



Our Commitment to Childminding in Scotland

Short Term Commitments

January 2021



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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A Vibrant Childminding Sector in Scotland

Childminders, as an important element of the childcare sector, offer a unique experience of childcare for children and families. They offer care and learning for children in their own home, in generally small groups with no more than six children. Childminders look after children of all ages; for example in a single setting a childminder could be caring for an infant, young children under 5 years of age, alongside older children of school age.

A childminder can offer children and their families a range of benefits. For instance, a small home-based setting can be particularly helpful for some children with additional support needs or a child who may find a larger setting challenging. The opportunity to learn through play with children of different ages can also build confidence and support development. Childminders also develop close relationships with the families they care for, offering important wider support to families within their community.

Childminders have one of the highest ratings across all quality criteria in inspections by the Care Inspectorate.

We know that quality childcare is important for the whole family, giving children opportunities to learn through play in a nurturing environment and supporting parents to access work, training or study.

Often a childminder can provide welcome and necessary flexibility for parents who need to manage work commitments. Childminders may sometimes be used to provide wrap around care alongside nurseries or schools. This blended care approach can provide parents with more options as their children grow and develop, and may also support parents looking for care for siblings of different ages. Childminders provide continuity of care throughout childhood, from care and learning during 0-5 years to later providing before and after school care, as well as care during school holidays.



Childminders play an important role in Scotland's school age childcare sector, with almost 50% of children receiving care from childminders being of school age. Many families rely on childminders from their children's earliest weeks and months of life through to their time at school.

Childminding not only provides these benefits to children and families, but offers a rewarding career for childminders themselves. They see children grow and flourish as they learn, and offer support to families when they need it.



Case Study – Supporting Families

Emily, who lives in the Scottish Borders, is mum to Samuel (eleven years old) and Rebekah (four years old).

Emily has been sending her daughter, Rebekah, to the childminder since she was 18 months old. Rebekah is a limited sleeper which means she rarely sleeps through the entire night and it means Emily and her husband also get very little sleep. In the beginning, the NHS helped provide emergency childminding for Rebekah, allowing Emily and her husband to catch up on sleep during the day, carry out household tasks and help Rebekah's development.

The childminder that Emily and her husband used through the NHS was so supportive that they continued to use her after the emergency childminding ended. Initially, they used the childminder for 10 hours a week but slowly increased the hours when Emily started working and they heard about the increase in early learning and childcare (ELC) entitlement trial in their area.

“Rebekah has been going to the childminder since she was 18 months old and she used to go for just 10 hours a week until the increased early learning and childcare entitlement trial was introduced in the area. Now, she will usually do two days at the childminders and two days at nursery but some days she might join me when I go to the market or do other things in the morning.”

“Flexibility is very important with Rebekah's lack of sleeping. By having Rebekah with a childminder who is also flexible with hours, I don't need to worry about dropping her off or picking her up at certain times. I can spend more one-on-one time with my son and know that Rebekah is in a caring, nurturing environment.”

“Rebekah is always excited to go to the childminder! It's like a little family with the small number of children that are there. She gets a lot of attention and gets to mix with children of different ages – babies, toddlers, and primary school kids. I like to think this is great for her social development and has helped her to get ready for school.”



Support for Childminders

What have the Scottish Government and Partners done so far?

The Scottish Government has led or funded a range of recent activities which have been focused on supporting childminders in their learning and development:

- We developed and have regularly refreshed [Your Childminding Journey](#), a learning and development resource launched by the Care Inspectorate in September 2017. This supports childminders in registering a service, induction, identifying valued skills, knowledge and understanding, and also in gathering evidence of prior learning to reflect on and improve practice.
- We worked with SVQ training providers to ensure childminders could access their training needs flexibly, at hours that suit them.
- We have developed a [suite of free online continuous professional development](#) modules for the entire ELC sector, which are available to childminders.
- In addition, using STEM strategy funding managed by Education Scotland, the SCMA have developed a suite of STEM courses and resources, which support the online modules and are aimed at childminding settings.
- Along with our partners Early Years Scotland, we have developed the [Team ELC Wellbeing Hub](#), providing practical advice and support on managing wellbeing for childminders and others who work in ELC. While this resource was developed with funding from the Scottish Government, it is complemented by other sources of support which are also available including through the Scottish Childminding Association.
- We supported childminders to undertake their induction through funding for [Individual Training Accounts](#) (ITAs) to cover the costs of the SCMA induction support programme, which we supported the development of. In the autumn 2020 round of ITAs childcare was identified as a priority area for funding, in the future we will continue to monitor need and ensure that where there is a risk of over subscription we act to ensure access to opportunities.
- The [Virtual Nature School](#) provided a free training resource for all early learning and childcare practitioners – including childminders - wishing to increase and improve outdoor experiences for their children during the COVID crisis. A childminder case study from this programme has been developed.
- The Care Inspectorate are developing bite size sessions as part of the improvement programme to support the sector achieve the National Standard and improve practice in the setting. These are also available to childminders and the first of these are launched to support self-evaluation in the sector. Further sessions will be developed in the near future supporting the sector raise their knowledge and skills in specific areas. Sessions can be accessed through the Care Inspectorate HUB, www.hub.careinspectorate.com
- Education Scotland has provided a range of online professional learning opportunities and resources throughout the pandemic. These have been available for childminders to participate in, or in many cases to engage with at a time of their choosing.

We are committed to continuing to invest in childminders professional development for the benefit of the children they care for of all ages, to access opportunities to provide funded ELC, as well as to engage in discussion about the importance and role of childminders in childcare.

Building a vibrant, supported childminding sector in which we retain and engage the current workforce, will in the medium and longer term, provide the basis for promoting the opportunities of becoming a childminder for childcare professionals at all stages of their career.



Our Commitments to the Childminding Sector

1. Develop and host an 'In Conversation with' (virtual) event with the Minister for Children and Young People for childminders to discuss the important role childminders play for families, and how government can best help develop the sector
2. A series of online support sessions on a range of topics, of which at least the session on COVID-19 guidance will take place this year
3. To support childminders with the COVID-19 Scottish Government and the Care Inspectorate will issue communication products to further support guidance compliance (infographics, posters, social media etc)
4. Publication of the dedicated chapter of 'Out to Play' will provide an opportunity for a video promotion – potentially jointly with a childminder who participated in the Virtual Nature School
5. To support the activity to re-fresh Parent Club information about childminding and the benefits it offers families, the Scottish Government proposes creating a small focus group of parents and childminders to share ideas and feedback on options – a call for volunteers to participate will be promoted
6. Arrange virtual visits for the Minister to engage directly with childminders
7. Inclusion of the SCMA Community Childminding proposal within the Access to Childcare Fund, supporting the Community Childminding model in 4 local authorities to evidence positive outcomes for low-income families
8. Work with SCMA and other partners to scope barriers to childminders accessing training and practice support opportunities and resources, including the issue of evidencing Prior Learning, to inform further work in this area. Consider, in particular, development of more 'bite-sized' resources and flexible learning models to support access to Continuous Professional Learning.
9. Work with employability bodies including Department of Work and Pensions and Skills Development Scotland to promote childminding as a career choice
10. Work with SCMA to enhance the presence of information on childminding on the childcarecareersscotland.scot website
11. Begin the independent research previously committed to into the trends within the childminding workforce, taking learning from the #TellSCMA: Childminding and You 2020 Survey to help frame this piece of work. This will be overseen by the Scottish Government, Care Inspectorate and SCMA

Our commitments over the longer term will see us continue to take forward focussed work to promote childminding as a career, incorporating learning from the research into workforce trends to help identify future targeted activity. Including establishing a dedicated working group to consider the results and action which maybe required to address the issues identified. Please see Childminding Action Plan for full list of our long term commitments to the childminding sector.



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