

Childcare -ready to choose?

A guide on choosing
a childminder in Wales



One of the most important decisions you will make

Whether you're looking for work, doing a training course, or taking some time for yourself, there are lots of different reasons why parents consider childcare.

Choosing the right childcare for your child can feel daunting. After all, whoever cares for your child will have a huge influence on them during the most impressionable years of their life. It's understandable that the thought of handing your child over to a relative stranger will make you feel a little anxious. However, high quality childcare will not only benefit children and give them the best start in life, it will also provide peace of mind for you. It will mean you can concentrate on work, studies, or time for you knowing your child is safe, and being well cared for.

There are lots of different types of childcare to choose from, and many different childcare providers across Wales. This brochure is designed to give you practical considerations; as well as some questions to ask, so you can make an informed decision.



Types of childcare

There are lots of different types of childcare available in Wales, including:



- Childminders
- Full Day Nursery
- Full Day Sessional Care
- Sessional Playgroup / Cylchoedd Meithrin
- Out of School Childcare including breakfast and holiday clubs
- Crèche
- Nannies
- Open Access Play Provision

The type of childcare you choose is up to you, but it's worth considering your child's needs; individual preferences; when and where you need the childcare; their age; and your budget.

In Wales, there are legal requirements for childminders and childcare settings to be registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Nannies, however, do not need to be registered and inspected, although many choose to join CIW's approval scheme.



Make a start

One of the most important things to do is to start your search sooner rather than later. A lot of childcare providers have waiting lists, so don't leave it until the last minute to start researching your options.

First impressions count for a lot, but before you even visit a childcare setting you can do some background checks. By reading a registered childcare provider's latest inspection report from Care Inspectorate Wales, you can get a good overview of their services.

However, it's often only when you go and visit a childcare setting that you can truly get a feel for the quality of the childcare they offer.

High quality childcare settings ensure that carers and children form strong bonds, that children feel safe and have opportunities to learn and develop through a range of varied activities. The days are structured, and children can enjoy lots of positive interactions from those who are caring for them. These settings will also have lots of ways to keep you involved in your child's progress, whether that's a daily update or a shared learning journal, so you don't miss out on those important milestones.

Start your search
sooner rather
than later



What type of childcare should I choose?

When it's time to start your search, think about what your priorities are and what you want your children to get out of their time with a childcare provider.

- Think about what kind of experience you want your child to have.
- Consider whether you prefer a personal, flexible, home-based approach, or a bigger setting.
- Use your local Family Information Service (FIS) which has details of all the local registered childcare providers. Read their CIW inspection report and then make a shortlist of those you would like to visit.
- Ask friends, neighbours and parents you know in the local area for recommendations. Personal experience will give you the best insight into what a setting is really like.
- Think about the hours and days you need childcare for. Whether you work standard office hours or irregular shifts will have a big impact on your choices.

- Remember, location is key. You will be spending a great deal of time travelling to and from the setting you choose, so it's important to choose wisely.
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What is high quality childcare?

It's difficult to summarise what 'high-quality' childcare means as lots of things contribute to the quality of a childcare setting. With that being said, there are a few indicators to look out for.



High-quality childcare providers ensure that:

- Each child has a key person who is responsive and caring, and who is familiar with the child's individual interests and needs.
- Childcarers and children form strong bonds, with lots of positive interactions.
- Children feel safe and secure, both at the setting and while on outings.
- Children have opportunities to play, learn and develop through a range of fun and varied activities.
- Days are structured with familiar routines and opportunities for both child-led and adult-led learning.
- Children can enjoy nutritious food and are encouraged to make healthy choices.
- Childcarers at the setting have appropriate training and qualifications and continually reflect on best practice.
- Childcarers work together with parents and keep you involved in your child's progress, for example, through a daily update or a shared learning journal.

Have you thought about a childminder?

Registered childminders are able to support your child's play, learning and development in a home setting.

Alongside other childcare providers, registered childminders are regulated by The Childminding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations and work to The National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare for children up to the age of 12 years.

There are lots of benefits of choosing a childminder to care for your child:

Personalised care

Childminders look after smaller groups of children, so they are able to give a child the individual attention and secure attachment they need. Childminders, especially, make an ideal choice for young children. Research has shown that childminders have a particularly positive impact on young children's language and cognitive development.



Flexibility

Home-based childcare can often allow for early starts; school pickup and drop-offs; trips to nursery, pre-school, toddler groups or soft play sessions; as well as overnight or emergency care and flexible sessions for shift workers.

Spontaneity

Home-based childminders can be flexible and therefore make the most of the weather with impromptu trips out. Plus, your child can enjoy real-life learning experiences like cooking, shopping, gardening and shared mealtimes.

A family environment

Because childminders care for mixed age ranges, it means family members can be cared for together, helping them create and maintain a strong sibling bond – making life easier for the whole family. Being with others of different ages also helps children learn to adapt when it comes to working and playing together

Continuity

Childminders can often stay working with a family for years – looking after children from a very young age, through to school years where they offer wraparound care before and after school. Providing childcare for such a long length of time allows for strong bonds to form between childminders, the children in their care and their families.

Professionalism

To become registered, childminders must undergo pre-registration training; have an enhanced DBS check and undertake other relevant training, including paediatric first-aid. After applying to CIW, a number of checks are made including a home visit, and references obtained before they can become registered. Childminders must hold public liability insurance, be regularly inspected, complete annual quality of care reviews and take part in ongoing training. PACEY offers membership to registered childminders, helping them to provide the best standards of care and education to young children.

Asking the right questions

Now that you have an idea of what to look for in a childminder, it's a good idea to start putting together your shortlist. Make initial enquiries as to their availability and make sure they are able to accommodate the days and times you need, before you go and see them.

When you arrange an appointment to visit, it's a good idea to take your child with you. Watch how the childminder interacts with your child. Do they focus on your child? How do they engage with them? Do they appear interested? Research shows that positive interactions between child carers and children are at the heart of high-quality care.

Prepare a list of things that you would like to find out. Try and find out as much background information as possible, such as, how long the childminder has been registered, how many children are cared for, the ages of the children and opening times.

If you hold strong views on any aspect of parenting, make sure that the setting you choose shares your values. If your child has additional needs, has a medical condition or an allergy or intolerance, you should ensure the childcare provider understands their requirements and is able to cater for them.





Questions to ask your childcare provider:

- ✓ What is the cost of care?
What is included in fees and what isn't? For example, are there extra costs for food, nappies, wipes etc?
- ✓ How do you ensure the safety of children in your care?
- ✓ What experience and/or qualifications do you have and what training is undertaken?
- ✓ What is the typical routine here?
- ✓ Do you provide food? If so, can you provide a copy of the mealtime and snack menus?
- ✓ Do you have access to outdoor space?
- ✓ Do you arrange any outings?
- ✓ How is a child's play, learning and development supported?
- ✓ How is a child's progress recorded and how is that information shared with parents?
- ✓ Does the setting offer government funded places or tax-free childcare?
- ✓ What are your arrangements for school drop offs and collections?
- ✓ What are the ages of other children in your care?
- ✓ What is the approach to discipline and how is a child's behaviour managed?
- ✓ Can you provide parent references?

Childminder myth busting!

Myth:

Childminders are just babysitters; children just play and don't learn as much with a childminder.

Fact:

Play is an essential ingredient to support children to think and make sense of the world around them.

The value of play is understood by childminders who will have a daily routine in place to ensure children's learning and development needs are being met. This includes a range of stimulating activities including creative play, messy play, outdoor play, reading, storytelling, role play and music.

Childminders may take children on regular trips; depending on the hours a child attends a setting; and participate in groups and activities within the local area.

Myth:

A childminder will replace the parents in the child's affection.

Fact:

Some parents, especially mothers returning to work after maternity leave, have concerns that a childminder will form a closer bond to the child than they do which adds to the emotional concerns of leaving a young child. The reality is that childminders understand that a child's relationship with parent/s is paramount and are never seeking to replace them.

Childminders have experience of working in partnership with parents and have a key role to play in supporting smooth transitions between the home and childminder setting and attachment with the child. The likelihood is that a professional bond will grow between the family and the childminder over time which supports all involved and ensures a better outcome.

Myth:

A childminder works for me (the parent).

Fact:

Childminders are self-employed and enter into a contract with the parent to deliver a childminding service. This arrangement creates an equality between childminder and parent allowing for the best interests of the child to be considered. In practice this means the parent pays a fee for the childminding service provided and the childminder is responsible for managing their own tax and insurance.

Myth:

Childminders are unqualified.

Fact:

Many childminders are highly qualified professionals and are committed to their personal development. As part of the process to register as a childminder they will have had to evidence their knowledge of child development and will have records of training and qualifications undertaken to share with those looking to use their service.



Views shared with us

A parent's perspective

“When I started my search for childcare, my priorities were to find someone experienced who would support my child’s development – physically and emotionally. I was keen to explore childminding as I knew I wanted my daughter to be in a home setting.

Once I found my childminder, I never looked back. It made returning to work so much easier finding someone I could trust. As a member of PACEY, she takes her professional training and development very seriously and I have total faith in her professional knowledge as an early year’s expert. She has exceeded my expectations and I have always been so happy seeing my kids shine in her care. Her home is full of love, and her advice, empathy and flexibility has made a real difference to our lives.

Our childminder made a lasting impact on my children, they adore her, and they are more sociable. For that I feel incredibly fortunate and know I made the right decision.”

Emma, Parent of two children

A childminder's perspective

“The best things about childminding are having other families trust you to look after their prized possession and helping them – not just by looking after their children – but by just being there for them trying to make their life easier because it is really hard for parents to go out to work and try and juggle that with a family so I am there to try and make their job easier.”

Kim, Childminder Wales



Information, help and support

Support with childcare costs

The Government provides varying levels and types of funding to help parents and carers with childcare costs. To find out what childcare options are available and for more detailed information please contact your local Family Information Service team or see [help paying for childcare](#).

Further information

The following are a number of organisations that are able to provide information, help or support when choosing childcare, including:

The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) provide a range of [information for parents](#).

[Local Family Information Service](#)

[Dewis Cymru](#)

[Care Inspectorate Wales Information to support you in choosing a childminder.](#)

[Find a care service and inspection reports](#)

[WeCare Wales: Read about a childminder](#)

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PACEY is the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years.

Formed in 1977, we are a charity dedicated to supporting everyone involved in childcare and early education to provide high quality services, information and advice to children, their families and carers.

Across England and Wales we provide training, expert advice, help and peer support to practitioners and practical and impartial support and information for families and carers and those advising them.

For more information about PACEY go to pacey.org.uk

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