

Welcome

This newsletter is sent to you by the National Childminding Association (NCMA), a charity and professional association. We believe every child should reach their full potential. Since 1977 we have worked with registered childminders and nannies, as well as other individuals and organisations such as local and national government, to ensure families in every community in England and Wales have access to high-quality, home-based childcare, play, learning and family support. This newsletter is supported by funding from the DCSF Children, Young People and Families Grant Programme.

Children's Stars

Nominations for the 4Children Children's Star Awards 2010 are now open. 4Children is looking for exceptional childcarers in a number of categories, including:

- Childminder of the Year
- Newcomer of the Year
- Early Years Practitioner of the Year
- Award for Supporting Parents and Families
- Childcare Team of the Year (open to teams of two or more, for example two childminders working together or a childminding network).

The judges will be looking for childcarers, or groups of childcarers, who've made a real difference to the lives of children and families they care for. The deadline for nominations is 23 April 2010 and finalists will be invited to attend the awards ceremony in London on Wednesday, 23 June. To download a nomination form, and to read more about the awards, visit www.4children.org.uk.

Inspections show improvements

NCMA is encouraged to see that the number of registered childminders achieving and exceeding inspection standards is improving, with 97 per cent making the grade.

The improvement in results can be seen in Ofsted's published data on childcare inspection outcomes, for the period from end of September to end of December 2009. Read more [here](#).

Funding for childminders to work with disabled children

The government is to provide £12.5 million to fund the national roll out of the Disabled Children's Access to Childcare Programme (DCATCH), following ten successful pilots across England. The 142 local authorities which were not part of the pilot will receive at least £59,000 to spend on a range of options.

The programme will help parents of disabled children, who may be cautious about using childcare, benefit from expert advice and support when choosing services for their child. Local authorities are to recruit parents of disabled children to be "parent champions", drawing on their experiences of using childcare to help other parents in similar situations. Read more [here](#).

Training research

NCMA has recently appointed research organisation GfK NOP to undertake a study into training for childminders.

This work will have two parts. The first part will comprise interviews with staff in 22 local authorities, exploring their plans for providing and funding qualification-related training to childminders in their area. The second part will involve focus groups and telephone interviews with childminders, looking at their views on training.

GfK NOP is currently contacting childminders in selected areas and staff across local authorities to invite them to participate in this research. If you have any queries relating to the project, please contact Rebecca Loader, Research and Policy Officer at NCMA on 020 8290 2539 or email rebecca.loader@ncma.org.uk.

Affordable childcare difficult

Following the launch of the Daycare Trust's annual childcare costs survey, NCMA has called for sustained support to help parents meet the cost of quality childcare.

Read the full response to the survey [here](#).

Firm Foundations Campaign

NCMA is supporting a campaign by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) to promote the need for investment and quality in early childhood education and childcare services.

The Firm Foundations Campaign is about demonstrating how strongly both the early years sector and families feel about investment in high-quality early years services. NCB is looking to individuals and organisations to support the campaign and to take action. Find out more about the campaign and register your support at

www.firmfoundationscampaign.org.uk.

Inclusion work in Coventry

Coventry's Community Childminding Inclusion Network (CCIN) was developed in 2008 in response to a need for short-term, short-notice childcare for families in the city.

The Childminding Support Team, managed by NCMA, initially worked on a pilot scheme funded by Coventry Domestic Violence and Abuse Partnership. Childminders provided childcare to parents who had to attend court appearances, police interviews and solicitors' appointments.

The pilot scheme was successful and identified a need to offer not only short-term, short-notice care for families affected by domestic violence, but also for families referred by various Social Care agencies. Childminders from all areas were given the opportunity to join the network to ensure the service could be offered across the city.

Childminders registering on the network complete a training package devised in conjunction with the Childminding Support and Social Care teams. When the need for a childcare placement is identified, the Childminding Support Team will contact a suitable childminder. A member of the team visits the childminder prior to placement to confirm everything is in order and will accompany the parent and child on a settling-in visit. During the placement a member of the Early Years team visits the childminder to carry out a review.

A number of different agencies are currently using the services of the network, including the Police, Domestic Advice Officers, Domestic Violence Support Services, Relate, Coventry Autism Support Service and Community Resource Officers. Childminders are involved in a huge variety of work, such as providing care for children of parents who are attending medical appointments and children with complex medical needs.

One childminder involved in the scheme says, "I have found being part of the network very rewarding. I feel as if I'm giving just that little bit more to families who need it. Working with children with complex needs is a privilege, and I've learnt so many new skills. It can be hard work at times but it's well worth it."

Termly support groups are being established between the childminders involved in the network, Social Care and the Early Years team to monitor progress and share good practice. These groups will also give childminders an opportunity to identify their training needs.

Sandra Hobley, NCMA project manager, says "The CCIN project has been very successful and to ensure it remains ongoing, we are working hard to identify appropriate funding streams. Over the next few months we

are working towards the network achieving CCF approval and later, accreditation.”

NCMA is the National Childminding Association of England and Wales. NCMA is a membership organisation and national charity which promotes quality home-based childcare for the benefit of children, families and communities. Charity Number 295981.

For more information about NCMA and its work, visit www.ncma.org.uk or call 0845 880 0044.

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