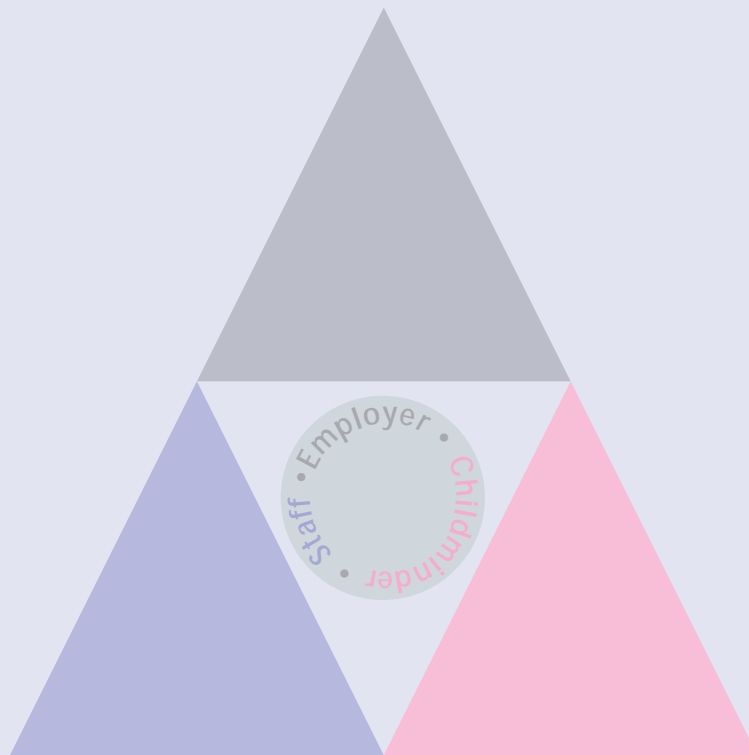


Employer's Guide to  
Approved Childminding Networks  
or  
**How to Keep Your Workforce!**



Together we are all stronger

# What is a Childminding Network?

A Childminding Network is a cluster of 10-40 registered childminders in a geographical area, who have been recruited and assessed to *Children Come First* quality standards by a Network Co-ordinator - a qualified childcare professional.

The *Children Come First* quality standard is laid down by the National Childminding Association and approved by the Department for Education and Skills. It takes into account all areas of childminding practice and sets high standards for the care and education of children. Each Network is inspected every 3 years by a National Childminding Association assessor.

Parents of children cared for by Network Childminders will be kept fully informed of their Childminder's membership of the Network and parents seeking childcare will be given expert assistance in choosing the right care for their child.

Childminding Networks can be approved for delivery of childcare and may be accredited for provision of early education. Accredited Childminders can provide free nursery education, funded by Nursery Education Grant.

A Childminding Network can be built incrementally - starting with 10 Childminders and "bolting on" as many as necessary. The only factor to take into account is that one full-time Network Co-ordinator can monitor up to 40 childminders.

To be assessed into a Childminding Network, the childminders first have to be registered by Ofsted. Registration alone does not guarantee successful assessment into a network.

Childminders who successfully complete the assessment process are monitored regularly. The Network Co-ordinator visits each childminder every 6-8 weeks and may make unannounced visits too. At every visit, the Network Co-ordinator will be checking that the Childminder's practice is of high quality and offering support, information and advice.

All Network Childminders must have individual personal training plans and access to a toy and equipment library and they attend support meetings and training sessions organised by the Network Co-ordinator.

Childminders who are members of Childminding Networks all affirm their commitment to delivering high quality care and education for children.



## What is Childminding?

Childminding is affordable, flexible childcare for children aged 0-14 years-provided in a home environment and registered by Ofsted - the Office for Standards in Education.

Working parents use childminding more frequently than any other form of registered childcare.

There are many advantages of childminding:

- *Parents can choose care near their homes, allowing their children to attend local groups and schools-or they can have childcare nearer to their workplace if they want their children close by during the working day.*
- *Children from the same family can be cared for together.*
- *Out of school and holiday care is part of the service.*
- *Many childminders offer overnight and weekend care.*
- *Childminders are self-employed, so their fees and conditions of work are agreed with parents. They are responsible for their own business paperwork and tax returns.*
- *Childminders have their own public liability insurance.*
- *All Childminders operate in domestic premises-usually their own.*
- *Some Childminders are able to look after children in the parents' home, under the government's Home Childcarers scheme.*
- *Childminders' working hours are flexible, so parents can be flexible in their working hours.*

# Flexibility, Quality and Affordability

Approved Childminding Networks provide the ultimate in employer-friendly childcare

## Why invest in a Childminding Network?

### Flexibility for employers

- Networks expand or contract according to need - so you won't waste money on staffing and equipping buildings for surplus places.
- They cover your geographical area, caring for children of employees near their own homes, on their route to work or near their workplace. It's their choice!
- They make childcare accessible to all businesses, whatever their size, matching the precise needs of individual employers and their staff.
- They provide childcare for children aged 0-14 years, so there is no need for separate provision!
- They offer childcare on weekdays, weekends and overnight - ideal cover for shift work and full-time staff.
- And importantly, they provide back-up childcare for emergencies, temporary staffing and training events.

### Quality for staff and their families

- Network Childminders are assessed and monitored to the *Children Come First* Quality Standard, approved by the Department for Education & Skills and the National Childminding Association.
- All Network Childminders are trained and they are qualified First Aiders, checked by the Criminal Records Bureau and monitored every 6-8 weeks by a qualified childcare professional.
- All Network Childminders provide children with stimulating and educational activities, accessing Network toy libraries, equipment loan schemes and support facilities.
- Accredited Network Childminders offer free nursery education, funded for parents by the Nursery Education Grant.
- All eligible staff using registered Childminders can claim the childcare element of working tax credit.
- The Network Co-ordinator offers advice and support to staff, matching their childcare needs to approved Network Childminders' services.



### Affordability for employers

- Childminding Matters already has Networks set up in many parts of Norfolk. If your business is in one of those areas, your capital outlay will be small, as we have stakeholders who are ready and willing to share and build their networks with you.
- Even if you're starting from scratch, your capital outlay will be minimal - all that is needed is a workstation for the Network Co-ordinator, a toy and equipment library for the Network Childminders and you're away!
- Networks can be shared with other employers or stakeholders, so you need not bear all the cost - plus, you have the flexibility to provide places for only a very small number of staff. Childminding Matters can put you in touch with employers in your area who are interested in sharing Networks.
- Revenue costs are low too! All a Childminding Network needs is a Network Co-ordinator, a toy and equipment library and somewhere for the Network Childminders and the children to meet for support and training. Childminding Networks are community-based, so you do not need space on site.
- Childminding Matters offers a low-cost option for you to hand over the day-to-day management of the Network to us - saving you the time and trouble of coming to grips with childcare issues. All Childminding Matters staff are childcare specialists, with years of experience in managing childcare services. We can deal with all the Childminding Network set-up, management and quality control - giving you peace of mind through regular reports and updates.

*Your level of support for your employees' childcare needs is up to you...*

# How can we set up a Childminding Network?

## Are your staff interested in the services a Childminding Network can provide?

Our menu of provision includes...

- Support and advice for maternity leavers
- Childcare information for all staff who are parents - under your company banner, if you wish
- Childminding vacancy matching service for employees
- Sharing a Childminding Network with other employers/stakeholders
- Setting up your own, bespoke Childminding Network
- Retaining childminding places for your staff
- Subsidising childminding places for your staff - childminders can accept Childcare Vouchers, which are exempt from employers and employees National Insurance Contributions.

## Could your company become a stakeholder in an existing Childminding Network or do you need a bespoke Childminding Network?

All you need to do is tell us:

- how many childminding places you need for your staff
- the geographical spread of the places
- which services you require
- the age groups of children requiring care.

We will analyse the supply of registered childminding in your area and match that to the expressed needs of your workforce.

## Is there scope for limited involvement in Childminding Networks?

Yes. You could provide information and vacancy matching services for your employees, or support Networks through donations to toy and equipment libraries - thereby raising your company profile in the area. Childminding Matters can help you.

## To help you make the right choices Childminding Matters offers a feasibility study package which includes:

- Checking your aims and objectives for the Network
- Matching your aims and objectives to your staff's needs
- Checking with you whether all staff would be offered the benefits, or only a target group
- Designing questionnaires to staff (content of questionnaires agreed with you in advance)
- Distributing questionnaires to target staff
- Receiving and analysing the questionnaire results
- Checking the availability of Childminding Networks in the geographical areas identified
- Checking the numbers of registered Childminders and childminding places in the areas identified
- Estimating the potential for recruitment of Childminders to the Network
- Checking whether you will have opportunities to join existing Networks as a stakeholder
- Estimating the costs of developing Childminding Network services for your company
- Reporting the results to you
- Answering your questions.

*All your company information will be treated as confidential. Access to appropriate staff is essential.*



Just call Childminding Matters on 01603 615667  
or email us at [info@childmindingmatters.org.uk](mailto:info@childmindingmatters.org.uk).