Guidance

# Childminders based at home: Ofsted registration policy

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**Applies to England**

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# Introduction

If you plan to start looking after other people's children, you will fall into one of the following categories:

- You are legally required to join one of our registers.
- You do not have to register but may do so voluntarily – for example, if you look after children over the age of 8.
- You cannot register – for example, you are only looking after children related to you (including if you are their step-parent or otherwise have parental responsibility for them).

The Childcare Act 2006 says that childcare is any form of care for a child, including education or any other supervised activity.

**It is a criminal offence to provide unregistered childcare or to work from unapproved premises if you are legally required to register. Ofsted is responsible for making sure that only people who are suitable and ready to provide childcare are registered.**

**It is an offence to knowingly make a false or misleading statement in an application to register.**

In order to register, you will need to know the kind of childcare you are planning to provide – in particular, how many children you will be looking after, what age they will

be, and when and where you plan to look after them.

You will need to know whether you are disqualified from providing childcare, because if you are you will not be able to apply to register. If you are disqualified, you may be able to apply for a waiver.

You also need to know which register(s) you should apply for and which type of provider you should register as.

## The childcare registers

Each childcare register has a different set of requirements that you must comply with once registered. The childcare registers are:

- Early Years Register – if you will be caring for children at any point between their birth and the 31 August after their fifth birthday.
- Compulsory part of the General Childcare Register – if you will be caring for children between the 1 September after their fifth birthday and their eighth birthday.
- Voluntary part of the General Childcare Register – if you are looking after children aged 8 and over, or are exempt from needing to register, you can choose to apply to register on this.

Find out more about the different early years and childcare registers.

## Types of childcare

Types of childcare include:

- Childminder based at home (‘childminder with domestic premises’ ) – up to 4 people (including you) looking after children, partly or always in someone’s home.
- Childminder based outside the home (‘childminder without domestic premises’) – up to 4 people (including you) looking after children somewhere that is not someone’s home.
- ‘Childcare on domestic premises’ – 5 or more people looking after children, mostly or always in someone’s home.

- ‘Childcare on non-domestic premises’ – any number of people looking after children somewhere that is not someone’s home.

If you provide certain types of childcare, you do not need to register with Ofsted. This means that you are exempt from registration.

This page explains the type of registration called ‘childminder based at home’.

It covers who can apply to register as a childminder based at home and the requirements and legal obligations you must meet.

You must register as a childminder based at home if you meet all the following criteria:

- You care for a child or children under the age of 8.
- You are not related to the children, and do not have parental responsibility for any of them.
- You get paid to look after the children.
- You look after the children for more than 2 hours a day.
- You look after them mostly in your own home or someone else’s home – you can work in other non-domestic places for some of the time. (If you are only caring for up to 2 families at the same time in the home of one of the children, you may be exempt – see exemptions page.)

If you fall into this category, you must register with Ofsted or a childminder agency (CMA) as a childminder based at home unless you are exempt from registration.

CMAs register childminders and providers of childcare on domestic premises. They can help their providers with training, business support, advice and finding parents who wish to use their services.

If you register with a CMA you cannot register with Ofsted.

Childminders who are based at home and register with Ofsted may also ask to register as a nanny as part of their childminder based at home registration. You can ask to do this at any point after your application has been submitted.

Being registered as a childminder carries significant safeguarding responsibilities. Once registered, you will have the sole responsibility for the care of children and the protection of their welfare, including who else comes into contact with the children when they are in your care. This includes very young or otherwise particularly

vulnerable children who are unable to communicate concerns or protect themselves. The application process is therefore designed to ensure that only those individuals who are competent and suitable to care for and be in regular contact with children are registered.

> There is a separate type of childminder registration called ‘childminder based outside the home’ (sometimes called ‘childminder without domestic premises’), for people who always work from somewhere other than a home, like a community or village hall. If this applies to you, find out more at Childminders based outside the home.

## Suitability checks

This page explains the checks we carry out to make sure that you are suitable to look after children.

When you apply to register with Ofsted, we will check that you (and anyone who lives and/or works at the premises where childcare is or will be provided) are suitable to care for children and/or be in regular contact with children. You need to be 18 or over and have the right to work in the UK. Once registered, you must continue to meet the requirements of registration.

Find out more about how we determine your suitability.

# The registered person

As a childminder based at home, you will register as an individual and will be the ‘registered person’ for your provision. You cannot register as an organisation.

# Where a childminder based at home can operate

If you are registered as a childminder based at home, you will normally operate out of your or someone else's home, for example the home of another childminder.

You must make sure that the premises where you will be providing childcare are fit for purpose and suitable for children of the age of those you will be caring for, and for the type of activities to be provided. This includes overall floor space and outdoor spaces.

Your premises must be ready to use as soon as your registration is granted. This means any significant building work must have been completed.

If your premises are not ready to use, we will not be able to approve your application.

## Operating from non-domestic premises

You can apply to spend some of your time running childcare from other places ('non-domestic premises') as long as for some of the time your provision is run/operated from your domestic premises. Non-domestic premises include places like nurseries, church halls, outdoor areas, parts of a school and classrooms. They also include any area or any vehicle used for childcare, such as woodlands or a play bus.

You must tell Ofsted about these places when you apply for registration. If you want to add more premises after you have registered, you must tell us using an EYA form. You can find more information and download the form here: EYA form.

# Banned dog breeds

Ofsted and the Department for Education are clear that banned dog breeds are not compatible with childcare. Banned dog breeds (meaning dogs to which section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 applies, including the XL Bully type) must not be kept at or be present on the premises at any time.

We have taken steps to help us identify where a banned dog breed may be present on childcare premises. If we find a banned dog breed on the premises, we will take action to keep children safe.

# How many children you can look after

Your staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety.

This means that you must make sure that children are adequately supervised by the right number of people. The number of children being looked after per person is referred to as the staff-to-child ratio.

The ratio that you must provide depends on which register you are on.

For example, childminders on the Early Years Register can look after a maximum of 6 children. Of these, no more than 3 may be young children (a child is a young child until the 31 August following their fifth birthday), and there should only be 1 child under the age of one. There are exceptions to this, such as if you are caring for siblings or your own child. More information is set out in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework.

Find out more about specific ratios on the individual requirements page for each register: Registration requirements.

# How we determine your suitability

The law states that an applicant must be an individual that is ‘suitable’ to provide early years or later years childminding or childcare provision. This is a requirement set out in legislation for each type of childcare provider that registers with Ofsted on the Early Years Register and/or the General Childcare Register. The law sets different requirements for each type of childcare role.

Once registered, the provider must remain suitable at all times. Other people associated with your registration who care for or are in regular contact with children must also remain suitable.

If we decide that you or anyone associated with your application is not suitable, we may refuse your application.

Read more about how we determine suitability and the types of checks we carry out: Ofsted suitability checks for childminders and childcare providers.

# Suitability checks

We carry out checks on all childcare applicants and anyone associated with an application, to make sure that they are suitable to care for and be in regular contact with children. We also carry out checks on certain people who want to join an active registration.

The checks we carry out vary depending on which register you are applying to join. Some will need to be arranged by you; we will arrange the others.

If you are a registered childcare provider and are making a new application to register, we may be able to carry over checks from your previous application. This means that new checks might not be required. We will contact you if this is the case.

If you have recently resigned your registration and are making a new application, you may be able to carry over your previous checks if you apply within 3 months of your resignation.

You will need to arrange:

- a DBS check (a home-based 'enhanced DBS check with barred lists') – you can apply for DBS checks through the Ofsted DBS application service
- a health declaration form signed by you and signed or stamped by your GP (if you are applying to join the Early Years Register)
- a certificate of good conduct (if you have lived abroad in the last 5 years)
- references and employment history (if you are applying to join the Early Years Register)

Checks we carry out include:

- a 'known to CMA' check (for people who have previously applied to or been registered with a CMA)
- a review of our records to see whether you are currently, or have been previously, known to Ofsted
- a local authority children's services check(s)
- a military check (where applicable)

You can find full information about these checks on our suitability checks page.

# Who you must tell us about

We need to know about anyone who lives or works in a home in which you will be looking after children. You are responsible for ensuring that anyone living or working on the premises is suitable. This includes anyone who does any kind of work in the home while children are present, for example a cleaner or gardener or someone working on a voluntary basis. This means making sure that they have received the required training and passed any required checks to fulfil their roles set out in the EYFS and General Childcare Register requirements. Find out more about registration requirements for providers.

We also need to know about people who only live in the home for some of the time, for example if they are away studying but come back during the holidays or stay overnight on a regular basis.

Anyone aged 16 or over who lives or works in the home will need to get a DBS check to provide to Ofsted.

This needs to be of a particular type:

- Anyone who works in, but does not live in, the home will need an 'enhanced DBS check with children's barred lists'.
- Anyone who lives in the home will need a 'home-based enhanced DBS check with children's barred lists'.

You can find the details and apply on our page Childcare providers: who needs a DBS check. We will not be able to accept your application unless all relevant people have the right kind of DBS check.

We will also contact the relevant local authority children's services department(s) about these people.

We will not carry out checks on anyone aged under 16, but you must let us know about anyone living in the home where childcare is provided. Anyone caring for children will also need to provide the names and dates of birth of their own children, even if they do not live at the home where childcare is being provided.

When anyone living in your home turns 16 you must notify us at Report new people in the setting, and they must obtain a DBS check of the type listed above.

If any new people start to help you provide childcare after you have registered, you must notify us about them at Report new people in the setting.

You do not need to let us know about anyone who:

- visits occasionally and will not have unsupervised contact with children (for example, a friend or relative who comes round for lunch once a week)
- works in the home when childcare is not taking place (for example, cleaning in the evenings or at weekends)

As a childminder based at home, you are responsible for ensuring that anyone who has regular contact with children is suitable.

## Unsupervised contact with children

You must not allow anyone who has not had their suitability checked by Ofsted to have unsupervised contact with children.

Those who will be caring for children with you cannot start work until they have had their suitability confirmed by Ofsted.

Once a person's suitability has been confirmed, you as the provider remain responsible for their ongoing suitability.

# Working with others

You can work alone or with up to 3 other people as a childminder based at home. This includes:

- childminders (registered with Ofsted or a CMA)
- childminder assistants
- apprentices
- students
- volunteers

If you plan to work with more than 4 people (including you) at any one time, you will need to register as a 'childcare on domestic premises' provider. Find out more at Childcare on domestic premises.

## Childminder assistants

A childminder assistant is anyone who helps you to look after children who they are not related to. They are counted as a childminder assistant whether they are paid or not – students, volunteers and apprentices are all considered to be childminder assistants.

You must let Ofsted know about any childminder assistants who will be working with you. We will check them to make sure that they are suitable to look after children. They cannot begin to work with you until their suitability has been confirmed by us in writing.

Childminder assistants can be left in charge of children for up to 2 hours a day. However, they cannot be left in sole charge of children until they have received a letter from us confirming suitability, and you have obtained permission from the parents of each child. The childminder assistant will only receive a suitability letter if you are already registered as a childminder.

All volunteers will need to have an enhanced DBS with children's barred list check if they carry out childcare that meets the definition of regulated activity. (Volunteers were previously exempt from being considered for regulated activity if they were supervised, but this exemption was removed on 1 September 2026.)

# Training and qualifications

Before you register as a childminder based at home, you will need to carry out certain training – for example, safeguarding and first aid.

You should ensure that your assistants complete the relevant training.

The training required depends on which register you are applying to join. Find out more about registration requirements for providers.

## Training requirements for the different Ofsted registers

To be registered on the Early Years Register:

- you must have attended child protection training that helps you to identify, understand and appropriately respond to signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity
- you must have a current first-aid certificate. For people caring for young children and babies, this must be a paediatric first-aid certificate and must be renewed every 3 years

To join the compulsory part of the General Childcare Register:

- you must have attended child protection training and have completed a relevant childminding course
- at least one person looking after children must have an appropriate first-aid qualification

To join the voluntary part of the General Childcare Register:

- at least one person looking after children must have an appropriate first-aid qualification
- at least one person looking after children must have either a minimum level 2 qualification in an area of work relevant to the childcare you are providing, or training in the common core skills

# Registration visits

Everyone applying to join the Early Years Register will receive a registration visit. This will take place once all your checks are complete. You will have been given a proposed registration visit date as part of our initial review of your application, and this date will also be included in your acknowledgement email. If all required checks are completed in time for this date, an inspector will contact you to confirm the exact time and any arrangements needed. The inspector will give you the opportunity to discuss and/or provide information on any potential equalities duties, including

reasonable adjustments.

As part of your registration visit, we will review your knowledge and understanding of any completed child protection and safeguarding training. This will include assessing your ability to recognise, respond to, and appropriately report or refer any concerns relating to the safety and wellbeing of children, including concerns about the conduct or behaviour of staff or other people working with children.

If you only apply to join the General Childcare Register, you will receive either a visit or a video call to check your understanding of the requirements for registration.

A registration visit will include the following:

- We will assess your suitability to be a childcare provider, care for children and/or be in regular contact with children.
- We will check the documentation you need in order to register, and verify your identity.
- We will carry out a full tour of the home in which you will be looking after children, inside and outside (even areas that are not being used for childcare). We may also check any additional premises you are planning to use. We will not explicitly check whether you have approval from your landlord to work from your premises. However, you will be expected to comply with the relevant legal requirements. If we become aware that you have not complied with these, we will take this into account when we assess your application.
- We will check your knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the register(s) you have applied to join, and of your safeguarding responsibilities.
- If you are applying to join the Early Years Register, we will check your understanding of safer eating and safer sleeping requirements.
- You must demonstrate that you have the appropriate skills and knowledge to provide childcare, and a clear understanding of your role and responsibilities in providing it.
- If anything has come up during our checks that we need to discuss with you, we may do this during our visit or we may contact you separately.
- If we need to discuss any information with anyone you have told us will be living or working in the home, we may do so during our visit, or we may contact them separately.

## Documents to show the inspector

Inspectors will ask to see the following documents during your registration visit:

| Document type | Examples |
|---|---|
| Photo ID | Passport or driving licence |
| Proof of address (2 pieces of evidence) | Gas, electricity, water or council tax bill, or a letter from a government agency |
| | Credit card, bank or mortgage statement |
| Proof of any name changes | Marriage certificate or decree absolute |
| Employment history | CV or details of where you have worked |
| First-aid training | Paediatric first-aid certificate |
| Childcare training | Certificates |
| DBS checks | Certificates for you and everyone aged 16 or older who lives or works in your home |
| Driving documents | Driving licence, car insurance and MOT certificate (if you will be driving children) |

Ofsted's code of conduct sets out the expectations for inspectors and providers during Ofsted inspections and visits.

## Deferring your registration visit

We will only defer your registration visit in exceptional circumstances.

We may agree to defer your registration visit for up to 16 weeks if there are:

- unexpected delays to building work

- exceptional personal circumstances, such as short-term illness, injury or hospitalisation for surgery, or a death in the family

Requests should be made at the earliest opportunity by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk from your registered email address. We will consider each case separately and on its own merits.

If you fail to attend your registration visit or do not provide us with sufficient information, we may have to make a suitability decision using the limited information we hold. This is likely to lead to your application being refused.

# Registration costs

You must pay an application fee when you apply for each register that you want to join, and for each additional setting you want to register. The fee depends on which register(s) you are joining.

After you have registered, you will pay an annual fee for each setting, starting one year after the date on your registration certificate. We will give you notice when this fee is due.

If you join the Early Years Register you can join the General Childcare Register at the same time with no additional cost. It is important to make sure you pay your annual fee; otherwise we may take steps to cancel your registration.

Find out more about registrations fees for childminders, nannies, and other childcare providers.

## Additional costs that are not part of the registration

Before you apply you will also need to pay for any training and certificates you need, as well as professional costs such as insurance.

# Possible outcomes of your application

When we have all the information we need, we will make a decision about your application.

If we have carried out a registration visit, we may tell you the outcome of your application at the end of the visit. If we need any further information the inspector will explain this to you.

There are 2 possible outcomes:

- register
- refuse

If your application is successful, we will send you a certificate of registration. Certificates are issued once we have completed all required processes.

> If you are applying to register on the Early Years Register and/or the compulsory part of the General Childcare Register, you cannot look after children until you have the certificate.

If we decide to refuse your application, we will serve you with a notice of intention to refuse. You will have the chance to make an objection to our intention to refuse.

If your objection is unsuccessful, we will serve you with a notice of decision to refuse. At this stage, you will have the opportunity to appeal. Your appeal will be considered by the external body First-tier Tribunal (Care Standards). We will explain to you how this works and the timeframes for making an objection or making an appeal.

If you are applying to register on the voluntary part of the General Childcare Register, you can withdraw your application at any time.

## Conditions of registration

On occasion, we may impose conditions on your registration. We do this to reduce potential risk to children. We can impose a condition at the point of registration or after you have registered. You can request to vary or remove a condition after you have registered. Our early years and childcare enforcement policy explains when we may do this.

**It is an offence to fail, without reasonable excuse, to comply with a condition of registration.**

# If your registration is granted

Once you have received your certificate, you can begin work as a childminder based at home.

You will receive a letter with your certificate explaining what you need to do as a childminder based at home, including your ongoing responsibility to make sure that you comply with all the relevant requirements at all times. These include maintaining an appropriate first-aid qualification and public liability insurance.

The registers have different requirements. You need to comply with all the requirements for each register you are on. If you are on both, you need to comply with the requirements of both. These apply even if you are not currently caring for children. Find out more about registration requirements for providers.

If you are unable to meet the relevant requirements at any point after you have registered, you should consider resigning your registration or we may take steps to cancel it.

Find out more about registration requirements for providers.

# Certificate of registration

The certificate sets out:

- the date of registration
- the unique reference number (URN)
- the register(s) the provider is now registered on
- the specific provider type
- the name of the registered person
- the address(es) where childminding will take place

- any conditions that apply to the registration

If you are registered on the General Childcare Register, you must display your certificate at all times. If you are registered only on the Early Years Register, you should show your certificate on request.

# Withdrawing your application

You can withdraw your application at any time, unless we have served you with a notice of intention to refuse your application. If we have served a notice of intention, you can only withdraw with our agreement. For example, we are unlikely to accept a withdrawal where there are safeguarding concerns. To request a withdrawal, you will need to contact us from your registered email or mobile phone and provide your URN. Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or call 0300 123 1231.

If you are applying to register on the voluntary part of the General Childcare Register only, you can withdraw your application at any time.

If you withdraw after the application fee has been paid, your fee will not be refunded.

If you withdraw your application and want to re-apply in the future, you must:

- complete a new application
- pay a new application fee

If we have safeguarding concerns about you, and you withdraw your application before we issue a notice of intention to refuse your application, we will consider this information if you apply again in the future.

# Making changes to your application

There are certain changes you need to tell us about after you have submitted your application.

If additional people become associated with your application after it is processed, you will need to notify us using Childminders: Report new people in the setting. This may mean that your application is delayed as we will need to complete

checks on this/these person(s) before we can proceed with the application.

# After registration: changes you need to tell us about

Once registered, you must let us know about certain changes to your personal details and circumstances.

If you change the home where you provide childcare, you must carry out a risk assessment and ensure that the new premises are suitable to provide childcare. We will then issue a new certificate for those premises. (We do not usually need to carry out a visit.)

If you operate on non-domestic premises for some of the time and you change where you do this from, you must tell us so that we can approve the premises before you provide childcare there. You must tell us about each additional premises by submitting an EYA form. We will issue a new certificate for those premises when we have approved them.

**It is an offence to operate on non-domestic premises that have not been approved by Ofsted.**

You must tell Ofsted about changes to any of the following as soon as possible, and within no more than 14 days of the change happening:

- your name
- your personal address or telephone number
- your registered address and any contact details
- the address of the childcare premises (for non-domestic premises you must submit a new application form)
- the type of childcare you provide (for example, if you change the days or hours when you look after children)
- if you are registered on the General Childcare Register, the number of children you are caring for

In addition to the above, if you are on the Early Years Register, the EYFS sets out

the full list of changes that you must notify us about. If you are registered on the General Childcare Register, the changes you must notify us about are set out in the General Childcare Register Regulations 2008. Find out more about registration requirements for providers.

To inform us about any of the changes, you must email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk from your registered email address and include the following information:

- the details of the change (for a change of childcare address, this includes the names of all household members and people working at the new address)
- your unique reference number (URN)
- the date of the change(s)

If anyone new starts to work with you to provide childcare you must notify us as soon as possible, and no later than within 14 days, using Childminders: Report new people in the setting.

**It is an offence if you fail to do this, and we can take action against you, which could include taking steps to cancel your registration.**

The new people will need to meet all the requirements listed above including having the correct DBS check. Find out more about the enforcement action we may take in our enforcement policy.

# When and how to notify us of serious incidents and significant events

You must notify us if certain types of serious incident or significant event take place. You need to make sure that you are aware of which types of incidents do or do not need to be reported to us, as failure to notify Ofsted of significant events without a reasonable excuse is a criminal offence.

> This must be done as soon as is reasonably possible, and in any event within 14 days of the incident.

If you are on the Early Years Register, the EYFS sets out the full list of events or

incidents you must notify us about. If you are registered on the General Childcare Register, the events or incidents you must notify us about are set out in the General Childcare Register Regulations 2008. Find out more about registration requirements for providers.

**It is an offence to fail to notify Ofsted of certain notifiable events within 14 days.**

Find out more:

- Serious childcare incidents
- Significant events

If anyone makes a complaint to us about your childcare or raises a concern, we will assess the information we have been given and may contact you to discuss this further. If the information suggests that you have breached any of the requirements of your registration, we may carry out an inspection, a visit or regulatory activity. Find out more about our enforcement policy.

# Inspections

Ofsted carries out inspections of registered childcare providers to make sure that they are continuing to meet the requirements of their registration(s). This is a different process from our registration visits.

If you are on the Early Years Register, your first inspection will take place within 18 months of your registration date. After that, we will inspect your provision within a 4-year window, although we may inspect more frequently.

We inspect 10% of providers who are only registered on the General Childcare Register each year.

If you are on both registers, we will inspect you as per the Early Years Register.

Find out more about inspections:

- Being inspected as a childminder or childcare provider
- Ofsted inspections of early years and childcare providers

- Carrying out Childcare Register compliance inspections

# Publishing your registration details

Once your provision is registered, we automatically publish the following information on Ofsted's find an inspection report website and in our official statistics:

- your unique reference number (URN)
- your date of registration
- your register (for example, the Early Years Register)
- your provider type (that is, childminder based at home)
- the conditions of your registration
- your available inspection report cards
- an outcome summary (if we have looked into a concern or notification and we or the provider take action due to a breach of requirements)

We will also publish your setting's name and address, unless you ask us not to. If you change your mind about that, we can remove your details from the website later. To submit a request for us to remove this information, you will need to email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk from your registered email address and quote the URN for each setting affected.

# Resigning your registration

If you want to resign your registration, contact us or tell the inspector during a visit.

Everything that has been published on our reports website about your registration will remain for 5 years after you resign. This includes:

- the name of the childcare
- your inspection report card(s) (if you were only registered on the General Childcare Register, your inspection outcome letters will remain online for 12 months after publication)

- details of any previous conditions of registration
- any information we have previously published about complaints or compliance action taken against you (this will remain online for 5 years after publication)

We do this so that people can view this information in case:

- you decide to register to provide childcare again after a short period
- you decide to start providing childcare at a different address
- you decide to register to provide childcare through a new organisation – for example, if you want to set up a new company to provide childcare
- someone else decides to register to provide childcare from the same address

# Further support

You can contact your local authority for information and advice about registration. Local authorities are legally obliged to provide this support.

Information about how Ofsted regulates registered providers is set out in the early years and childcare enforcement policy.

# The legal basis for our work

The legislation under which we regulate childcare providers, together with subsequent regulations and standards, include the following:

- Childcare Act 2006
- Childcare (Early Years Register) Regulations 2008
- Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage
- Childcare (General Childcare Register) Regulations 2008
- Childcare (Early Years and General Childcare Register) (Common Provisions) Regulations 2008
- Early Years Foundation Stage (Welfare Requirements) Regulations 2012

The childcare exemptions are set out in the Childcare (Exemptions from Registration) Order 2008.

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