



Quality childcare



A parents' guide to NCMA quality assurance schemes for childminders



What is quality childcare?



Choosing childcare is one of the most important decisions you will make as a parent. You will want to feel confident that you have made the best choice and your child is being well looked after.



You probably have a good idea of what you want from good quality childcare and trusting your gut instinct when choosing childcare is vital. It is reassuring though, to know and understand the checks that the childcare provider you choose has been through.

At the National Childminding Association, we have come up with two ways of measuring the quality childcare that our childminders provide. These are known as quality assurance schemes which involve rigorous assessment and go further than basic registration, which is required by law.

NCMA Quality First is for individual childminders and NCMA Children Come First is for childminding networks. Both schemes encourage childminders to reflect on how they carry out their work and begin a journey of continual professional development and improvement.

What does registration mean for childminders?

All childminders must be registered with Ofsted in England, and in Wales, by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW). They should have insurance; a health check; introductory training; a current first-aid certificate; and had an enhanced CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) disclosure. All members of their family over the age of 16 also have CRB disclosure.





Why choose a registered childminder?

Childminders work in their own homes looking after small groups of children, providing flexible, quality care. Childminders are an ideal option because:

- your child will be looked after with a small group of children in a home environment which means they'll get lots of individual attention.
- childminders are uniquely placed to provide childcare for disabled children and their families, offering more personalised care to small groups of children.
- the same person will care for your child every day – especially important for babies and young children. Also, children often stay with the same childminder from being a baby to starting secondary school – benefiting from the stability that this provides.
- children of all ages, including siblings, can be cared for together – creating a family environment.
- they can offer flexible hours, such as before and after school, or fit in around non-standard working hours. They can collect and drop off children at school or playgroup.

What's different about NCMA childminders?

NCMA childminders work towards NCMA's 10 Quality Standards. These rigorous guidelines cover all aspects of home-based childcare and show that a childminder is dedicated to providing a professional service. NCMA promotes the social model of disability which emphasises meeting the individual needs of all children in an inclusive home-based setting.



Tell me more about the NCMA quality assurance schemes.

The NCMA quality assurance schemes are based on NCMA's 10 Quality Standards covering all aspects of home-based childcare. They have been created with the help and support of the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) and have received official Investors in Children (IiC) endorsement in England. IiC is designed to give parents confidence in the quality of the childcare they have chosen.

NCMA Quality First

Launched in 2003, Quality First is NCMA's nationally recognised quality assurance scheme for individual childminders. NCMA Quality First means your childminder has:

- demonstrated commitment to NCMA's 10 Quality Standards
- actively thought about their practice and found ways of improving their service
- received support and information from a childminding mentor
- been checked by an NCMA assessor who observes how they relate to and communicate with children in their care
- produced a comprehensive NCMA Quality First portfolio to demonstrate how they achieve best practice.

NCMA Children Come First

NCMA Children Come First is the only nationally recognised quality assurance scheme for childminding networks. A Children Come First approved childminding network is a group of registered childminders who work together, with support and guidance from a network coordinator, to provide a quality childminding service for their local community.

Networks are very adaptable and can provide a range of services to meet your needs and those of your community. This includes sharing resources such as play equipment and information amongst network members and offering childcare cover when childminders are sick or on holiday.

If your childminder belongs to an NCMA Children Come First network, he or she will have:

- actively thought about their practice and found ways of improving their service
- been assessed by a network coordinator to make sure they are working towards NCMA's Quality Standards
- received ongoing visits and support from a coordinator
- demonstrated very high standards of childcare.

Can my child get free early years education?

Every 3- and 4-year-old is currently entitled to five free early years education sessions a week before they begin school. A growing number of NCMA Children Come First network childminders are taking additional training to provide early years education accessing government funding for this service. Ofsted's education division in England and Estyn in Wales inspects networks offering early years education.

Receiving free, early years education from a network childminder means your child:

- receives individual attention and help
- learns through play and real-life situations
- enjoys learning in a home-based situation
- learns at their own pace.

How does training for childminders fit in?

All registered childminders are required to take an introductory childminding course. Many childminders continue to undertake additional training so they can enhance their childminding service. In this way childminders are able to demonstrate to parents their ongoing commitment to professional development. Training and assessment form a key part of NCMA quality assurance programmes.



Find out more

For details of childminders with vacancies in your area, contact Childcare Link who can put you in touch with your local Children's Information Service. Call Childcare Link free on 0800 096 02 96, or go to its website www.childcarelink.gov.uk or call the Children and Families Division on 029 2082 6802.

NCMA's website has further information on choosing a registered childminder and about the NCMA Quality First and NCMA Children Come First quality

www.ncma.org.uk

About NCMA

The National Childminding Association for England and Wales (NCMA) is the only national charity and membership organisation that speaks on behalf of registered childminders. We promote quality registered childminding so that children, families and communities can benefit from the best in childcare and education.

Working in partnership with the Government and the National Assembly for Wales, local authorities, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships, Ofsted, CSIW and

other childcare organisations, we aim to ensure that every registered childminder has access to services, training, information and support to enable them to do a professional job.



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