



Department  
for Education

# **Childminder recruitment and retention**

**Government consultation**

**Launch date 15 March 2024**

**Respond by 10 May 2024**

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## Ministerial foreword

This government is committed to building a strong foundation for every child and supporting working families to access flexible, affordable, and high-quality childcare. This is vital for giving children the best start in life, building a strong economy by allowing parents to enter employment, take on more hours, and have the freedom to choose childcare that works best for themselves and their children. With the cost of living continuing to rise, we are committed to doing everything we can to support families with their finances while keeping people in high-wage, secure jobs that help grow the economy.

In the Spring Budget 2023, this government announced the single biggest investment in childcare ever made in England, and by 2027-28 we expect to be spending more than £8 billion every year on early years education and childcare. We are delivering transformative reforms – including the expansion of our free childcare offer, so that children of eligible working parents can access 30 hours free childcare per week, and new wraparound funding – to ensure high-quality and affordable childcare is accessible to all.

Never has our dedicated workforce of childcare professionals who work with skill and care to provide quality, flexible childcare for families been more important. That is why we have announced ambitious measures to help grow the workforce and are investing £400 million in 2024-25 into the rates we provide to local authorities to fund the entitlements, building on the £204 million we invested in 2023-24.

Childminders are a key part of the early education and childcare market. They offer care that can be tailored to the needs of parents and children. Children enjoy the benefits of being cared for in a nurturing environment, while childminders can work more flexibly and even care for their own children during their working day. Childminders get to be their own boss, running and growing their own business in a rewarding career that is shown to produce high-quality outcomes for children.

The reforms announced in the Spring Budget 2023 are a great opportunity for childminders to thrive in the childcare sector, and we are proud of the successful launch of our childminder grant scheme, which has already started to provide funding for new childminders to start their career journey. But we know there is more to do to support childminders to join and remain in the sector.

That is why we are consulting on proposals to support childminder recruitment and retention and support the role of childminder agencies in the sector. We are seeking views on our proposals, as well as gathering evidence on how we can best support childminders in future.

We look forward to receiving your responses.

# Introduction

## What are childminders and why are they important?

Childminders are childcare professionals who:

- provide paid childcare, predominantly from their own homes, for children under the age of 8 for more than 2 hours a day.
- must follow the requirements outlined in the [early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#) statutory framework, when caring for children aged 0-5-years-old, delivering high-quality early education.
- must register with Ofsted, or an Ofsted-regulated childminder agency (CMA).
- can work with up to two other childminders or childminder assistants under their registration.
- can apply to work up to 50% of their time on any non-domestic premises.

The same rules apply for providers of childcare on domestic premises (CODP), except they must work with a minimum of three other childcare providers or assistants, meaning a minimum of four people come together to provide childcare in a domestic setting.

Both childminders and providers of CODP represent an important part of the early years sector, and they can, and do play a vital role, in providing wraparound childcare for school-age children. Their childcare offer is unique and flexible childcare for working parents. Largely home-based and working with smaller groups of children, childminders can build closer relationships with the children they care for whilst supporting their learning and development. 97% of Ofsted registered childminders were rated good or outstanding at their last inspection.<sup>1</sup> CMAs also play an important role in recruiting and retaining childminders and currently work with 4% of childminders.<sup>2</sup> As do local authorities (LAs) in providing access to information, training, and advice.

## Why do we need more childminders?

To support the delivery of the government's childcare reforms and give parents greater childcare choices, we need childminders more now than ever.

We therefore want to do more to increase the recruitment of new childminders and to retain them for longer.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/childcare-providers-and-inspections-management-information>

<sup>2</sup> [Childcare providers and inspections: management information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## **How are we planning to improve the recruitment and retention of childminders?**

We have spoken to childminders, the bodies that regulate them, and those who represent them, who told us some of the biggest challenges childminders face are the time and cost of registering; property restrictions; issues related to entitlement funding and universal credit; feelings of isolation; a lack of recognition for their professionalism; and business administration processes.

We are already taking action to support prospective and current childminders and providers of CODP, including through the uplift in funding for early years, the new wraparound funding, and the new flexibilities provided for by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. Childminders will also benefit from the childminder start-up grant scheme, open to all new childminders who registered on or after 15 March 2023.

This consultation gives you the opportunity to give your views on proposals which aim to address the issues that matter most to childminders and providers of CODP, reflecting the fantastic contribution they make to the childcare sector and their local communities.

## **Who this is for**

- Current, former, and prospective childminders and providers of CODP
- Other early years providers
- Childminder agencies (CMAs)
- Parents
- Ofsted
- Organisations that represent childminders, providers of CODP and other early years providers
- Local authorities and the local government association
- Regulated healthcare professionals who work in GPs surgeries
- Landlords and any relevant representative bodies

## **Issue date**

The consultation was issued on 15 March 2024.

## Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the team by email:

[Childminder.Consultation@education.gov.uk](mailto:Childminder.Consultation@education.gov.uk)

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: [Consultations.Coordinator@education.gov.uk](mailto:Consultations.Coordinator@education.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

## Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

## The response

The results of the consultation and the department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in Autumn 2024.

## About this consultation

This document includes a consultation on three specific policy proposals that we believe will make a difference to childminders, and potentially other early years providers.

These are:

- improving the registration process by enabling regulated healthcare professionals other than GPs to complete GP health declarations for new childminders.
- ensuring childminders, and potentially other early years providers, are paid entitlement funding monthly by LAs, if they request it.
- giving CMAs new flexibilities to enable them to thrive and grow.

These proposals also apply to providers of childcare on domestic premises, meaning more providers will benefit from these changes.

To help inform future policy development, this document also seeks to gather evidence on what additional support childminders, providers of CODP, and CMAs want and need.

We would like to hear your views on our proposals.

Please note all proposals and policies in this consultation apply to England only.

## Questions overview

The table below shows who questions are aimed at.

**All respondents are welcome to answer all questions, however they may find that some are less relevant to them.**

Question number	These questions are primarily aimed at:
1	Regulated healthcare professionals. Current, former, prospective.
2	Childminders/providers of CODP. Current, former, prospective.
3-4	Private landlords, social housing landlords, housing associations, tenant management organisations, property developers, leaseholder groups. Current, former, prospective.
5-6	Everyone
7-11	Early years providers. Current and former.
12	Local authorities
13-16	Everyone
17-21	Childminders/providers of CODP. Current, former, prospective.
22-28	Everyone, particularly CMAs for questions 25-27

## Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit [DfE consultations on GOV.UK](#) to submit your response.

## Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may request and complete a word document version of the form.

### By email

- [Childminder.Consultation@education.gov.uk](mailto:Childminder.Consultation@education.gov.uk)

### By post

Childminder Consultation Team  
Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

## Deadline

The consultation closes on 10 May 2024.



## About you

The following introductory questions will help us understand more about you and, where relevant, the nature of your business or organisation and the main ways in which you currently interact with the early years profession in England. This will help us direct you to the questions that are most relevant to you and/or your organisation and analyse your responses. We know that not everyone will wish or feel able to answer all the questions in this consultation. However, you will still have the option to answer all the questions if you wish to do so.

### Confidentiality

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal data, may be subject to publication or disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. If you want all or any part of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential. If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it confidential will be considered, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not in and of itself be regarded as legally binding for the Department for Education. The privacy notice is available alongside this consultation.

### Questions about you

- What is your name? *[Free text]*
- What is your email address? *[Free text]*
- In processing your data and meeting legal duties, the government may be expected to share information about your consultation response. In line with the privacy notice, would you like your response to be kept confidential? *[Yes/no]*
- As the government analyses the consultation findings, we may identify direct quotes to include in the published government response – may we use your feedback in this way? *[Yes/no]*
- If the government uses a direct quote in the published government response from yourself or your organisation, would you/the organisation like to be anonymised? *[Yes/no]*
- Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation? *[Multiple choice: Individual/organisation]*
  - If you are responding as an individual, we will consider the views within your response to this consultation to be your personal views.
  - If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, we will consider the views within your response to this consultation to be those of your organisation and not necessarily your personal views.

## Individual

- Please select one description of your current role: *[Multiple choice: Child or young person up to age 16; Childminder; Former childminder; Prospective childminder; Childminding assistant; Childminder agency (CMA) associate; Childcare on domestic premises provider; Former childcare on domestic premises provider; Prospective childcare on domestic premises provider; Nurse, Pharmacist, Occupational therapist, Paramedic; GP; Landlord/property developer; Local authority associate; Ofsted associate; Other early years professional; Parent/Guardian of child(ren) aged 14 and under; Other – If other, please describe your role [free text]]*
- Please select one or more descriptions of yourself and of other relevant current or previous experience: *[Multiple choice: Options as per previous question]*
- Which local authority in England are you based in? Please select which local authority in England you live or work in: *[Multiple choice of each LA; If you are based outside England, please specify which part of the United Kingdom and region/s [free text]]*

## Organisation

- Which type of organisation do you represent? Please **only** select that you are responding on behalf of an organisation if you are submitting the cleared and approved official response from the organisation. Individual responses should be submitted in the section previous. *[Multiple choice: Local authority; Childminder agency (CMA); Childminder; Former childminder; Prospective childminder; Childcare on domestic premises provider; Former childcare on domestic premises provider; Prospective childcare on domestic premises provider; Other early years provider; Landlord association/landlord representative bodies; Local government association; Membership organisation/sector representative body; Ofsted; Regulatory body; Healthcare body/trade union; Other; If other, please describe your organisation [free text]]*
- What is your organisation's name? *[Free text]*
- Which local authority in England are you based in? Please select which local authority in England you live or work in: *[Multiple choice of each LA; If you are based outside England, please specify which part of the United Kingdom and region/s [free text]]*

# Childminder recruitment

## Background

There are many benefits to a career in childminding: from running your own business and being your own boss, to working flexibly and from home. There are also many reasons why people enjoy being a childminder: working with children and watching them grow and develop; the independence and flexibility of being self-employed; and being able to care for their own children while earning an income.<sup>34</sup> Childminders registered with a CMA also appreciate the support they receive from their agency, particularly when they are starting and growing their businesses, and the additional connections it provides them with.

In the last year, we have taken action to recruit more childminders through:

- the childminder start-up grant scheme by helping cover registration costs for new childminders who register on or after 15 March 2023.
- new flexibilities on EYFS training requirements at registration, with new childminders now only needing to demonstrate required knowledge of the EYFS at their pre-registration visit rather than complete mandatory training prior to registration.
- ‘Do something BIG. Work with small children’ early years workforce campaign.

We are also working in partnership with Ofsted to improve the registration process, giving applicants a quicker and smoother start to becoming a childminder. As a result: most new childminder registrations are completed in around 10 weeks, down from an average of 12. This has been achieved by pre-booking registration visits, allowing applicants to verify their identity online when requesting a Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check, and phoning applicants to discuss their application at an early stage in the process.

We know that LA social services checks are an important part of the registration process for both Ofsted and CMAs, and we will continue to work with LAs, where there are significant delays to these checks being completed. However, we believe we can do more to encourage new childminders into the sector. This section of the document seeks your views on our key areas where we think we could improve the registration process further.

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<sup>3</sup> [Childminding profession: challenges and opportunities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<sup>4</sup> [Childminder Sustainability in England and Wales - University of Plymouth](#)

### **Case study on married couple who run a childcare business in Reading**

Sandy and Bobby previously had office-based managerial careers. Sandy started childminding after having her daughter – finding it fun and rewarding, she made it a long-term career move, and Bobby subsequently joined her in running the business. Referring to how positive an experience she found childminding to be, Sandy says: “I started childminding to care for our daughter while she was young...and 25 years later, I’m still childminding.”

### **Case study on how a new childminder used the childminder start-up grant**

Mandy worked as a room leader in a private nursery for 10 years, until her husband suffered an accident and Mandy wanted to consider more flexible career options.

Mandy loved working with small children but didn’t have the spare finances to set up a childminding business on her own. That changed when she was able to access the childminder start-up grant, which has paid for beds, highchairs, toys and more for the young children she now cares for. Mandy says: “I wouldn’t be where I am without it. The grant was key to helping me to get back into the workforce and doing something I love.”

## **Consultation proposal: change to new childminder GP health declarations**

As part of the childminder and provider of CODP registration process, Ofsted and CMAs take steps to ensure that applicants have no health issues that could impact their suitability to care for children. Ofsted and CMAs ask the applicant to complete a health declaration, which is then verified by the applicant’s GP. The GP is not ultimately required to assess the suitability of the applicant to operate as a childminder – this is undertaken by Ofsted or the CMA, sometimes with the input of health assessment organisations. CMAs are required through legislation to make enquiries with an applicant’s medical practitioner (GP), while Ofsted carries out the checks as a matter of policy.

Healthcare professionals are best placed to declare relevant details from the applicant’s medical record, particularly in providing background information on the severity of a person’s medical conditions, and their response to treatments. We know however, that health checks can be time consuming (in some cases, taking as long as 12 weeks) though this can vary significantly. While these checks are not a contractual obligation for

GPs, they can be burdensome, and the government has committed to reviewing and reducing such administrative burdens where possible<sup>5</sup>.

We are therefore considering expanding the range of regulated healthcare professionals, working within a GP surgery, who can complete health checks for prospective childminders registering with a CMA. We think this could speed up the process in some cases and remove burdens on GPs, where the GP feels it is appropriate for another regulated healthcare professional to complete the checks.

The Department for Work and Pensions and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency have implemented similar flexibilities for their respective health checks. Ofsted will also consider taking forward this proposal in light of the responses to this consultation.

**Question 1:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should expand the range of regulated health care professionals, working within a GP surgery, who can complete health declarations for prospective childminders to include:

- nurses?
- pharmacists?
- occupational therapists?
- paramedics?

## Gathering evidence: to understand property barriers

When registering as a childminder, an applicant may need to seek permission from their landlord, housing association, LA, or property developer to run a business from their home. A recent survey of Ofsted registered providers showed that 14%<sup>6</sup> of existing childminders had experienced an issue with their tenancy agreement, and 22%<sup>7</sup> of homeowning childminders had been put off expanding their business due to LA planning permission requirements.

For prospective childminders, the data is more limited. We expect that some people will have wanted to become a childminder but, because of problems with their tenancy agreement or with planning permission, have been unable to do so. According to data collected by the CMA Tiney, landlord refusal and LA objection was the second most

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<sup>5</sup> [Bureaucracy busting concordat: principles to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and administrative burdens on general practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/bureaucracy-busting-concordat-principles-to-reduce-unnecessary-bureaucracy-and-administrative-burdens-on-general-practice)

<sup>6</sup> [Early Years Foundation Stage: A survey of early years providers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674442/early-years-foundation-stage-a-survey-of-early-years-providers.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [Early Years Foundation Stage: A survey of early years providers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674442/early-years-foundation-stage-a-survey-of-early-years-providers.pdf)

cited reason for prospective childminders dropping out of training, totalling 12% of those who left the process.<sup>8</sup> We therefore want to ensure that prospective and current childminders, who provide a high standard of childcare, are not prevented from operating due to property-related barriers.

Through engaging with the property sector, we know that landlords may be restricted by insurance and mortgage conditions, but that there are clear actions we can take to build the confidence of the property sector in opening their doors to childminders where they are able to. The Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing has already written an open letter to the property sector, encouraging them to be flexible in allowing childminders to operate from home.

We plan to share best practice on how LAs can support childminders to work from home, for example by working with the property sector to address issues surrounding restrictive covenants on new build properties and linking up childminders who have been refused permission to operate a childminding business from their home with other childminders who have received permission in their local area. We also plan to develop more information for landlords and housing associations to address any potential misconceptions and grow their understanding of the requirements that childminders must meet regarding floor space, fire safety and the condition of their properties.<sup>9</sup>

In combination with the new flexibilities provided for in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 – which will increase the time childminders can spend working from non-domestic premises and introduce a new category of childminder that can work 100% of their time from non-domestic premises – we believe these actions will go some way to help childminders. We are keen to gain further insight on what more we can do to help people overcome these potential barriers.

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<sup>8</sup> [Support for childcare and the early years \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk)

<sup>9</sup> [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

### **Case study on Cambridgeshire County Council**

Cambridgeshire County Council (CC) found that restrictive covenants on new build developments were preventing childminders from operating at home, reducing the overall supply of childcare.

Cambridgeshire CC addressed this issue by tabling a successful motion that all new build developments in the area exempt childminders from the restrictive covenants that prevent businesses operating from these properties. Cambridgeshire CC are implementing this approach across their 5 district councils, helping to boost the availability of childcare in areas where group-based settings are sparser.

Annette Brooker, Head of Early Years, Childcare and School Readiness at Cambridgeshire CC, says: "This was an important cross-team approach, and we can already see the impact...This is especially important as we develop places to support early years expansion."

### **Case study on Royal Borough of Greenwich**

When a prospective childminder approached the Royal Borough of Greenwich about their landlord refusing them permission to run their business from home, the early years team at Greenwich engaged with their existing childminders regarding the issue. One childminder was willing to welcome the prospective childminder into operating from their home, with a view to expanding their own business. The prospective childminder therefore had a potential route to starting their career in childminding despite it not being possible to work from their own property.

**Question 2:** Have you ever experienced an issue when seeking approval to operate or expand as a childminder from any of the below? Please select all that apply.

*This could include issues with your tenancy agreement, restrictive covenants, LA planning permission, or being refused permission to operate.*

- Private landlord
- Social housing landlord
- Housing association landlord
- Property developer
- Leaseholder group
- LA
- Other, not listed
- I have not experienced property approval issues

**Question 3:** Would you be willing to have a childminder as a tenant?

**Question 4:** Beyond mortgage and insurance restrictions is there anything that would reduce your perceived risk of a childminder operating from your property?

*This could be more information on childminder property requirements (for example floor space and fire safety), insurance products that cover wear and tear or damage to the property, or anything else beyond the guidance which is already available.*

**Question 5:** Are there any examples of good practice you can share of how LAs, property developers, landlords or other organisations can support childminders to overcome property barriers to childminding?

We are taking action to increase recruitment as noted above but would like to understand if there is any further action you think the government could take.

**Question 6:** Are there any further actions you think the government could take to increase the recruitment of childminders?



# Childminder retention

## Background

We want to do more to ensure that once someone becomes a childminder or provider of CODP, the right conditions are in place for them to stay in the profession. We know from stakeholder engagement that a sizeable proportion of childminders go on to work in education in a variety of roles, including within nurseries or schools.

We recognise that there are various and complex reasons why childminders may leave the profession. Interviews with current and former childminders revealed reasons such as feeling lonely; working long hours; difficulties with the timeliness of entitlement funding and universal credit; low pay; and a perceived lack of status or recognition for their professionalism.<sup>10</sup><sup>11</sup> Others leave for circumstantial reasons, such as retirement. We therefore want to do more to retain childminders for longer, particularly those who have recently joined the profession, or who leave education altogether.

We have already taken action to retain more childminders, including through providing access to continued professional development. Childminders can access support from a range of sources, such as the Stronger Practice Hubs and childminder mentor programme. Those registered with a CMA receive additional support on both professional development and business administration.

Childminders can also now care for more than three young children, when caring for the siblings of the children they already care for, when caring for their own children, or when other exceptions apply, if they maintain the quality of care and the safety and security of the children. This clarification has allowed childminders to work more flexibly in exceptional circumstances, alongside new flexibilities being provided for by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 which will increase – from 3 to 4 – the total number of people that can work together under a childminder registration.

We want to understand what more we can do to increase the retention of childminders. This section of the document therefore seeks your views on further opportunities to support childminders to remain in the sector.

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<sup>10</sup> [Childminding profession: challenges and opportunities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<sup>11</sup> [Childminder Sustainability in England and Wales - University of Plymouth](#)

### **Case study on a longstanding childminder**

Debi became a childminder after having her own child and struggling to find a childminder in her area. She loved being able to earn an income whilst also caring for her own child. Twenty years later, and having left a career as a buyer behind, she loves the flexibility of being a childminder and says that: “I like helping and supporting people, and you get to do that every day in this job.”

### **Case study on a childminder who works with another childminder and childminding assistants**

Claire, a childminder, had previous careers in nursing and teaching. She works with another childminder and part-time childminding assistants.

Claire says that working with others can have a positive impact on providers’ mental health, due to reduced feelings of isolation, and on their practice. She reports that: “Having others to bounce ideas off and identify and address weaknesses/areas for development improves the skillset of staff while simultaneously improving the quality of care in the setting. This effect is especially pronounced when caring for the needs of children with SEND and any safeguarding issues that may come up.”

## **Consultation proposal: change to LA entitlement payments**

LAs are responsible for paying providers to deliver the free early education and childcare entitlements. The early education and childcare statutory guidance states that LAs should pay all providers the full amount owed to them monthly unless they have good reason not to do so, for example, if, after consultation, most providers opt for an alternative method of payment.<sup>12</sup>

The guidance also states that LAs should be mindful of the cash flow concerns of smaller providers, particularly childminders, when making decisions about payment methods, and that LAs should regularly review how they pay providers to ensure they continue to meet the needs of all providers in their area. From our engagement with LAs and childminders, we know that some LAs, such as Swindon, have already taken action to ensure this happens.

However, we are concerned that not all providers in all LAs are being paid monthly where that is their preference. Childminders and organisations who represent

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<sup>12</sup> [Early education and childcare \(applies from 1 April 2024\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/81222/early-education-and-childcare-statutory-guidance-2017.pdf)

childminders have consistently told us that the timing of entitlement payments is creating an issue for them and making it harder for them to run their businesses.

We have also become aware that some childminders are struggling with large entitlement payments by LAs that are made as part of the termly or twice-termly frequencies, as it can impact their eligibility for Universal Credit. Childminding UK's Childminding Sustainability Survey Report 2023/24, which includes 424 member responses, highlights how lump sum payments can affect Universal Credit payments, by making a childminder's earnings appear above the maximum income threshold in a reporting window.<sup>13</sup> In some cases, this means childminders miss out on Universal Credit in the months in which they receive funding or until their funding runs out.

We want to tackle this issue for childminders and providers of CODP, and potentially other early years providers. We propose therefore to strengthen expectations or require LAs to pay providers monthly, if requested. We could encourage LAs to make these changes through amendments to the early education and childcare statutory guidance or require LAs to make these changes through new conditions of funding or legislation. Following consultation, we will decide whether change is required, and if it is, how best to introduce it in the most effective and timely way.

### **Case study on Swindon Borough Council – offering flexible payment frequencies**

Swindon Borough Council (BC) has been offering flexible payment frequencies for 5 years to all childcare providers including childminders.

Providers need to tell Swindon BC whether they want to be paid monthly or termly before the new financial year begins. They can subsequently inform Swindon BC if they want to change their payment frequency again. Changes to payment frequency cannot take place within a term but are applied to the next term's funding.

Swindon BC say that the process of changing payment frequency is straightforward from an administrative perspective, and comment that: "We found monthly payments allowed all providers to manage their finances and keep them sustained during each term. Monthly costs to providers like staffing are then easier to manage. All providers welcome the flexibility of having both options."

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<sup>13</sup> [childminding-sustainability-survey-2023.pdf \(childmindinguk.com\)](https://www.childmindinguk.com/childminding-sustainability-survey-2023.pdf)

**Question 7:** If you are a current or former early years provider, have you ever been in receipt of entitlement funding?

*This is funding paid to you by your LA to deliver the early years entitlements.*

**Question 8:** If you are a current or former early years provider, to what extent do you agree or disagree that receiving entitlement funding payments less frequently than monthly is a problem for you?

**Question 9:** If you are a current or former early years provider, have you ever been in receipt of Universal Credit?

*This is a means-tested payment to help with your living costs.*

**Question 10:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that receiving entitlement funding payments less frequently than monthly affects your eligibility for Universal Credit?

**Question 11:** Have you experienced any other challenges in relation to being a childminder and your universal credit payments?

## **If you are responding on behalf of an LA...**

**Question 12:** Do you offer childminders, providers of CODP, and other early years providers the option to be paid monthly, if requested? If no, what challenges do you foresee paying childminders and/or all providers monthly?

*For example, paying some providers termly or twice termly and others monthly.*

**Question 13:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to strengthen expectations that LAs should pay childminders and providers of CODP monthly, if they request it?

*This could be achieved by amending the early education and childcare statutory guidance to be clearer that we expect LAs to pay childminders/providers of CODP monthly if they request it.*

**Question 14:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to require LAs to pay childminders and providers of CODP monthly, if they request it?

*This could be achieved by introducing new legislation that requires LAs to pay childminders/providers of CODP monthly if they request it.*

**Question 15:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to strengthen expectations that LAs should pay all early years providers (including childminders and providers of CODP) monthly, if they request it?

*This could be achieved by amending the early education and childcare statutory guidance to be clearer that we expect LAs to pay **all** early years providers monthly if they request it.*

**Question 16:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to require LAs to pay all early years providers (including childminders and providers of CODP) monthly, if they request it?

*This could be achieved by introducing new legislation that requires LAs to pay **all** early years providers monthly if they request it.*

## **Gathering evidence: on support for childminders**

We know that childminders can feel lonely day-to-day with small children for company and a high level of responsibility. We also know that some childminders feel isolated from the broader childcare sector and other childminders.

Childminders can already access support from membership organisations, LAs, and CMAs – and through a range of government-funded support offers, including:

- the [childminder mentor programme](#) which offers bespoke support to childminders who look after at least one child aged 0-5-years-old, delivered by experienced early years professionals.
- [Stronger Practice Hubs](#) which work to improve the quality of provision at a local level, learning from the best available evidence, and by building lasting local networks.
- Family Hubs which centralise a range of services in over 75 LAs and are used by some childminder groups as a place to network.

However, we know that the quality, availability, and accessibility of this support varies across the country.

CMAAs offer childminders registered with them many of these kinds of support, but they only work with 4% of childminders.<sup>14</sup> We want to do more to ensure that *all* childminders can access the support they need to remain in the profession and feel part of a wider network and community. As a first step, we want to gather more evidence about what is most effective in supporting childminders to remain in the profession, where childminders currently access this support, and how to make any future support as accessible to childminders as possible.

### **Case study on Northern Lights Stronger Practice Hub, North East**

The Northern Lights Stronger Practice Hub provides advice, shares practice through local experts, and offers evidence-based professional development to early years providers.

The Hub team have been working to provide high-quality, inclusive, and accessible professional development for childminders. This includes collaborating with Tiny Tweeties on the provision of 3 interactive music sessions per month for childminders and the children they care for. The sessions involve dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, exploring puppets and props. Session leads share the theory and objectives of the session with childminders, allowing them to understand and apply evidence-informed strategies in their own homes.

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<sup>14</sup> [Childcare providers and inspections: management information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

**Question 17:** If you access support, what type of support do you access?

**Question 18:** If you access support, where do you access this support from?

**Question 19:** If you access support, to what extent do you agree or disagree this support helps you remain in the childminding profession?

**Question 20:** How could support be offered in a more effective or accessible way?

**Question 21:** Do you have any evidence you can share on how childminder support can improve retention?

## Gathering evidence: on entitlements and wraparound support

The government's transformative childcare reforms announced at Spring Budget 2023 stand to benefit childminders in a range of ways, presenting new opportunities for early years providers to grow their businesses.

The new early years entitlements are intended to help working families with their childcare costs. They will be introduced in three phases so that from September 2025 qualifying working parents of children over 9 months until school age can access 30 hours free childcare per week (38 weeks per year). As part of this, the government will increase the funding rates paid to local authorities to deliver the expanded entitlements which could result in a relatively large hourly income gain for childminders, along with an expected increase in demand.

New investment in the £289 million national wraparound childcare programme, which will support local authorities to introduce or expand paid childcare on either side of the school day (from 8am-6pm) for primary school-age children, will also create new opportunities and additional funding for childminders, particularly in smaller areas where smaller provision is more sustainable. Childminders will be critical to the success of the programme as they have a direct connection between children and families and provide flexible childcare options to meet their needs.

Combined, we therefore hope these new opportunities for childminders – the potential to increase their earnings and change the way they operate their business – encourage more childminders to join the sector and stay for longer.

We want to understand how best we can support childminders to make the most of the new opportunities these offers represent as well as any challenges childminders may experience such as later years training and registration requirements.

### **Case study on a childminder who provides wraparound care**

Kim has been a childminder for 9 years, having previously worked in school administration and business management. Kim is passionate about developing children and helping them to reach their full potential, especially those with speech and language disadvantages.

Kim provides wraparound care as part of her childcare offer. She enjoys caring for younger children and then continuing to look after them when they reach school age, dropping them off and picking them up. She highlights the value of this both to children in terms of continuity of care, and to parents: “Parents value my wraparound offering as they know their child is with a trusted pair of hands after school and the child gets to enjoy being back in a familiar home style environment, while still allowing parents to work.”

**Question 22:** How can the department support childminders to benefit from the increased early years entitlements?

**Question 23:** How can the department support childminders to benefit from the wraparound childcare programme?

We are taking action to ensure more childminders and providers of CODP remain in the profession, as set out here, but would like to understand any further action you think the government could take.

**Question 24:** Are there any further actions you think the government could take to increase the retention of childminders?



# Childminder agencies (CMAs)

## Background

CMAs were introduced in 2014 to give childminders and providers of CODP an alternative registration route to Ofsted and to provide them with more support. While their core offer centres around registration, quality assurance and practice support, CMAs can also offer a range of additional support services such as help with paperwork and business processes, one-to-one support and advice, professional networks and help finding new families.

Despite only representing a small proportion of total childminder numbers (4%), many childminders have reported positive experiences of being registered with a CMA.<sup>15</sup> Local authorities will also still play an important role however, in providing access to information, advice and training as well as assessing a person's suitability to become a childminder by completing social services checks. As the only bodies focused on the recruitment and retention of childminders, CMAs have the potential to increase the number of childminders and childcare places.

We want to ensure that CMAs are transparent, well understood, trusted and able to work effectively with key stakeholders. We also want to ensure that the CMA regulatory framework is proportionate, allowing CMAs to operate effectively and expand, while ensuring safe and high-quality childcare provision

The government's childcare announcement on 4 July 2022 included a commitment to encourage the growth of CMAs. As such, we are taking action to support CMAs and encourage new CMAs into the sector by:

- engaging stakeholders with an interest in the CMA sector to explore actions that would enable the CMA sector to expand effectively.
- clarifying expectations and improving information sharing between CMAs and LAs to speed up background checks and investigating safeguarding issues.
- amending the regulations to include transitional registration arrangements for childminders registered with a CMA that is voluntarily closing to move to Ofsted, ensuring continuity of care and entitlements funding for parents and childminders.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [Childcare providers and inspections: management information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/childcare-providers-and-inspections-management-information)

<sup>16</sup> The Childcare (Childminder Agencies) (Cancellation etc.) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/1922) came into force on 27 November 2023.

We want to take further steps to maximise the important contribution that CMAs can make. This section of the consultation seeks your views on our proposals for CMAs.

### **Case study on tiney CMA**

tiney have been operating as a CMA since 2019. Their offer is underpinned by three key features: dedicated support for childminders through tiney's education and childminding team; access to an extensive professional community of childminders; and robust technology including the tiney app, which helps childminders to manage their business with tools such as contract management, billing, payments, and EYFS-based learning activities.

tiney have grown significantly in recent years and have almost 900 registered childminders as at February 2024, located throughout England. tiney report that around 90% of their recently joined childminders are new to the childminding profession, and that around 40% are new entrants to the childcare sector. Their childminders tend to be relatively young – tiney report around 65% are aged under 40.

tiney charges childminders a joining fee and a %-based membership fee once registered. tiney report that around 500 of their recently registered childminders are eligible to benefit from the childminder start-up grant scheme. tiney find that March to September is a particularly busy period for new registrations, due to people setting up as childminders to coincide with the start of the academic year.

### **Case study on a new tiney childminder**

One Bristol-based childminder was previously an assistant in a care home. They are now registered as a childminder with tiney CMA. They had experience of working in nurseries and decided to re-train as a childminder after having children. They initially found certain factors associated with becoming a childminder daunting, including paperwork and equipment required, but on researching routes to childminding, identified CMAs, and were drawn to tiney's offer. The childminder highlights that: "They've got an app for you and parents to use, they offer training and support. It was the right thing for me."

## **Consultation proposal: giving CMAs more flexibility**

Under current legislation, CMAs must carry out at least one quality assurance visit per childminder or provider of CODP per year of registration (including to those who are not trading, or not practising because they are pregnant or on parental leave), provide their registered early years childminders and early years providers of CODP with at least 20 hours practice support per year of registration, and provide later years childminders and

later years providers of CODP with at least 10 hours' practice support per year of registration. This places time and administrative pressure on CMAs who also provide a range of additional support services.

We know that CMA-registered childminders and providers of CODP value the close relationship they have with their CMA, and we want to maintain this, as well as allow CMAs to continue to provide additional value-added support services that are not legal requirements.

We therefore want to make sure the legal requirements for CMAs to deliver safe and high-quality registration and quality assurance activities continue, while reducing unnecessary burdens so CMAs can retain their appeal and value for childminders and providers of CODP. We think that we could do this by refining certain requirements, where it makes sense to do so, enabling CMAs to operate and expand more efficiently.

As such, we propose changes to the following requirements:

- **quality assurance:** we propose to reduce the required minimum frequency of quality assurance visits from once per year of registration to once per every two years of registration. The pre-registration visit does not count towards this.
- **practice support:** we propose making the practice support that CMAs provide to their registered childminders and providers of CODP optional rather than a legal requirement.

Nevertheless, CMAs would be free to continue operating with their existing arrangements if they and their registered childminders/providers of CODP want to. For example, where there are concerns or issues relating to a registered childminder's/CODP's quality, their CMA may need to review the frequency of quality assurance visits for that provider. If we do introduce these changes, we will work with Ofsted to amend their CMA inspection requirements accordingly.

**Question 25:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should reduce the frequency of quality assurance visits that CMAs are required to carry out from one visit per childminder or provider of CODP per year of registration, to one visit every two years of registration?

**Question 26:** Do you think that there should be any exemptions to this requirement?

*For example, not being required to carry out a quality assurance visit to a non-trading provider, or a childminder who is pregnant or on parental leave; or being required to carry out a quality assurance visit more frequently than once every two years of registration, where there are concerns about a childminder's/provider of CODP's quality.*

**Question 27:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should make the practice support that CMAs provide to their registered childminders and providers of CODP optional rather than a legal requirement?

## Equalities assessment

### Gathering evidence: on particular protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010)

This section asks for your help in identifying any potential impacts of our proposals on people with particular protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnicity), religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

**Question 28:** What comments or concerns do you have, if any, about how the proposals in this consultation document may affect you or individuals (both adults and children) with particular protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010)?

## Glossary of terms

<b>Childminder</b>	A person who is paid to look after children from domestic premises for payment, and who is registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency (CMA).
<b>Provider of childcare on domestic premises (CODP)</b>	When a minimum of four people – including childminders and childminder assistants – come together to provide paid childcare in a domestic setting. They must also be registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency (CMA).
<b>Childminder agency (CMA)</b>	Childminder agencies (CMAs) are private companies that register childminders as an alternative to registering with Ofsted. They provide additional support regarding regulation, safeguarding, finance, continuing professional development (CPD), marketing, and finding new clients. All CMAs are inspected by Ofsted to make sure they are complying with the regulatory requirements.
<b>Entitlement payments</b>	This is funding paid to you by your LA to deliver the early years entitlements.
<b>Wraparound childcare</b>	Childcare that wraps around the conventional school day. It can also refer to provision in the school holidays.
<b>Domestic premises</b>	Somewhere that's used entirely or mainly as a private home.
<b>Non-domestic premises</b>	This includes settings like nurseries, church halls, parts of a school or classrooms.



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