)	All medicines are inaccessible to children		
v)	Fresh drinking water is available at all times		
w)	Bunk beds out of use or ladder removed		
x)	Safe use of cot and positioned safely		
y)	All toys and equipment are safe for use by children		
z)	Discourage use of baby walkers		
aa)	Premises and equipment are clean and good hygiene practices are observed including for food preparation		
bb)	Regulation cabinet for firearms		
cc)	Carbon monoxide detector		

Fire Safety

	Yes	No
a) A fire risk assessment		
b) Smoke detectors on each level		
c) Fire blanket which conforms to BSEN Standards in the kitchen		
d) Appropriate location of key for fire escape window		
e) No smoking by anyone during the working day		
f) Awareness of fire safety		
g) No candles in use		
h) Safe storage of matches		

Outdoors

	Yes	No
a) Safely enclosed play area		
b) Child-proof gate latches		
c) Safe non-climbable fencing or walls a minimum of 1.2 m high		
d) Safe cover for water features, ponds, hot tubs, swimming pools and no access to streams (if applicable)		
e) Safe inaccessible storage of garden tools, equipment and chemicals		
f) Greenhouses fenced off or have safety glass		
g) Gas cylinders made inaccessible as per manufacturers guidelines		
h) Safety supervision and awareness of poisonous plants		
i) Safe and age appropriate use of large outdoor equipment including swings, climbing frames and trampolines (note: parental permission may be required).		
j) Garages and outdoor sheds made inaccessible		

Pets

	Yes	No
a) Safe supervision and hygiene practices for pets		

Farms (if appropriate)

	Yes	No
a) Designated outdoor play area to be secured		
b) Chemicals, pesticides and animal medicines to be stored safely		
c) Slurry tanks/sheep dipping areas to be securely fenced off		
d) Contact with farm animals only with parental permission and supervision		

Cars

	Yes	No
a) Full driving license if transporting children		
b) Children never left unattended in cars		
c) Rear seat belts fitted		
d) Appropriate safety seats		
e) Adequate insurance cover		
f) MOT certificate		

Environmental Health

	Yes	No
• You will be required to register with Environmental Health		

Please note this is not an exhaustive list and the registering social worker may identify potential risks/hazards that will need to be addressed prior to registration.