



CHOOSING A CHILDMINDER
A Guide for Parents/Guardians



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Introduction:

Laois County Childcare Committee, in association with the HSE seeks to promote quality childcare services in the county. Paramount to choosing a quality childcare setting parents should be kept informed of the choices available to them. Childminding is one option of childcare a parent might be interested in availing of for their children

Choosing a suitable childminder is not a decision to be made lightly. A safe and stimulating environment is vital for children so that parents can have confidence that their children are well cared for. This booklet is intended as a guide only to provide parents with information about childminding. Parents should select childcare that is appropriate to meet the needs of their children.

Overview

When you are choosing childcare:-

- Take time.
- Ask questions.
- Check it out.
- Communicate your needs

Childminders look after children in their own home. Voluntary notified or notified childminders register with the HSE Pre School Services. (See section on how many children a Childminder can care for)
.Childminders are self employed; they decide their own working hours. Most are willing to work early mornings, evenings and weekends as well as part time, perfect for school and preschool drop offs, collections and holidays. Hours should be discussed initially with the childminder.



Benefits of having a Childminder:

- Provides a Home from Home setting
- Your child(ren) will have the one carer
- Children of different ages can be cared for together
- Childminders can support families for years as children grow up
- Can offer flexible hours

Steps to Choosing a Childminder:

- Contact the Childminder Advisory Officer for a Childminder Vacancy list for County Laois.
- Arrange to meet with a few known childminders in your area.
- Prepare a list of questions and issues you want to bring up beforehand and make notes.
- Talk to friends, neighbours, other parents, the Childminder Advisory Officer.
- Ensure you check out two references from the childminder.



What to Look for in a Childminder:

- The childminder should be genuinely interested in caring for children, be of suitable character to do so and have the ability to communicate with children. (Refer to the National Guidelines for Childminders).
- Be aged 18 or over.
- Provide references that will attest to her/his good character and suitability as a childminder. (Refer to the National Guidelines for Childminders).
- Respect the confidentiality of the children and their families.
- A childminder who likes and relates well to children, who will be gentle and kind and keep your child safe.
- A childminder should have knowledge of first aid, child protection and be able to deal with emergencies.
- Enquire if the childminder has childcare experience/training.
- Check to see whether the childminder is voluntary notified /notified to the HSE (refer to p.10)
- Will the childminder be flexible?



Childminder's Home:

- Visit the home and meet the childminder there.
- Is the home caring and friendly, yet stimulating?
- Is it a home away from home?
- Is it cosy and warm?
- Are the premises safe?
- Is there enough space for your child to be cared for and to play freely?
- Are there a variety of age appropriate toys to play with?
- Look for crayons, colouring books, play kitchens, jigsaws etc or other age appropriate activities for your child(ren).
- Make sure there are child safety locks on windows and doors, guards on fires and stairs and smoke alarms. There should be no trailing flexes and low level glass should be protected.
- Are the kitchen, toilets and other rooms clean?
- Is there a first aid box, and fire fighting equipment in the home?
- Outdoors: Is it safe? Check for hazards.
- Are there any pets?



Questions to be asked:

- How many children will the childminder be caring for?
- Ages of the children in care.
- Will the childminder have insurance cover?
- How will the children be disciplined?
- The type of food offered?
- Toilet Training?
- Rest/Sleeping facility?
- Play provision?
- Outings?
- Plan of activities for the day, including outdoor play?
- Check the hours childcare will be provided (Hourly/Daily/Weekly, the cost and flexibility on times)
- Childminders car safety seat/belt?
- Presence of other people in the home?
- Emergency arrangements?
- Does the childminder have written policies and procedures for their childminding service on:
 1. Confidentiality
 2. Health and Safety Policies including a safety statement
 3. Fire Safety Policy
 4. Positive Discipline Policy
 5. Partnership with Parents
 6. Equal Opportunities (refer to the National Guidelines for Childminders).



Childminder Information Record:

The Childminder Must Have:

1. The Child's name and address
2. The Child's date of birth
3. Details of parents place of work
4. Telephone Numbers – home and work numbers
5. The name and telephone number of the person to be contacted in an emergency
6. The name, address and telephone number of the child's doctor
7. Necessary medical or dietary information
8. Record of child's immunisation
9. Signed agreement for medication to be given
10. The childminder should give you a form, which will cover all these matters.



Introduce Your Child:

- Introduce your child with short visits so that your child gets used to saying goodbye and knowing that you will return. This may be enhanced by leaving a familiar object with the child. Upon return, the parent takes the object back. This helps the child associate the object with the return of the absent parent.
- Make sure your child has a favourite toy or comforter as a link with home.
- Ensure the childminder understands the child's special words and routines.
- Talk things over with the childminder about how you want your child cared for.
- If possible, leave time to exchange information each day about how your child is getting on.
- Phone during the day or turn up unexpectedly occasionally if you need to reassure yourself that your child is happy.
- If you are concerned about certain issues, talk to your childminder.



General Information:

Written Contracts

Written contracts are recommended between parents and childminders. Include times, payments, holidays, illness, food, outings.

Parent/Childminder Relationship

As a parent, it is important to recognise that the childminder you have chosen is providing a professional service. The childminder is a very important part of your and your child's life and therefore mutual respect and courtesy should be paramount at all times.

Medicine Administration

It is recommended that written consent be given by parents to the childminder for all medicine administration.



How Many Children can a Childminder Care For?

A childminder can care for three pre school children or less in their own home and are exempt from the Child Care Regulations 2006 and Child Care Amendment Regulations. Of these three pre school children, no more than two children should be under fifteen months. These childminders can avail of the voluntary notification service provided by the Childminder Advisory Officer in Pre School Services (057 93 70630).

A Childminder can look after more than three pre school children up the maximum of five pre school children, no more than two children should be under fifteen months, and are regulated by the Child Care Regulations 2006 and Child Care Amendment Regulations. For enquiries on Child Care Regulations 2006 and Child Care Amendment Regulations, please contact Pre School Services on 057 93 70631.

Collecting Time

Often collecting time can cause difficulty. In order to get attention from the parent, the child may display signs of unwanted behaviour. This can be common behaviour for a child who is just glad to see the parent and wants some attention. Talk about this with your childminder so that it does not become a problem and the two adults do not get played off against each other.



Conclusion:

It is anticipated that the information in this booklet can help to minimise the anxieties experienced by parents sourcing suitable childcare. As this information is a guide only, parents are the experts when it comes to their own child(ren) and trust in their own judgement to make decisions that are appropriate to meet their needs.



For further information contact:

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