

Barnsley Early Years Education Childminding Network



What is a Childminding Network?

A Childminding Network is a formal group of *registered* Childminders who are recruited, assessed, monitored and supported by a Network Coordinator. Network Childminders are committed to providing a high quality childcare/education service through ongoing training and self-investment.

Network Childminders work together as a team led by a Network coordinator, supporting each other through Network support meetings and ongoing training and workshops.

Network Childminders work according to the National Childminding Association's Quality Childminding Charter and are assessed to these standards and then monitored on a six to eight week basis. On approval to a Childminding Network Childminders are supported, kept up to date in training and kept aware of all developments and Childminding issues.

The Network Coordinator can then assure parents and employees of local family friendly businesses that high standards are in place and can help them in their search for a suitable childminder for their child/children. The network coordinator can also offer informed and independent advice and support to both Childminders and parents and also be a vital link between both those and other Childcare related organisations within the local community.

A Childminding Network can take many different forms according to the needs of the local community, offering out of school care, pre-school care and education and sponsored Childminding or indeed all three together, as well as being able to provide sickness and emergency and holiday cover by a childminder who maintains the same Quality Standards.

A childminding Network once established can apply to become a 'Children Come First' Network by having a NCMA assessor assess the Network. At the same time or as a later step the Network can be assessed by an Ofsted assessor, for the Network to become accredited in order to provide funded early years education. This later step needs a minimum of two accredited Childminders. Those on the network who are accredited can access the Childcare education grants available for three and year olds.

Barnsley Childminding Network is Approved and Accredited and now has many childminders offering Funded Early Years Education in the home.

Accredited Childminder Network

An Accredited Childminder is able to offer funded early education places to the 3 and 4-year-old children in their care.

The benefits to Childminders are that they will be considered as part of the choice when parents are seeking nursery education for their children, maintaining income and offering continuity.

The benefits to parents are similar, they can access a funded place, which may make their childcare costs cheaper, and they are able to go to work happy in the knowledge that their child is still content and settled with the childminder they may have been with since birth. It may be that their child is on a waiting list, which means they cannot access a nursery place until they are 4, or they may live in an area where nursery provision is not easily accessible. Some parents may prefer a smaller setting for their child at the age of 3.

The benefits to the child are equally valuable and again not unrelated. A happy, content and settled child will learn more from play and experiences offered than one who does not feel comfortable in their surroundings. Whilst change and challenge are both learning opportunities, some children need the security of familiarity to gain confidence in their achievements before being introduced to new experiences.

Other benefits and reasons for being part of the Network include, an enhanced professional image, specialised training, a recognised standard of quality beyond that of OFSTED, support, advice, access to group support, access to toys and resources free of charge and vacancy, sickness and holiday cover co-ordination.



Why do we need a Childminding Network?

- To ensure Childminders are recognised for their skills and given the opportunity to build on them.
- To offer Childminders further training, ensuring skills are kept up to date and individual training needs are assessed, recognised and training plans put together.
- To publicise Childminding within the community as a professional, high quality childcare option.
- To offer support to Childminders and Parents of childminded Children.
- To ensure high standards in line with the NCMA Quality Charter.
- To assist parents with finding a Childminder suited to the needs of the child/children and their parents.
- To provide by means of the Network Coordinator a vital link between Childminders, Parents & community partnerships.

Benefits for Childminders joining their Network

There are so many reasons why Childminders can benefit from becoming a Network Childminder.

The list below is just a few of the general benefits, as a Network Childminder additional benefits may also be available through your Early Years Partnerships and local community.

General benefits include:

- Providing Information, Advice, Support and Training.
- Filling vacancies quickly.
- Publicising Childminding as a professional, high quality childcare option.
- Being identified as part of a Network run to exceptionally high standards.
- To ensure high standards in line with the NCMA Quality Charter.
- Being provided with a coordinator to work with you and support you throughout.

- Access to ongoing training and opportunities through your Co-ordinator.
- Allows companies who assist in finding childcare for staff have access to Network Childminders.
- Access Under One Roof resources
- Having a Childminding representative that works on your behalf in the community

Benefits for parents choosing a Network Childminder

First of all lets think about why Parents choose Childminding as their childcare option:

- Childminders offer childcare in a comfortable safe home setting
- Childminders are often more flexible enabling them to offer evening and/or weekend cover or working with parents who have difficult shift patterns.
- Childminders can usually offer placements for siblings enabling families to be cared for together.
- Parents are able to choose a childminder in their local community or near parents place of work.
- The low ratio of children to childminder allows more opportunity for developmental care and education
- Children often stay with the same childminder from babyhood and throughout their school years

Additional Benefits of choosing a Network Childminder

- Network Childminders are assessed and monitored every 8 weeks to ensure the high quality standards are maintained and the Childminders themselves have continuous support
- Network Childminders commit to continued training throughout their Childminding Career's
- Network Childminders that are accredited can offer parents the option of early years education grants
- Accredited Network Childminders are able to offer educational placements working under the early learning goals/desirable learning outcomes
- Network Childminders work to the NCMA Quality Childminding Charter

- Network Childminders particularly Accredited will share written information to parents on the events of the day
- Network Childminders are offered training for special educational needs enabling them to care for children with special educational needs

The Role Of A Network Co-ordinator

At the heart of a childminding network is a network coordinator who brings together childminders, parents and their children and local childcare related organisations. It is the coordinators job to recruit and assess registered childminders to the criteria set by the quality charter.

The coordinator then offers support and ongoing training opportunities to ensure that Childminders skills are kept up to date and standards are adhered to. In areas where there is already a good supply of vacant childminding places, the coordinator works with childminders to encourage them to join the network and fill their vacancies. The coordinator visits network childminders regularly to monitor the quality of care according to the exacting standards set by the NCMA quality charter.

The role of the coordinator can vary according to the needs of the local situation. As a guide the role of the network coordinator can be to: Recruit, assess and train childminders Interview childminders and parents to match placements Advise parents and childminders on contract arrangements Organise continuing training for Childminders Organise support meetings for Childminders Monitor the quality of childcare through regular visits Assist parents in finding holiday and emergency/sickness cover Mediate between parent and childminder in the event of a dispute Co-ordinate vacancies Organise and administer toy library and equipment loan scheme. Liaise with the Local Authority Registration and Inspection Department and local voluntary organisations. Liaise with and offer support to local childminding groups.

Recruitment And Assessment Procedures

Before a Childminder can be recruited to a Network, the Network Co-ordinator must assess his or her suitability.

Over several home visits a report form will be filled out, including name, address, details of minded children, members of household, pets and time will be spent generally getting to know each other. The Co-ordinator will assess the Childminders practice against the NCMA Quality Childminding Charter, recording evidence in the report, on each section. Network Childminders must work to the standards set out in the Charter. You should have a copy of the Charter if not then ask your coordinator.

Network Childminders who are accredited to make educational provision must reach additional standards indicated at the end of the NCMA Quality Childminding Charter. When a Network is first established and Childminders

are newly recruited, there may only be a few or even no Childminders who have yet developed their practice to the additional standards. But NCMA "Children Come First" approval may be given to a Network, which has no, accredited Childminders. However with training and support it is expected that some Childminders will be able to meet the additional requirements for Accreditation.

When there are two or more accredited Childminders NCMA will be informed and the information passed to OFSTED who will inspect the Network and maybe you. Membership to NCMA is highly recommended - enabling Childminders to keep in touch with their professional Organisation and keep up to date with new information and ideas. If you are a member you will be asked to show your membership card or number, please ask for a membership form if you wish to join and benefit from the NCMA membership.

Preparing For Assessment

Before you can join a network, your coordinator will need to know all about the childminding service you offer. This will involve several visits from your coordinator usually three, one of which with your minded children present and another when you are free to discuss aspects of your childminding practice.

Your coordinator will assess how your practice matches the NCMA Quality Childminding Charter. So to prepare read the childminding charter and think about whether your usual childminding practice meets the standards described. Would you need any further training to be able to reach the standard? Would you feel comfortable, confident and happy to sign an agreement committing yourself to the standards set out?

Once you are part of the network your coordinator will visit you regularly to ensure those standards are kept, the network itself will be visited by a NCMA assessor who may wish to visit a few of the childminders on the network. Ask yourself if you are prepared have regular visits by your coordinator or possibly a NCMA assessor.

For your first assessment visits it will help and save time if you have the following documents ready:

- Your current registration certificate from you local authority
- The latest report of inspection by the local authority
- Your NCMA membership documentation
- Your current liability insurance certificate (if not NCMA insurance details of the cover provider)
- Your car and insurance certificate (if relevant)

- Records of attendance at training and any qualification certificates you hold relevant to working with children & families
- Information you keep about the children and any records you keep of children's progress
- Your accident book and record of injuries children sustain before they come to you
- Examples of a week's menus for the meals and snacks you provide for the children
- Attendance records, your financial records and contracts with parents (You do not have to show the coordinator all the details a blank page or form just to show you keep them in a business like way)
- Your written policies on children's behaviour and on equal opportunities/anti-discrimination
- Also be prepared to show your coordinator:
 - Toys, equipment, materials and other resources you have to support children's play and learning
 - Aspects of your Childminding environment, which promote positive images of people who are sometimes discriminated against.
 - All the safe and healthy aspects of your childminding environment (according to safe and healthy checklist which you will receive from your coordinator)

Your coordinator will also want information about:

- The children you currently care for (names and dates of birth)
- The other members of your household (names and if under 18 dates of birth)
- Your childminding assistant or jointly registered childminder (if you have one)
- Your emergency/backup plan in case of illness or emergency
- Any animals you keep which have contact with children
- If members of the household smoke, action taken to ensure children are protected from this

- Opportunities you provide for the minded children to join in activities with groups of other children e.g. childminding group drop-ins, toddler groups etc.

Don't forget to write down any questions you may have so you can discuss them with your co-ordinator, also keep notes as you think of practices you do which match the NCMA Quality Childminding Charter.

If you would like more information about becoming a Network Childminder please contact Carol Banyard (Childminding Network Co-ordinator) at Barnsley Choices on 01226 775977.