

Protocol for Childminders and Children's Centre Service Providers working together in Northamptonshire

Registered Childminders play an important role in giving parents a greater choice of high quality, flexible childcare and family support services. They can be particularly valuable when children are very young, in areas with only small number of children (for example, in rural communities), when caring for children with special needs, or in supporting parents who work shift patterns.

Children's Centre Service Providers should be ensuring that families have access to high quality universal services including high quality, inclusive, early learning and childcare (Children's Centre Core Purpose) and childminders are a key part of this, particularly for the 2 year old offer.

The following actions will ensure good collaborative working:

Childminders will –

- Model good practice at all times, promoting a professional image of childminding to all
- Work in partnership with all other childcare providers in the area
- Be familiar with and respect the ethos and policies of the Children's Centre Service Providers
- Keep NCA and FIS informed of vacancies and keep published contact details up to date in order that details can be passed onto parents looking for childcare
- Put the needs and wellbeing of minded children first at all times
- Encourage the parents of minded children to register for Children's Centre services and to access them where appropriate
- Attend meetings at Centres where appropriate to represent the childminding group and childminders in general, particularly including childminder representation on the Advisory Board
- Offer children in their care the appropriate balance between home-based care and attendance at Children's Centre services

Children's Centre Service Providers will –

- Promote childminders as one of the range of quality choices for childcare including 2 year old funding, 3/4 year old funding and placements supporting family support work, children with disabilities and teenage parents
- See childminders as part of the team around the family/child where appropriate
- Where possible provide a room for the use of a childminding group and/or the facility for the NCA Childminding Consultant to provide drop in sessions, as deemed necessary in consultation with the NCA Childminding Consultant.
- Give childminders access to Centre resources and facilities at set times according to Children's Centres individual circumstances
- Provide a space for childminders to advertise their vacancies. All childcare providers, including childminders, with vacancies in the reach area may be advertised through the Children's Centre according to the individual Centre's policy. The Children's Centre Service Providers will remain impartial and will not recommend one childminder or setting over another, except where funding requirements specify particular criteria. However parents can be provided with advice as to the kinds of questions they might ask to help them make a decision.
- Provide a childminding notice board where necessary and appropriate
- Include childminders in any appropriate opportunities for shared training
- Provide a named person as a liaison point for childminders and the NCA Childminding Consultant
- Inform childminders of local events and activities
- Provide crèche when appropriate to enable childminders to attend Advisory Boards and other meetings at the Centre (with due regard to the necessary permissions from parents of minded children)
- Address any safeguarding concerns around a child attending activities with a childminder by
 - Following safeguarding policies and procedures laid down by Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board
 - Involving the NCA Childminding Consultant (or another representative of Northamptonshire Childminding Association) in discussions to act as a liaison between the children's centre and the childminder
 - Record all discussions and decisions as per policies and practices
 - Agree actions with the NCA Childminding Consultant relating to who will notify relevant bodies (MASH, NCC, Action for Children, Spurgeons, Ofsted etc as appropriate)

NCA Childminding Consultant (or other NCA rep) will -

- Attend up to three meetings a year with the Service Providers as appropriate to share information and for forward planning. This would not normally form part of the Advisory Board meeting
- Offer a monthly drop in session for parents and local childminders to access advice and information. This could be part of the Childminders Support Group or through an alternative arrangement with the Service Providers
- Be the contact person if Children's Centre Service Providers have any concerns about childminders accessing the Centre
- Support the Service Providers with recruiting new childminders where appropriate
- Work in partnership with the Service Providers to ensure all elements of this protocol are met

Childminder Support Groups

Childminder Support Groups are run by and for childminders and provide an opportunity for them to meet together for support and to develop their practice. They may organise speakers or visitors to the group and discuss relevant issues of local and national concern. Suitable activities will be provided for the minded children attending the group but the focus of the group is support to the childminders rather than the learning and development of the children.

- Where possible and appropriate Children's Centre Service Providers will allow local childminders the use of a room and other facilities in order to enable them to run a support group. The group will work in partnership with the Service Providers to ensure that the room is clean, tidy and safe before, during and after the session.
- Childminding Support Groups will follow the NCA good practice guidelines.
- Childminder support groups are run by and for childminders and therefore the children who attend with the childminders will remain the responsibility of those childminders and will not be required to be registered as users of the Centre, although a full signing in sheet will need to be maintained for health and safety purposes.
- Within the group childminders will adhere to the Service Providers' requests in respect of policies on snacks, hot drinks, photos and any health and safety requirements associated with the use of the space.
- Childminders leading the group will plan suitable activities and visitors in order to ensure that both childminders and children benefit from the group. They will encourage all those

attending to become involved with the planning and to participate in the activities. They will engage with the Service Providers in agreeing the resources needed within the room, particularly discussing the range of materials that will be provided for children's play.

- The NCA Childminding Consultant will attend the group on a regular basis as part of the support package offered.
- When appropriate Children's Centre Service Provider staff may arrange to visit the group as part of the support package it offers.

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