



# Supporting childminders

An advisory resource for Local Safeguarding  
Children Boards (England only)



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# 1. Introduction

This resource has been developed by NCMA, with support from the Department for Education (DfE), to assist Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to consider how local safeguarding arrangements can support the specific requirements of childminders with their safeguarding responsibilities.

Every day, approximately 275,000 children in England are cared for by registered childminders and, due to the frequency of their contact with children, they can play a key role in the prevention or early identification of the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, and any changes in a child's behavior which warrant concern.

**In 2007, a registered childminder who cared briefly for Baby P informed social services of injuries to him and was also in a position to notice some of the key signs of abuse and neglect – reporting that he was often unwashed, smelt of vomit, arrived with a dirty nappy and demonstrated aggressive behaviour (headbutting, scratching and biting).**

This case highlights the role childminders can play in the protection of children, and how important it is for LSCBs to develop an effective way of involving childminders when pooling information to gain a full picture of a child about whom there are concerns.

According to Lord Laming, education and early years providers are “vital partners in protecting children and they need to be willing and proactive in discharging their statutory duty to cooperate on child safeguarding.”

With Eileen Munro's Safeguarding review intending to establish how LSCBs can become more effective in their roles as a strategic leadership group, the findings may impact on how LSCBs work in the future; this is likely to include a strengthened contribution to multi-agency learning and development, and strategic leadership locally in relation to the quality and impact of child protection services.

NCMA believes it is important that LSCBs develop working practices to strengthen ties with the home-based childcare workforce. This document has been provided as guidance for LSCBs to consider the current support and communication channels with this sector, and NCMA would appreciate if the attached feedback form could be completed and sent to:

**Safeguarding Officer, NCMA, Royal Court, 81 Tweedy Road,  
Bromley, BR1 1TG  
[info@ncma.org.uk](mailto:info@ncma.org.uk)**

In April 2011 we will be sending out a more comprehensive feedback document to gain your full opinion of this guidance document and to enquire whether it has had an impact on working practices.

## 2. About childminding

Every day, around 60,000 registered childminders in England care for the children of working and student parents, including disabled children, children with additional requirements, babies, pre-school and school-age children, making home-based childcare the second most popular form of formal childcare in England and Wales.

Registered childminders work in their own homes, providing childcare for up to six children at any one time, aged from birth to 8-years. Registered childminders are usually self-employed and are registered and inspected in England by Ofsted. They may offer full day care, overnight care, childcare before or after school or during school holidays.

Registered childminders may look after siblings of different ages and many children stay with the same childminder for years – some well into secondary school. They can often provide flexible childcare, and in some areas there are childminding networks with childminders who have specific training to work with disabled children and children with additional requirements.

Registered childminders are required by Ofsted in England to ensure that all children in their care are safe from harm. Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and the accompanying guidance document (Working Together to Safeguard Children) place a statutory duty, “on key persons and bodies to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging their functions, they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.”

For childminders in England, the Welfare Requirements contained within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)\* set out what they must do to keep young children safe. The EYFS applies to all registered childcare providers looking after children aged between birth and 5-years, but represents good practice across all age groups. The welfare requirements of the EYFS are can be viewed online at [www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/83954](http://www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/83954)

Childminders are also committed to the five outcomes in Every Child Matters that are key to children and young people’s well being. These are: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic wellbeing. In order for childminders to support children to achieve these outcomes, they will need the assistance and support of LSCBs and local authorities, especially for the outcome of enabling children to “stay safe.”

\* please note that the EYFS is currently under review

### 3. Working with childminders

LSCBs are encouraged to consider how they can develop their working practices to strengthen ties with the home-based childcare workforce. NCMA would encourage LSCBs to spend time establishing relationships with registered childminders and ensuring that there is a good level of knowledge and expertise amongst staff. In relation to safeguarding, this may entail providing training for childminders that relates to the local authority's policy and procedures. Section four covers in more detail the areas to focus on.

The unique nature of the home-based setting means that registered childminders have additional considerations to support the development of their safeguarding processes:

- they do not deliver services within a “traditional” organisational framework referred to in many statutory and procedural documents
- they are often self-employed and usually work alone, and are therefore particularly vulnerable to incidents of allegations and complaints
- they are generally unavailable to attend training during Monday to Friday business hours
- childminders providing specialist support for more vulnerable children (such as respite care and the care of children referred by social services departments) would benefit from advanced child protection training and a clear support network to aid their practice.

The then DCSF (now the Department for Education) commissioned NCMA in October 2009 to undertake a survey of its members' views and practices in the area of child protection, as part of a larger piece of work on child protection in early years settings. The following advisory information is based on the results of the survey.

## 4. Developing working practices to strengthen ties with childminders

### **Publicise up to date information, guidance and support**

It is important for local authorities to publicise their services actively to registered childminders and be clear how and in what format guidance and procedures are made available. Documents should be clear, easy to understand, consistent within the LSCB area and distributed by a well-known source. Information published by the local authority and NCMA is reported as the most widely read by registered childminders, followed by guidance published by central government.

### **Provide clear contact points**

Registered childminders need a clear contact point within the local authority/social services if they are to seek further information and/or advice on child protection matters; act on concerns about a child attending their setting who they consider may be at risk; or make an alert or referral. As childminders provide flexible care, which can include overnight stays, this contact point needs to be available 24-hours a day. This, depending on local arrangements, may include providing contact numbers for both the local authority's main contact point and the out of hours duty team.

### **Supporting childminders who act on their concerns**

Support should be provided to ensure childminders have the confidence to act on concerns, and overcome worries about the potential impact of a mistaken referral and the possible repercussions on the childminder and his/her family. LSCBs should consider what contact information is available to signpost for childminders to receive support so that they are not prevented or discouraged from making a referral.

Ultimately a childminder making a referral regarding a child's welfare will be acting in the child's best interests, and, even if the referral/alert was mistaken, this practice should not be discouraged. As in all cases of safeguarding and the protection of welfare, feedback should be given to the referrer within a local authority's agreed timescales – this represents good practice on behalf of the local authority and will also show the childminder that their concerns are being taken seriously.

## **Deliver safeguarding training at accessible times**

Registered childminders provide a flexible childcare service which will often fit around varied working patterns, so it can be difficult for them to find the time to access training courses during the conventional working day.

LSCBs can overcome this by considering the accessibility of training courses and if they are being held at convenient times and locations for childminders. This may mean making training available at evenings and weekends, or considering how the course is delivered with the option of distance learning or e-learning, should this be sufficient to ensure that they carry out their safeguarding responsibilities competently and with confidence.

## **Provide advanced training**

Registered childminders provide childcare for up to six children at any one time aged from birth to 8-years, and many children stay with the same childminder for a number of years. Therefore a childminder may come into contact with a broad range of challenges and issues which may impact on children of a variety of ages.

It is important to meet the need for greater access to more advanced training and/or courses tailored to the childminding workforce. LSCBs should be prepared to consult with childminders when developing safeguarding training, and to meet the demand for training so childminders do not have difficulty obtaining a place. They should also consider the appropriateness of a charging policy which may present a barrier for childminders to attend.

## **Sharing information**

Childminders are confident in their role to share information with parents, and to address child protection issues. With regard to sharing information with other professionals, the majority of childminders are confident in making judgements about whether to share information about a child with practitioners outside their setting. It is important that safeguarding training clarifies responsibility for disseminating information, and who to share such information with.

## 5. Supporting childminders who are the subject of an allegation

Registered childminders are in a unique position as they are often self-employed and normally work alone. This means parents can build a close relationship with their child's carer, but it also means they are particularly vulnerable if there is an allegation or complaint made against them as they do not work in an organisational framework.

Childminders share their homes with the children they care for, and their own children may be an important part of the lives of their minded children. As work and home life are so closely linked, being the subject of an allegation will be particularly stressful. Stress could be emotional or financial – childminders may lose income if a child is removed from their care or if their registration is suspended.

Due to the uniqueness of childminder settings LSCBs should be aware that information is available to show who the registered childminder can contact if their registration to operate has been suspended. Support should be provided to the childminder through an effective allegation management process.

It is important for childminders to be supported during an investigation, informed in writing about the nature of concerns, inquiry procedures, given information about independent advice and what support they will receive from within the local authority.

### **Strengthening the support processes – hints and tips**

- provide clear guidance on the level of safeguarding training and knowledge required by childminders in the LSCB area
- have a clear relationship and agreed channels of communication with the childminding sector
- make support available to childminders – including advice, information and emotional support in reporting child protection concerns
- provide clear contact points for advice and the referral of concerns by childminders
- provide clear guidance on childminders' responsibilities for sharing information
- work closely with local authority early years teams and NCMA to develop robust procedures for childminders and childminding networks.

## 6. Resources

### **NCMA Safeguarding Policy**

NCMA's Safeguarding Children Policy outlines the Association's commitment to safeguarding children and the expectations of staff working for NCMA.

You can download the policy via the following link:

[www.ncma.org.uk/about\\_ncma/work\\_for\\_us/safeguarding\\_children.aspx](http://www.ncma.org.uk/about_ncma/work_for_us/safeguarding_children.aspx)

### **The Role of Ofsted**

Ofsted protocols for working with Local Safeguarding Children Boards (formally area child protection committees) were updated in April 2010 and are available to view at:

[www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Protocols-between-Ofsted-and-other-organisations-in-relation-to-childcare](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Protocols-between-Ofsted-and-other-organisations-in-relation-to-childcare)

### **The Role of NSPCC**

The NSPCC runs a wide range of services for both children and adults, including national helplines and local projects, at [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk) or call the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000.

### **Guidance on Handling Allegations**

Procedures for working with people against whom allegations arise are outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010:

<http://publications.education.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00305-2010>

Guidance, which supplements Working Together to Safeguard Children, on Handling Allegations of Abuse made against Adults who Work with Children and Young People can be downloaded from [www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations)

### **Early Years Foundation Stage(EYFS)\* welfare requirements**

For childminders in England, the welfare requirements contained within the EYFS set out what they must do to keep young children safe. They can be viewed online at:

[www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/83954](http://www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/83954)

\* please note that the EYFS is currently under review

## 7. Audit tool

This audit tool is designed to highlight the key questions to aid a review of current working processes, and support the identification of weak areas and potential for improvements to strengthen links with registered childminders. The feedback form, which will be made available in March, will be an opportunity to report back to NCMA on the audit of current working processes which has been undertaken.

**LSCB has an established relationship and agreed channels of communication with the childminding sector**



in place



planned



not in place

Additional notes:

**LSCB consults with childminders to ensure their views are taken into account when safeguarding training is being developed**



in place



planned



not in place

Additional notes:

**Effective data management systems in place to record, analyse and monitor training for childminders to meet intended purposes and outcomes**



in place



planned



not in place

Additional notes:

**Clear guidance is available on the level of safeguarding children training required by childminders:**

- basic awareness
- multi-agency (intensive)
- e-learning package



in place



planned



not in place

Additional notes:

**Training for registered childminders is available at weekends and evenings on a rolling programme**



in place



planned



not in place

Additional notes:

**LSCB has agreed arrangements to support childminders in identification and reporting of safeguarding children issues**



in place



planned



not in place

Additional notes:

**Support is available to childminders, including advice/information and emotional support in reporting child protection concerns, and is reviewed on a rolling programme**



in place



planned



not in place

Additional notes:

**The appropriateness of each childminder's response to safeguarding children issues is monitored**



in place



planned



not in place

Additional notes:

**The relationship and lines of accountability between childminders and the local authority and LSCB are robust and support the challenging of local practice/arrangements**



in place



planned



not in place

Additional notes:

**The LSCB includes a senior partner responsible for championing childminders**



in place



planned



not in place

Additional notes:

**National Childminding Association**  
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0845 880 0044  
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Code CP04 03/11

