

Introduction

Kerry County Childcare Committee in association with the Health Services Executive seeks to promote quality childcare services. Children have emotional needs and physical needs with regard to developing relationships, physical care routines and nutrition. A safe and stimulating environment is vital for children so that parents have confidence that their children are well cared for.

If you are looking for a childminder, you probably have a good idea of what you want — a place that is safe, happy, and loving, where children can learn and have fun. At the same time, childcare must also meet your needs. Childcare should be convenient, affordable, and offer care when you need it. Finding childminding care that has the quality and convenience you want — at a reasonable cost — can be a real challenge. It is rare to find the perfect situation but it is possible to find a very good situation that will meet your needs. This guide is designed by Kerry County Childcare Committee to assist you in making informed choices.

Mission Statement

'Kerry County Childcare Committee Ltd. endeavours to implement the County Childcare Strategy which aims to co-ordinate, support and advocate for the provision of quality, accessible and inclusive childcare services throughout the county.'



What is a Childminder?

- A Childminder looks after children in the Childminders own home. They offer this service all year round for the full working day or for different periods during the day.
- A Childminder is defined as a person who single-handedly minds preschool children (children under the age of 6 years) in the Childminders home for a total of more than 2 hours a day.
- A Childminder can mind up to 5 children under the age of six years (including her own children under the age of six years) but no more than two should be under the age of 15 months.
- If a Childminder minds 4 children or more they are required to notify the Health Service Executive Pre-school Inspection Team. (The HSE has a duty under Part VII of the Child Care Act 1991 and Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations 2006 to inspect each childminder at least annually).
- Childminders caring for 3 children or less do not notify the Health Services Executive however, they are encouraged to voluntarily notify Kerry County Childcare Committee of their service.
- In certain cases Childminders may be eligible to participate in the Early Childcare Education Scheme (ECCE) however these Childminders a subject to very specific criteria. For further information on this please contact Kerry County Childcare Committee on (066) 7181582.
- **Parents and Childminders negotiate their own terms.**

Five Steps to Choosing Quality Childminding Care

Step 1 – Get organised

Step 2 – Conduct a telephone interview

Step 3 – Make a visit

Step 4 – Check references

Step 5 – Make a decision



Step 1 – Get Organised

Finding a quality childminder is going to take a little homework. If possible, begin gathering basic information a few months before you think you will need childcare.

- Ask your friends, family, neighbours and co-workers for recommendations
- Contact Kerry County Childcare Committee on (066) 7181582 or the Health Services Executive on (066) 7184919 for names and contact details of childminders in your area and any other useful information they may have
- Place an advertisement in the local Newspaper or in local places of business
- Reply to Childminder advertisements

Step 2 – Conduct a Telephone Interview

Save time and energy by using the phone to narrow your search. It is a good idea to contact a number different childminders. To get the best response, avoid calling at busy times such as arrival, departure, or lunch time. Take Time – Don't rush into any arrangement, explain your childminding needs. Arrange to meet a few Childminders in your area. Before meeting the Childminder prepare a list of questions and topics you want to discuss.

Step 3 – Make a Visit

It is best to pre-arrange a visit with a childminder. It may help to visit the childminder while children are there or alternatively the Childminder might prefer you to call at a quieter time. You will need to consider accessibility, affordability and quality. Good quality childminding care has many long term benefits for children and their families. Visit a few childminders. You should expect:

- a warm greeting
- short introductions to children and any other adults/family members present
- a brief tour of the house – inside and outside
- an explanation of fees and policies
- an invitation to stay a while to see the daily routine and children playing

Questions parents should ask:

- What **experience/knowledge/training/qualifications** does the Childminder have?
- Do you have policies and procedures for the day to day running of your service?
- Is the Childminder notified to the Health Service Executive Pre-school Inspection Team? (only applicable if caring for 4 or more children)

- Is the Childminder voluntary notified to Kerry County Childcare Committee? (only applicable if caring for 3 or less children)
- Clarify the number & ages of children currently in the Childminder's care
- Does the Childminder have **insurance** cover (public liability)?
- Are there other adults working/residing on the premises while children are being minded.
- What is the Childminders behaviour management policy? This should involve working in partnership with parents.
- What type of care/programme is provided for minded children during the day e.g. play activities, meals, outdoor play, television, stories, rest?
- Outline details of child's typical daily routine?
- Will the Childminder/parent provide the meals for the child during the day? If the Childminder is responsible for this is the Childminder aware of nutritional needs of young children?
- What toys, play equipment, materials are available to children?
- What baby equipment does the Childminder have/use – high chair, cots, car seats etc?
- Is the proposed rest/sleeping area and equipment suitable?
- What contingency plan does the Childminder have if they are unable to care for your child or in case of emergency? Does the Childminder have substitute or back-up staff?
- What are the Childminders:
 - hours of work?
 - rates of pay?
 - holiday leave?
- What are parents expected to provide (e.g. nappies, toiletries etc)?
- What arrangements are in place if a child is sick?
- Does the Childminder collect children from preschool/school/playgroup?
- Does the childminder have pets? Are they appropriately vaccinated?
- Outings – What is the Childminders policy?
- Car Safety – Does the childminder have proper car seats etc?



Suitable Person

- Genuine love of children
- Dedication to the job
- Good caring relationship with children; Kind
- Able to listen to both children and parents
- Be sympathetic & understanding
- Have a sense of humour
- Able to play
- Ability to think of others
- Be in good health; Lots of energy
- Level-headed
- Business like and diligent
- Be able to work in partnership with parents



Childminders Home – Look for the Following

- Meet the Childminder at his/her home
- Is there adequate space for indoor and outdoor play, for children to eat, sleep, change nappies etc?
- Can you visit at any time during the day?
- Are the premises safe?
 - Indoors: e.g. safety gates; protected range & radiators; safety locks; smoke alarms; toughened glass on low windows, glass doors; attention to hygiene etc. Includes: eating, sleeping & toilet areas
 - Outdoors: e.g. secure area; no access onto road; quality equipment
- Is the home caring, happy, friendly and stimulating?
- Is the home cosy and warm?
- Is there warm, happy responsive interaction between Childminder and children?
- Ensure the children have access to a variety of equipment, toys and learning materials which they will find interesting and which will contribute to their development i.e. sand / water play, secure outdoor play area, playdough, books, role play / imaginary play opportunities, bricks, colouring / drawing / creativity materials, climbing equipment, balls, bean bags, jigsaws etc.

Childminders should keep records:

On Individual children

- Child's name and address
- Child's date of birth
- Contact details of parents during the day - home & work phone numbers

- Contact number of family doctor
- Name and contact details of whoever is to be contacted in an emergency
- Details of who can collect your child
- And medical & dietary requirements

The Childminder should require the parent to fill an 'Enrolment Form' or 'Child Record Form' including all the above information.

General

- Daily Attendance Record
- Accident/Injury Records
- Signed Agreement for Medicine Administration

Some childminders may have some information to give you when leaving detailing opening hours, fees, facilities offered, policies and procedures etc. This could leave you with fewer questions to ask. Feel free to make notes of things discussed.

Step 4 - Check References

Don't be shy about checking references. Selecting a Childminder to share the care of your child with is one of the most important things you will ever do. Ask each Childminder for at least two parent references and their phone numbers. Most parents are happy to share information with other parents and can be an excellent resource.

Step 5 – Make a decision

Remember that it is OK to be choosy. Review the information you have gathered and call back if you have questions that were not answered. Trust your gut instinct. If you are not comfortable with what you have found thus far, keep looking. If a childminding setting you like is full, put your name on a waiting list. Even if you must use another service temporarily, you will have this as an option if things don't work out. Prepare your children by talking positively about the new Childminder and by letting them visit her home beforehand. Ask your new Childminder if it would be OK for your child to bring a favourite toy, teddy bear, or blanket to help ease the transition.

Kerry County Childcare Committee recommends that all Childminders have a written 'working agreement' in place with parents, so that the quality of the relationship between the Childminder, parents and children will not be impaired by misunderstandings. Both the Childminder and the parent should discuss and agree the terms of the childminding arrangement. Both parties should retain a copy of this agreement.

Settling In – Building a bond

Each child reacts differently to this process. Some children will take longer than others. It may help at the start if the parent is in a position to stay with the child for some time as this will help build the child's confidence.

- Start with short visits – leave the child with the Childminder for a few hours at a time
- Communicate with the Childminder how you would like your child cared for
- Ensure your child has their favourite toy or some link to home (comforter)
- Talk to the Childminder about how your child has been during the day – any upsets/problems
- Phone or call during the day if you are feeling uneasy about the arrangement
- Ensure that the Childminder understands special words or routines that your child may have
- Talk to your Childminder



General Information

The Childminder should have an understanding that early childhood is a time of enormous learning, therefore he/she is a teacher as well as a carer. The Childminder should be able to supply various types of play and educational material, be able to play with the child and encourage the child's individual development and interests.

Parents should work closely with the Childminder. Childminders know that parents are the most important people in a child's life. They should keep parents informed of their child's progress. As a parent it is important that you respect the childminder and the role he/she plays in your child's life. The Childminder is a very important person in you and your child's life and therefore mutual respect and courtesy should be shown at all times.

The information contained in this leaflet is intended as a guide only, to assist parents who are sourcing Childminding care for their children. Ultimately Parents and Childminders will make their own arrangements to meet their needs. However, if you wish to receive further information or assistance about childminding, please contact:

Kerry County Childcare Committee,
1 Powers Court,
Boherbee,
Tralee.
(066) 7181582

Health Service Executive,
Pre-School Inspection Team,
19 Denny Street,
Tralee
(066) 7184919

