

Choosing a Childminder

When you are looking for childcare for your child, Walsall FIS understands that it is a difficult decision.

To help you we have put together a guide to helping you choose the best provision for you and your children. If you are considering using a childminder then this fact sheet gives tips and hints on what to look for and what to ask.

Firstly is a childminder for you? Childminders maybe for you if:

- You need Ofsted registered care (you maybe able to claim help towards the costs. Please speak to a team member for more details.
- You need flexible care. If you work shifts, irregular hours, weekends or have to start early/finish late, then a childminder maybe able to offer you more flexibility than a group setting
- You want your child to be dropped off/picked up from school
- You have older children that need caring for as well and would like older siblings to attend the same setting
- You want your child to be cared for in a family home
- You're good at saying what you want
- You want your child to have one carer

If you decide that a childminder is for you the first thing you need to do is establish which childminders have the vacancies to meet your needs.

The information that Walsall FIS hold about vacancies is only ever a guide and we would always recommend that you contact them directly for up to date details.

Once you have established which childminders maybe able to meet your needs, you should arrange a visit to meet them, preferably more than once and at different times of the day. When you go to see them, if possible, take your child with you.

When you visit the childminder you may want to look for the following:

- Are you and your child made to feel welcome?
Do they interact with your child?
- Do the other children look happy?
Are they playing and talking to each other?
- How does the childminder interact with the other children?
Do they have a good relationship?
- Does the house appear to have reasonable health and safety features ie. fire-guards, stair-gates, plug socket covers, etc?
- Is the house clean? Have you seen all the rooms that the children will be cared for in?
- What toys, books, equipment, etc, are available?
- What is the outside area like? Is there enough space for your child? If there isn't a garden, what local facilities are available?



Choosing a Childminder (continued)

Questions you may wish to ask on your visit:

- Can I see your Ofsted registration certificate and current report?
- How long have you been childminding?
- Have you done any extra training? Including a current paediatric first aid qualification? Can I see certificates?
- Do you have the appropriate public liability insurance? Can I see it?
- Do you have your own transport for use with the children? If so, do you have appropriate insurance? Can I see it?
- How much do you charge? What is included ie. food, nappies, outings, school collections?
- Do you have phone numbers for parents you work for? Can I contact them for references?
- Do you drop off or collect from schools?
- Will there be other children with my child? What are their ages?
- How do you spend the day? What activities do you do with the children?
- Do you charge if my child is sick? And what about if you're sick and not able to care for my child?
- Where will my child sleep? Is it a quiet area?
- What is your toilet training policy?
- Do you offer a trial run – maybe a few mornings a week to see how things work out?
- Will you keep a file about my child's progress?
- Do you have any pets?
- Do you supply food? If so what is offered? If no, what are the arrangements?
- How do you cater for special needs/disabilities?

Remember – trust your gut. If you don't think a provider is right for you and your child, you don't have to use them.

Ratios

Childminders can normally care for no more than six children under the age of 8. Of these no more than three can be under 5 years and no more than one under 1 year. Remember a childminder's own children will be taken into account on these ratios.

Arranging childcare

Walsall FIS would always recommend that you have a contract with your childminder so that you both know what is expected. This contract should cover hours, pay, sickness, holiday pay, notice of cancellation period.

You should also agree things such as discipline, TV watching, learning, what happens in an emergency and anything else that is important to you. You should always agree this beforehand.

Settling your child in

Please see our separate fact sheet on this. There should be one enclosed in this information pack. If there isn't please contact Walsall FIS.

I'm not happy with my childminder – What should I do?

If you are not happy with your childminder for any reason, we would always recommend talking to them first. It maybe just a misunderstanding of what is expected from both parties and can be easily sorted.

If this is not the case then please contact Walsall FIS on 01922 653383. All childminders have an Information Officer and Improvement Officer who can offer advice on concerns.

Alternatively if you are concerned for a child's welfare then you should contact Ofsted on 0845 601 4771.