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Policy paper

Childminder agencies

Published 16 September 2025

Applies to England

Terminology

Childminder agencies (CMAs) are organisations that can register and quality assure:

- childminders (with and without domestic premises)
- providers of 'childcare on domestic premises' (CODPs)

In this document, the term 'childminder' refers to both childminders with and without domestic premises, but not to providers of CODPs, who follow different requirements.

The role of childminder agencies

Childminder agencies (CMAs) are expected to:

- assure and improve the quality of childminders and providers registered with them
- take appropriate measures to respond to circumstances affecting providers
- deliver ongoing professional support
- deal with concerns about providers, including:
 - suspensions
 - registration cancellations
 - participating in appeals to tribunals against suspensions

CMAs may also provide other services such as:

- helping parents find a childminder or CODP through brokering, advice and support about the things to consider when choosing a childminder
- increasing the number of childminders in the market by

helping potential childminders understand the various requirements to establish their business and get them up and running

- providing business and marketing support

Ofsted regulates and inspects CMAs. All CMAs must be registered with Ofsted.

Childminders and providers can register with either a CMA or Ofsted.

Rationale for introducing childminder agencies

Legislation allowing the creation of CMAs was introduced in 2014. A related [consultation outlines the aim of CMAs](#) to:

- provide an alternative route into the profession that offers more support to childminders, including training and development and business and marketing support
- increase the number of childminders in the market by helping potential childminders understand the requirements to establish their business and to get them up and running
- help parents find a childminder by offering a brokering service, advice and support about the things to consider when choosing a childminder

Relevant legislation

The [Children and Families Act 2014](#) amended part 3 of the [Childcare Act 2006](#) so CMAs can register with Ofsted. Once CMAs are registered, they can register childminders and

providers of childcare on domestic premises.

Any person or organisation that wishes to [register as a childminder agency in England](#) must submit an [application to register with Ofsted as a CMA](#) and have their application granted before they can operate.

Once registered with Ofsted, CMAs are regulated and inspected by Ofsted. The legal requirements placed on CMAs (including the underpinning legislation) are available in DfE's [guide for childminder agencies](#).

CMA powers and duties

CMAs' legal functions are primarily set out in the [Childcare Act 2006](#). These functions include:

- registration and regulation of childminders and providers of childcare on domestic premises
- quality assurance and monitoring
- support and training
- handling complaints and concerns
- safeguarding responsibilities
- retaining information for Ofsted inspections

Regulations state that during each year of registration, an agency must conduct a minimum of one quality assurance visit (which must be unannounced) to each of their registered providers to assess the standard of care and early education being delivered.

Childminder agency fees and charges

CMAs are independent of government and are entirely self-funded. They are able to set their own fees for the services they provide, which will vary depending on the overall package of support they offer. CMAs should be contacted directly for more information about the services they offer and their fee structure. Check our [list of open childminder agencies](#).

Ofsted inspections

Ofsted inspects CMAs in line with the inspection principles set out in its [childminder agencies: inspection guidance](#) and within the timescales outlined in the [childminder agency inspection requirements for Ofsted](#).

CMAs are only eligible for inspection once they have registered providers on roll. Ofsted carries out the first inspection of a newly registered CMA within 12 months of the date that it registers its first provider. This is because Ofsted assesses an agency's compliance with the regulatory requirements (including requirements that impact on the safety, well-being, learning and development of children cared for by CMA-registered providers) rather than the quality of childcare provision registered with the CMA. CMAs are responsible for assessing and improving the quality of its registered providers.

There are only 2 overall effectiveness inspection outcomes for CMAs:

- effective
- ineffective

Find an Ofsted [CMA inspection report](#).

Government funding for childminders

registered with a CMA

Childminders and providers registered with a CMA are eligible for various government funding initiatives. For example, local authorities can fund early education places for children aged from 9 months old at any early years provider registered with a CMA.

The legal requirements related to the funding of early years provision in England are outlined in the [statutory guidance for local authorities on the provision of early education and childcare](#).

Parents eligible for the Tax Free Childcare (TFC) scheme can use TFC to help pay for any childcare provision registered with a CMA. Providers registered with a CMA can also be paid to support young parents under the [Care to Learn scheme](#).

Updates to policy

Since 1 October 2021, early years CMAs have been required to carry out a minimum of 1 unannounced quality assurance visit to each of their newly-registered early years providers in the first year of the provider's registration. This amended the previous requirement to carry out a minimum of 2 visits in the first year. All other CMA quality assurance visit requirements remain unchanged.

Since 1 November 2024, childminders with domestic premises and providers of childcare on domestic premises have had more flexibility to operate on non-domestic premises. Alternatively, childminders can choose to operate entirely from non-domestic premises.

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