



# Make Chatter Matter



How registered childminding  
supports children's speech,  
language and communication  
development

A report to mark  
National Childminding Week 2005



Gill (centre) meets childminders in Wythenshaw

In the 12 years I have been Chief Executive of NCMA, I have never ceased to be amazed by the continued professionalism and commitment of registered childminders. One area of their work with children which has always interested me is that of communication and language. I am particularly delighted that this report highlights how uniquely placed registered childminders are to support young children in an inclusive way with speech, language and communication development. Ruth, Jackie, Linda, Margaret and Robert's stories illustrate this so well.

Sadly though, the report also highlights that many registered childminders are often left to their own devices to identify the information, resources and training they need to ensure they provide quality childcare and early learning opportunities to all the children in their care, including those with speech, language and communication impairments.

This, in NCMA's view, is a missed opportunity. A workforce of 72,500 committed individuals at the frontline of delivering children's services should be supported in how they access information, training and support to care for children with specific needs, be these emotional, physical or social. NCMA is working with some local authorities to integrate registered childminding into the services they offer – the community childminding network that Ruth belongs to in Manchester is just one example. Alongside childcare for disabled children, Ruth's Children Come First network provides community childminding services to vulnerable children.

Integration like this should be the norm. In practice it is still rare and too many professionals working with children – in education, social and health services – view registered childminders as little more than regulated babysitters. This is despite childminders' own investment in their training and development; Ofsted (or in Wales CSIW) regulation; NCMA's development of Children Come First childminding networks; and increasing investment in childminding by government.

This is partly why NCMA chose to highlight the role registered childminders have in "Making Chatter Matter" during National Childminding Week 2005, to

show more people how registered childminding can give children a great start in life. Because of the strong relationships they develop with each child in their care and his or her parents, registered childminders are well placed to provide families with advice and support if they have to deal with challenges such as caring for a child with a speech, language or communication impairment.

It is vitally important that this unique contribution is brought to the forefront. Local government will, by 2008, be charged with new and important duties to secure the appropriate provision of childcare for all children in their communities. Children's Trusts will soon be commissioning services to deliver this new agenda. So our message is: please look at the resource that already exists and build on it – a talented and dedicated childminding workforce, ready to rise to the challenge.

We are delighted to be working with I CAN on this important project. They have recognised the major influence early years workers, including registered childminders, can have on speech, language and communication development and we congratulate them on "I CAN Talk!", their training resource which enables early years workers to identify and support children with additional speech, language or communication needs.

I CAN has recognised the important contribution registered childminders make. I hope, by reading this report, you will better understand how childminding can contribute to the care of all children. Please support NCMA in ensuring registered childminders are integrated into the children's workforce – and their potential fully recognised for the future.

Gill Haynes OBE  
Chief Executive

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**A**cross the UK, the lives of over 1 million children and young adults are affected by speech, language and communication impairments<sup>1</sup>. Children with these additional needs have to be supported to develop speech, language and communication skills that other children learn naturally. They also need to be supported so their impairments are not a barrier to learning.

The importance of children receiving this help as early as possible has been reinforced by a wide variety of research<sup>2</sup>. Last year the Government acknowledged the importance of early intervention in its National Service Framework for Children, the expansion of the Early Support Programme for families with disabled children aged 3 or under<sup>3</sup> and, most recently, in its Ten Year Strategy for Childcare<sup>4</sup>.

With childminders "Make Chatter Matter" the theme for this year's National Childminding Week, the National Childminding Association has surveyed<sup>5</sup> 200 of its childminder members to find out how many of them are caring for children with specific needs including speech, language and communication needs

(as notified by the child's parent) and what – if any – specialist training and support they have received to care for these children. This report includes the main findings of this survey, highlights the experience of five registered childminders caring for children with speech, language and communication impairments and recommends how government and others can utilise the skills and experience of registered childminders.

**"All children have a right to the best possible start in life. Where they have special needs and disabilities it is particularly important that these are identified as early as possible and that the right structures are put in place to support them."**

**Education Minister Cathy Ashton – July 2004**

## Message from I CAN

"I CAN is working with a range of organisations, groups and the Government to ensure that the needs of children who have speech, language and communication difficulties are recognised, understood and met. We believe that early identification and effective support in both home and pre-school settings is crucial to help children overcome or learn to manage their difficulties. Registered childminders have a major role to play both in supporting children with speech and language difficulties on a daily basis and promoting all children's communication development. We are therefore delighted that NCMA is highlighting this important issue."



**Alexandra Hall**

**I CAN Director of Policy and Practice**

<sup>1</sup> Estimate from I CAN

<sup>2</sup> The I CAN Early Years Programme Report (April 2004). Executive summary available at [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

<sup>3</sup> The Early Support programme brings together statutory and voluntary services, with organisations as diverse as the RNID, the National Autistic Society and Mencap working together to develop materials to help families cope with the pressure of having a very young disabled child.

<sup>4</sup> Choice for Parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare (DfES Dec 2004) – Appendix A

<sup>5</sup> A survey is sent to all of NCMA's childminder members as part of their membership renewal information. On average each month around 100 completed forms are returned. The 200 returned in April and May were analysed for the purposes of this survey.

# Registered childminding – the background

There are over 360,000<sup>6</sup> registered childminder-provided childcare places in England and Wales. With over 72,500 registered childminders caring for, on average, five children at any one time, the support they can give to any child developing their speech, language and communication skills cannot be under-estimated. Like other registered childcare workers in nurseries and pre-school playgroups, registered childminders work towards an agreed set of national standards for daycare which require them to support a child's communication development. All early years workers, including registered childminders, are required to undertake basic training on child development, including speech, language and communication development.

In England, these national standards are regulated by Ofsted, whilst in Wales they are regulated by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW). All registered childminders undergo regular inspection by these bodies to remain registered and, according to the latest annual report from Ofsted, 47 per cent of registered childminders are providing good childcare and 52 per cent are providing satisfactory childcare<sup>7</sup>.

Though they work to very similar national standards as other registered childcare workers, registered childminders differ greatly in the way they deliver them. They work in their own homes, caring for much smaller numbers of children. This allows them to provide much more personalised childcare to the children they look after. This means childminded children benefit from a highly consistent, stable relationship with the same person every day.

Working in their own homes also means that registered childminders are likely to reflect their communities. NCMA believes they provide a more flexible and inclusive quality childcare service than much of centre-based childcare because, again with smaller numbers of children, registered childminders can agree childcare hours with individual parents and adapt the childcare they offer to their children, depending on their needs. They provide babies and under-tuos with early education opportunities in a real home environment and care for siblings together. Childminders also ensure a continuity of childcare and education for the babies and children they look after, from birth to 5 years and beyond, if out-of-school provision is provided, too.

Research by Hennessy, Martin, Moss and Meluish (1992)<sup>8</sup> analysed findings on childcare quality from a number of different studies. Among their conclusions, they stated that a child's language development was more likely to be promoted by caregivers who are responsive to their attempts to communicate and who speak to them more often. With fewer children in total to care for, registered childminders are naturally more responsive to the needs of the children they care for, making their care especially beneficial to children with additional speech, language and communication difficulties.

Research into childcare over the years has identified that children's educational and social development is enhanced by high-quality care and a number of factors have been identified as contributing to this high quality<sup>9</sup>, namely –

- favourable ratios
- stability
- responsive care giving
- training.

Increasingly, registered childminders are investing in their own training and professional development to support the delivery of a quality childcare service to the families they support<sup>10</sup>, and the development of quality-assurance models such as NCMA's Children Come First networks are helping to drive quality up further<sup>11</sup>.

Children Come First childminding networks are Investor in Children endorsed quality-assurance models that help to recruit and retain childminders in the childcare workforce<sup>12</sup>. Through the employment of a full-time network coordinator, a Children Come First network can assess childminders in terms of their training and professional development needs and support them to achieve their training goals. Increasingly, local authorities are recognising the value of this quality-assurance model and establishing Children Come First networks in their local areas<sup>13</sup>. Not only do they recruit, retain and support childminders to develop as professionals, but networks also help to provide families with more flexible and inclusive childcare. They also offer parents reassurance their childminder is regularly monitored.

<sup>6</sup> 362,000 registered childminder childcare places are provided, assuming that each of the 72,500 childminders in England and Wales are, on average, registered to provide childcare for five children at any one time.

<sup>7</sup> Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 2003/04

<sup>8</sup> Literature review on quality in childminding, with specific reference to childminding networks, Sue Owen, Director of Early Years Unit, National Children's Bureau (2004)

<sup>9</sup> Mooney, Munton, Rowland and McGurk (1997)

<sup>10</sup> 2002/03 Childcare and Early Years Workforce survey, DfES

<sup>11</sup> Children Come First – the role of approved childminding networks in changing practice, Sue Owen, Director of Early Years, National Children's Bureau (2005)

<sup>12</sup> A review of childminding networks and a guide for local authorities and their early years development and childcare partnerships, Cragg Ross Dawson, DfES (2003)

<sup>13</sup> Childminder Networks Census, DfES (2005)



Margaret and Robert with some of the children they care for

**M**argaret Heath from Sheffield has been childminding for 15 years, the past five of them in partnership with her husband, Robert. Both have found their knowledge of Makaton Signing invaluable in working with children who have Down's syndrome, delayed speech, and other communication needs. They recently joined Sheffield's "special needs" childminding network.

Five years ago, a mum of one of the children they were caring for became pregnant and asked if they would look after the baby part-time when she went back to work. Robert was self-employed at that time, working from home, but he was also registered as a childminder so he could help Margaret out. To enable the Heaths to take on the baby, he decided to work part-time so that he could do more childminding. He enjoyed it so much he was soon childminding full-time.

The baby, Jessica, had Down's syndrome. "At 6 months, a speech therapist suggested using Makaton Signing with her," explains Margaret, "so we did a beginners' course with funding from an Early Years Intervention grant. Shortly afterwards, our childminding development worker found that our local special educational needs department had funding to train new Makaton tutors, and put my name down." Today Margaret runs Makaton courses about once a month for childminders, nurseries, and even parents.

When Jessica was a year old, her dad came to pick her up from the Heaths' house one day. "We were all stood in the hallway and she looked up and made the

sign for 'light'. It was such a wonderful moment, we all cried!" says Margaret. "She went on in leaps and bounds. By the time she was 2 she could use nearly 300 Makaton signs. At 3, she could only speak half a dozen words, but because she could communicate all her needs through signs she never showed frustration.

"We realised that, because we were signing with Jessica, the other children were using the signs to communicate with her, too. One boy we were caring for at that time then went on to school, but still came to us every afternoon. On the first day of his second term, he came running in and said: 'Margaret, guess what? There's a new boy in my class and he's got Down's syndrome. He can't speak, but he uses Makaton. And nobody could talk to him except me!'"

In a typical day, Margaret and Robert use Makaton signs at breakfast, lunch and dinner, whenever they sing songs or tell stories, and in general play. "Even children who can't normally sit still when you read a story, will sit still if you sign it as well. Signing automatically slows your speech down and makes it more precise. The children concentrate on your hands as well as listening, and the slower pace gives them time to repeat the signs themselves," says Margaret.

The Heaths believe signing definitely promotes spoken language and doesn't delay it. "We always use speech at the same time as signing, as the spoken and signed words emphasise one another. Jessica's first words when she learned to talk at 3½ were all words she could also sign."

## Making chatter matter for Jake

Linda Mortley, from Gillingham in Kent, started her working life as a fashion designer but became interested in childminding when her sister-in-law registered as a childminder. In 2001 Linda registered too and has since cared for children with a wide variety of communication impairments. In every case, she has started by working with the child's parents to understand what they felt their child needed from her childcare service.

Brother and sister Jake, aged 5, and Rebecca, aged 3 (who is known as Boo) have been cared for by Linda in total for over four years now. Jake has Asperger syndrome, an autistic spectrum disorder which is evident in children's abilities to relate to other people. Boo has special educational needs.



Linda and Jake

"Before Jake and, later on, Boo came to me, I met their mum and listened to what she felt her children needed. She told me a lot about Asperger and gave me lots of written information too. I also went on the web to see what other information I could find for myself," says Linda. "Then, to help Jake get used to being away from home and comfortable in my home, we carried out six weeks of visits. Each time he spent longer with me and over time settled into the routine of our day along with the other children."

Linda's main aim was to support Jake to take a full part in the activities she planned for her other children. "Jake's impairment does mean he has specific needs.

For example, he preferred to play alone whilst watching children's TV and to be separate from other children. I would play with him, using games that encouraged social interaction and, over time, I encouraged him to take part in group play too – at first leaving the TV on in the background. Slowly he became more involved. Now the TV is switched off, he plays with the other children and is part of the crowd."

Linda (who has achieved a Level 3 childcare qualification with funding from her local authority in Medway and paid for herself to undertake additional specialist training on adapting routines for disabled children and setting educational plans) adapted certain activities for Jake. Often simple changes made the biggest difference for him. "Jake didn't like playing

with messy things like finger paint, so he had crayons whilst the other children had paint, and he didn't enjoy squidgy food, like baked beans, so he would have cream cheese on toast.

Communicating with Jake was the biggest challenge Linda faced when she first started to look after him. "Jake did not like to make eye contact and, as his language development was delayed, it was very difficult to understand his needs and to involve him with the other children I cared for." Whilst signing is one of many approaches which may be recommended for children with Asperger syndrome, Linda had already done a sign language course and found the skill helped her to communicate with Jake and, as he learnt it, for him to tell Linda what he wanted or felt.

Jake now attends a specialist school during the day and comes to Linda in the afternoons. "It is wonderful to see how much Jake has progressed thanks to the love and support of his family and, I hope, my involvement too. I think Jake benefits from being in my childminding setting because I care for a smaller number of children and can give him more one-to-one attention. I can also more easily adapt the care I offer to meet his personal needs. I watch Jake now playing with the other children I care for, whereas a year ago he would have screamed and got upset. He is a typical child who just needed the childcare I already offered adapted to meet his needs!"

Learning communication skills is something that happens quite naturally for most of us, from the moment we are born. Gurgles communicate pleasure and different cries communicate hunger, pain and tiredness. For most of us, it's an exciting journey from the first tentative words of a 1-year-old, to mastering the complex language structures used, almost subconsciously, by most adults. Talking and listening to young children is important for all sorts of reasons:

- makes them feel valued and builds their confidence
- helps them bond with their parents and carers
- helps to develop their listening and attention skills, so they can learn more effectively when they go to school
- provides a great foundation for learning to read and write
- helps them develop the thinking and reasoning skills they will need throughout their lives
- helps them develop their social skills, giving them the ability to build strong relationships
- helps them learn to get their message across, reducing frustration and distress
- can improve their behaviour, as they learn to communicate their emotions through speech, rather than through tantrums.

Children learn to communicate by interacting with others and there is a wide variation in the rate at which children develop speech and language. Some children develop quickly, others may take a little more time. Often, children who are slow to develop these skills initially, soon catch up with their peers.

**“When Suzie was born, it was the most important day of our lives. We waited for her to crawl ... we were ecstatic. We waited for her to walk ... we were thrilled. We waited for her to talk ... she didn't. Suzie couldn't tell me what she wanted. She'd scream and scream just to tell me she was hungry or wanted something. And when she didn't understand what I was saying she'd just fling herself to the floor and sob.”**  
**Mother of a child with a speech, language and communication difficulty**

Nevertheless, for some children, learning language can be a very difficult process and they may need extra help. For over one million children in the UK – that's almost one in every 10 UK children – some aspect of the communication process breaks down. These children struggle to understand what people are saying to them and have difficulty conveying their thoughts and feelings. Each day can be a challenge and, unless these children get the right help at the right time, communication difficulties can affect them for the rest of their lives.

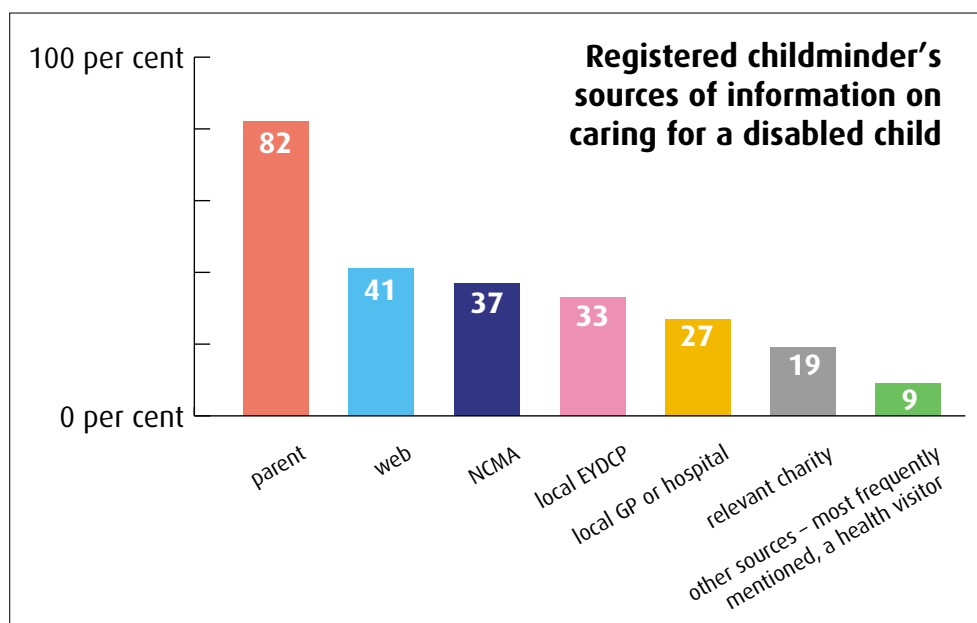


Any child, but especially a child with speech, language and communication difficulties, benefits from their parent or carer taking the lead in play and conversation and talking to them about what they are doing, playing games which encourage social interaction and giving clear and explicit praise for any attempts at communication.

Most children with speech and language difficulties require therapy and specialised teaching. Some require access to signing in order to develop their communication and literacy skills. Others may need alternative means of communication – for instance, electronic voice devices or symbols. A number of children with severe difficulties need help throughout their school life and beyond.

Parents are, of course, the most important influences on a child's speech and language development but, with more and more children now in childcare, the role their carers play is becoming increasingly important.

## Key findings



**W**ith National Childminding Week 2005 highlighting the work registered childminders do to support children's speech and language development, NCMA included in its annual survey of members a series of questions that explored how many were caring for children with specific needs including speech, language and communication impairments. The survey also asked what information and support these members received to help them care for disabled children. NCMA has 48,000 childminder members (who make up over 60 per cent of all registered childminders in England and Wales) and members who responded were caring for babies, very young children and school-age children.

A copy of the survey was posted to every member of NCMA in April and, in the first month, over 200 were returned and analysed to inform this report. These came from childminders all over England and Wales and revealed that –

- **One-third of all the respondents (29 per cent) were caring for children with needs ranging from physical impairment to delayed language development.**
- **Just under half (45 per cent) of those respondents caring for disabled children were caring for a child with a specific speech, language and communication need.**
- **Of those respondents who were caring for disabled children, only 20 per cent received additional funding (either passed on by the**

**parent from their local authority payment or direct from a local authority) in recognition of the additional responsibility they had taken on.**

- **Of those respondents caring for a child with a specific need, 45 per cent had undertaken some form of specialist disability training.**
- **Of those respondents caring for a child with a specific need, 45 per cent were part of a quality-assured childminding network.**
- **The majority (82 per cent) of all the respondents stated that a child's parent would be a source of information and advice on caring for a disabled child. Over 40 per cent would search relevant websites for information.**

In summary, it is clear that significant numbers of registered childminders are caring for children with speech, language and communication difficulties (as well as other impairments) and, by seeking out training and information from a wide variety of sources, doing their best to ensure they give appropriate childcare and learning opportunities to these children. However, for some the lack of a structured or formalised training and support programme – delivered via a quality-assured Children Come First childminding network – is resulting in many of them relying on the internet, their local doctor, hospital or health visitor for information and advice.

## Making chatter matter for Danny and Daniel

When a former teacher asked Ruth Studders from Manchester to provide childcare for a friend's child, it set Ruth on her career as a childminder. When Ruth registered in 1992, she never imagined that today she would be working with a wide range of different local agencies to provide community childminding to vulnerable children in her area.

"I was offering a standard childminding service until about four years ago when a leaflet was sent to me by the local city council asking childminders to contact them if they were interested in being part of a pilot scheme to offer childcare to families with vulnerable children or parents who need support," explains Ruth. "I was looking for a challenge and, reading about community childminding, I felt this was what I was looking for."

So Ruth applied and was one of six childminders who successfully completed the process and became part of the pilot scheme. Four years later the scheme has developed into a Children Come First approved childminding network with over 16 childminders on it, offering a range of childcare services for disabled or vulnerable children.

"To be part of the network, you have to be willing to undertake regular training and work with other agencies to support the children in your care," explains Ruth. "It is a very challenging form of childminding but you get good support from the network coordinator and the commissioning officer, who places the children with us."

Two of the children Ruth cares for are Daniel, who is 2½ years old, and Danyal (known as Danny), who is just a week older than Daniel. Both boys have Down's syndrome and supporting their speech and language development is a key aspect of the care Ruth gives them.

"I use sign language with both children and have a sign book to support them in developing this skill," explains Ruth. "I also work with the local pre-school special needs team, physiotherapist and speech therapist to provide programmes that help the boys to develop their language and communications skills as well as their social and mobility skills. We agree a programme that allows both the boys to progress through key stages such as making marks on paper, turning pages of a book or taking and returning toys when asked. My use of sign language helps me in all this but I make sure I use both speech and sign so the boys do not come to over rely on sign."

Through her involvement with the Children Come First network, Ruth has undertaken a wide variety of training to prepare her for many aspects of her



Ruth and Daniel

community childminding and has investigated new resources to support all the children she cares for, such as sensory storytelling boards and mats, and music workshops. She is also accredited to draw down the nursery education grant to provide free early education. This helps the parents using her service to make more choices in the childcare and early education they choose for their children.

"Through regular training and using other local resources such as the toy library, I have gained knowledge and been able to use good quality equipment that is beneficial to the children I am working with," says Ruth.

Six months on from arriving at Ruth's home, both boys are doing well. "They are very different little boys – and I work with each of them to personalise their care," says Ruth. "They both love playing with each other too and it is wonderful to see them both so happy and content in the care I give them."

## Making chatter matter for Sophie

Jackie Trotman, from Maidenhead, has been a registered childminder since 1995. She first learnt British Sign Language (BSL) simply out of personal interest and a wish to broaden her skills. She found out about the course from her local social services and funded it herself. Within a few months of completing her BSL course, Jackie found her new skills became an essential part of her childminding practice, when she started to care for 2-year-old Sophie.

Sophie's family knew of Jackie's childminding service through the work Jackie did in partnership with

at their level. We also use lots of facial expressions and signs when we care for babies anyway and so BSL was just a natural progression of this," explains Jackie.

"With Sophie's mum's consent, I started to use BSL alongside other basic hand gestures to help Sophie to communicate. Within a matter of weeks, Sophie had learnt enough sign language and other gestures to communicate what she needed or felt, and her frustration with her speech impairment reduced. Her mum learnt BSL too and between us we were able to support Sophie to say the things that mattered to her."

When her younger sister Emily joined Jackie's childminding setting a few months later, she too began to learn BSL. Soon the two sisters were able to communicate with each other more easily.

"Sophie is now 6 and her sister 3 and they are both still with me. Today Sophie has regained her communication skills and, apart from the odd occasion when her impairment reappears if she gets overly excited, she does not need to rely on BSL anymore."

In fact BSL has caught on with all the children in Jackie's childminding setting. "The other children soon wanted to be able to join in and talk with Sophie and Emily and so they all started to pick up sign language, using the videos and books I have in my home as learning resources. Most of them now sign their ABC and use key words too."

Jackie was given funding by her local social services department to do her BSL course and, through the childminding network she is now part of, Jackie feels she has been given the support to develop further her skills as a childminder. "All the training I undertake is to benefit the children I look after and ensure I give them the best care I can," explains Jackie. "I have been very lucky that my local authority – through the Children Come First network – has given me the opportunity not only to take my Certificate in Childminding Practice but also many other training opportunities. Moreover, I am still using my BSL skills, most recently because I am caring for a child with cystic fibrosis. On the days he is feeling unwell and less able to talk, he has sign to rely on to get his message across."

Sophie's own childminder. Once Sophie's mum returned to work after the birth of her second child, she asked Jackie to care for them both. Sophie had experienced some delayed speech development at an early age but was progressing well until – when Sophie was 2 – her Mum gave birth to her sister, Emily. From that moment on, Sophie developed a severe speech impairment. When she was upset or stressed, Sophie would often be unable to say one word. This, of course, made her extremely upset and frustrated which in turn made her impairment worse.

Jackie talked to Sophie's mum about using her BSL skills to help Sophie. "I already knew the importance of eye contact and of kneeling down to talk to a child



Jackie with (left to right) Jack, Sophie, Emily and their mum, Chris

This survey has revealed that a third of respondents are caring for children with impairments – just under half of whom are experiencing a speech, language or communication difficulty; that many respondents are investing in their own training and professional development to support them in caring for the disabled children in their setting and the vast majority are doing so for no additional funding for the specialist childcare they provide.

As the case studies illustrate, whilst some childminders will receive training and support from quality-assured Children Come First childminding networks or as individuals via their local Early Years and Childcare Development Partnership, others do not. Instead they must assess their own training, support and information needs and seek these out, paying for any training themselves in order to provide the quality childcare they want to the disabled children they care for.

The core knowledge and skills that I CAN would recommend for all early years workers are: promoting language development; identifying children with communication delay and impairments; supporting language development and enabling children with additional needs to access everyday learning experiences using a wide range of methods such as signing. I CAN's early years model of provision has shown that early years workers working in partnership with speech and language therapists provides the optimum environment for children with speech and language difficulties.

The findings of this survey show that sadly most childminders – like other early years workers – do not have contact with speech and language therapists to advise them on caring for a child with specific speech, language and communication difficulties and the child's parent is left alone to offer their advice and expertise.

Whilst it is clear the vast majority of registered childminders are providing satisfactory childcare to the children they look after, it is wrong that – as this survey shows – many of those caring for a disabled child have to do so in isolation from any formal support and advice from other professionals. With 72,500 registered childminders in England and Wales, it is likely that a large proportion of them are providing a much-needed but hidden childcare service for disabled children and NCMA believes more should be done to acknowledge and support the work they do to give these children the best start in life.

Their work could be better supported and acknowledged if –

## Government

- funds more research into how registered childminders are caring for disabled children and disseminates these findings to children's trusts and other professionals shaping services for these children;
- gives greater recognition in its childcare strategy and other relevant policies to the role registered childminders play in supporting disabled children;
- provides specific funding for registered childminders to undergo regular and appropriate training on the needs of the disabled children in their care;
- gives greater recognition to the fact that many registered childminders have the potential to develop their work with disabled children and ensures career pathways are developed that enable them to more readily become part of a transformed, integrated children's workforce;
- establishes a pathfinders programme that trains and supports registered childminders to develop as childcare partners, working with children's trusts and local health services to provide childcare and family support to disabled children and their families;
- ensures that every children's centre (or integrated centre in Wales) in every community is linked to a quality-assured Children Come First childminding network to integrate registered childminders into the range of services available for disabled children.

## Other children's professionals

- recognise that registered childminding is a non-stigmatised community-based service supporting early intervention and, by working with quality-assured childminding networks linked to children's centres/integrated centres, ensure they integrate their unique services into their plans for disabled children;
- inform parents of disabled children of the services and support registered childminders can offer;
- include registered childminders in training and development opportunities alongside other children's professionals, ensuring the training is appropriate to their home-based setting and accessible (both in terms of timing and cost);

- through children's trusts, provide more funding to ensure families of disabled children are able to access quality, registered childminding if they choose and registered childminders are fairly rewarded for the specialised care they provide to that child.

### Childcare service funders/local authorities

- establish quality-assured Children Come First childminding networks, linked to every children's centre/integrated centre, that enable registered childminders to not only access information, training and advice from other professionals but also provide home-based childcare services and so ensure true childcare choice for families;
- ensure there is a level playing field for childminding services when funding is mainstreamed through children's trusts.

### Registered childminders

- contact their local children's centre, integrated centre or EYDCP to let them know of the community childminding services they provide and ask about training opportunities that may be available to them;
- promote the unique services they offer to families of disabled children via their local Children's Information Service, children's centre/integrated centre or children's trust, asking that they communicate this to local families;
- continue to invest in their training and professional development to support their delivery of quality childminding services to all children;
- undertake disability awareness training, if they have not done so already, to gain a greater understanding of how they can provide inclusive childminding;
- can also download information from [www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk).

### NCMA will continue to

- promote the unique contribution registered childminding makes to inclusive childcare and early learning;
- encourage other children's professionals, funders and government to integrate registered childminders into the children's workforce;
- campaign to ensure all registered childminders are able to join a quality-assured Children Come First childminding network, linked to their local children's centre/integrated centre, if they choose, or are supported to become individually quality-assured as childcare partners.

**NCMA's goal is for the unique contribution that registered childminders can make to be brought to the forefront of support services for disabled children.**



**National Childminding Association of England and Wales**  
8 Masons Hill, Bromley, Kent BR2 9EY  
[www.ncma.org.uk](http://www.ncma.org.uk)  
Tel: 020 8464 6164

June 2005



Registered Charity 295981