

Policies and Procedures

- Childminders should ensure that parents understand and agree with all their policies and procedures. Let parents know what you have in place and what your responsibilities are in relation to the welfare of their children. Ensure parents have copies of all your policies and that they understand them.

Contracts

- Childminders should have a written working agreement with parents, including conditions and payment etc. (available from the Childminders Advisory Officer in your local County Childcare Committee Office). All agreements should be signed by parents and childminders in relation to the care of their children. These should be reviewed annually.
- Contracts should be signed by parents and Childminders and should be reviewed regularly.

Equal Opportunities

- Childminders, as service providers, have a responsibility to ensure equal access to all children and families. They should have an open approach to facilitating children's culture, religion or disability.

For information and assistance on developing policies and procedures for Childminders contact:

Cavan County Childcare Committee Ltd
Railway Station, Belturbet, Co. Cavan
Tel: 049 9529882
admin@cavansccc.ie www.cavansccc.ie

Louth County Childcare Committee Ltd
Unit 14, Ardee Business Park, Hale Street
Ardee, Co. Louth
Tel: 041 8659912
info@louthchildcare.ie www.louthchildcare.ie

Meath County Childcare Committee Ltd
1 Newbridge, Athlumey Road, Navan,
Co. Meath
Tel: 046 9073010
info@mccc.ie www.mccc.ie

Monaghan County Childcare Committee Ltd
7 The Grange, Plantation Walk, Monaghan,
Co. Monaghan
Tel: 047 72896
monaghanccc@eircom.net www.monaghanchildcare.ie

Transforming Ireland

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CHILDREN FIRST FOR CHILDMINDERS

Children First

'Children First: The National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1999, aim to assist people in the identification and reporting of Child Abuse. They also outline the principals of best practice in child protection. The guidelines highlight how everyone in contact with children has a responsibility to put children's welfare first. It is therefore important that Childminders are alert to the possibility that children they are in contact with may be in need of help or protection, and that their families may also be in need of support.

What do Childminders need to know?

Childminders should be alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse and what to do if they have concerns about a child. Childminders should familiarise themselves with the types of indicators of abuse as outlined in Children First. Training and advice on this topic is available through the Health Services Executive, Children First Information and Advice Office.

For Children First Training contact:

Kathryn Morris,
HSE NE,
Enterprise Centre,
Trim Road,
Navan, Co. Meath.
Tel: 046 9097846

Deirdre Horan Martin,
Primary, Continuing and
Community Care,
HealthService Executive
Dublin/ NorthEast,
Local Healthcare Unit,
Rooskey, Monaghan Town,
Co. Monaghan.
Tel: 047 30475

What should Childminders do if they have concerns about a child?

The following steps should be considered if a Childminder is concerned that children may not be receiving the care and protection they need or that they are being harmed. They should always aim to discuss these concerns with the parents of the child unless doing so would put the child at further risk of harm. It is important to keep a written record of this conversation. Where the concerns remain for the safety/welfare of the child then the childminder should contact, the Health Services Executive Duty Social Worker **without delay**, either for informal advice i.e. discussing the situation without giving the name of the child or family, or if necessary and when advised by the social worker making a referral outlining all relevant details. She should contact the HSE Duty Social Worker. The Childminder should keep clear, accurate written records of any concerns that they might have about a child. These details are confidential and should only be shared on a need to know basis.

Contact Details for Duty Social Workers

(Duty hours: 9.30pm - 5.00pm)

Social Workers Office - Telephone Number

Cavan	Tel: 049 4377300
Monaghan	Tel: 047 30400
Meath	Tel: 046 9030611/612
Louth-Dundalk	Tel: 042 9332287
Louth-Drogheda	Tel: 041 9833163

If you have a child protection complaint out of hours, contact your local Garda station.

GUIDANCE ON SAFE PRACTICES IN CHILDMINDING

'Children First' highlights the need to have positive and safe practices when working with children. Good childminding practice should include the following:

Getting to know children

- Have discussions with parents and with children, when appropriate, about their needs.
- Fill out a 'working agreement' form (which is available from the Childminding Advisory Officer in your local County Childcare Committee) with parents which allows for discussion about how to meet the child's needs. For example, comforting the child, special dietary requirements, intimate care arrangements, medical considerations and any cultural or religious needs the child and family might have. Ensure parents sign up to all the arrangements agreed on the form.

Settling in procedures

- Agree ways of gradually introducing children to the new setting to avoid undue stress for them and for their parents.

Have an open door policy

- Parents should feel they may call at any time to look in on their children.

Childminders' approach to caring for children

- It is important that parents know that their child will be treated with kindness and respect and that the Childminder will be positive and attentive in their interactions with their child.
- It is important that Childminders are clear with parents about how they meet the emotional and physical needs of the children they work with. This will help eliminate any misunderstanding or misinterpretation of their actions.
- The Childminder should discuss where age appropriate, what sort of physical contact the child likes. It is important to respect the child's wishes in relation to physical contact.
- It is advisable to record any important information relevant to the children in your care and advise parents of same. Additionally, childminders should keep a written record of any accidents and incidents of any type and inform parents/carers of any accidents or incidents their child may have been involved in without delay.

Positive Behaviour Management

- Parents should be clear about how the Childminder manages children's behaviour. Inform parents that you will not use any form of physical or emotional punishment on any child/ren in your care. In discussion with parents, decide how you can both work towards positive methods of managing their child's behaviour.

Medical Conditions

- The Childminder should be informed by parents of a child's medical conditions. If necessary, information and confirmation from the child's doctor should be given to the childminder, particularly if symptoms include rashes, marks, bruising or continuing symptoms of illness. Childminders should have clear policies around illnesses and administering medicine. Medicine should only be administered with written consent from parents; refer to working agreement, (which is available from the Childminders Advisory Officer in your local County Childcare Committee).

Intimate Care

- Depending on the age and developmental stage of the child, Childminders should discuss and agree with parents how they will assist the child in relation to bathing, toileting and personal care.

Information for Parents

- Make available to parents **two written references** and the phone numbers of parents whose children you are currently minding or have minded in the past. (Ensure you have those parents permission first). This will provide parents with the opportunity to discuss what experiences other parents may have had with you. Where possible consider putting in writing your experiences to date, e.g. CV/ written outline. Garda Clearance – If you have previous Garda clearance from an organisation, make this available for parents. In the absence of Garda Clearance sign a declaration form for parents. (Sample forms available from your local County Childcare Committee)

Child's Contact with other People while at Childminders

- Childminders should inform parents about whom their children will be coming into contact with during the day. If another adult is looking after the children, even for short periods of time, **this should be with the parent's written consent.**