



coram pacey

Magic of Childminding

2026



"Childminders are at the heart of our early years system, providing high quality, flexible care where children can thrive from their earliest days. Their support is invaluable, especially for children with SEND and those from disadvantaged background."

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP,
Secretary of State for Education in
England

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INTRODUCTION

Across England and Wales, childminders are delivering something magical for families, opening their homes to create familiar and welcoming environments for children to thrive and grow, building trusting relationships and support networks.

Children benefit from a unique childcare experience that is tailored and personal. In small, mixed-age groups they are supported to develop socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively in a nurturing home-like environment.

For families, a childminder's value extends beyond childcare. They are trusted professionals, offering reassurance, advice, and practical support to parents. Their flexibility helps parents to balance work and responsibilities, allowing greater focus on their family's needs, aspirations and wellbeing.

For local communities, childminders provide accessible childcare close to home and support local economies by enabling parents to work. Through long-term relationships with families, they become trusted figures within their neighbourhoods, strengthening community ties and networks of support.

Childminders complement and strengthen the wider early years system. Yet despite their significant contributions, the number of registered childminders across England and Wales has fallen steadily in recent years. This decline has taken place against ongoing challenges, including limited funding, a lack of targeted investment, increasing administrative demands, and a profession that is too often undervalued and overlooked.

Drawing on the experiences and voices of childminders, children, families and sector experts, this report is a deep dive into the magic of childminding. It showcases examples of the vital work childminders deliver every day and highlights the unique advantages of childminding that cannot easily be replicated in other settings. It also highlights the urgent need to nurture and support the sector in the context of a shortage of accessible childcare and to meet the needs of children in England and Wales.

Governments in England and Wales have rightly recognised the importance of reversing the childminder decline and have set an ambition to strengthen and grow the workforce. This report supports that ambition by shining a light on what childminders already achieve, often despite considerable pressures. With the right recognition and sustained investment, the impact of childminders can be scaled up to benefit more children and families. This report sets out 12 recommendations to secure the future of this vital provision.

The magic of childminding is already happening across England and Wales. We must now recognise it, value it, and invest in it so that the benefits of childminding can grow for generations to come.

24,990

registered childminders in England

(Ofsted, August 2025)

1,083

registered childminders in Wales

(Care Inspectorate Wales, September 2025)



Ka Lai Brightley-Hodges
Head of Coram PACEY

A man wearing a blue jacket, a grey puffer vest, and a white cap stands in a wooded area. He has his hands on his hips and is looking down. In the foreground, there are two children: one in a blue patterned jacket and another in a grey and black jacket. A grey stroller with a red cup on top is also visible. The background consists of trees and a ground covered in fallen leaves.

The MAGICAL
impact of
childminding on:
CHILDREN

CHILDREN

At the centre of childminding is the child. Childminding offers a unique environment that combines learning, care, and everyday family life. From the outside, a childminding setting often looks like a regular home. Inside, however, children experience rich opportunities to learn, explore, and develop in ways that feel natural and familiar. Research has consistently shown that childminders provide a distinct pedagogy that supports children's care and educational needs, as well as offering wider support to families (Ang and Tabu, 2018).

The home-based nature of childminding creates an environment that feels safe and predictable for children. Yet, every childminding setting looks different, reflecting the individual childminder, their family values, and the children they care for. This allows children to experience environments that feel welcoming and personal rather than institutional.

While the vast majority of childminders do work from their own homes, there is flexibility within the system, with a small proportion in England spending time operating from non-domestic premises. Policy changes introduced in England in 2024 increased this flexibility, allowing childminders to operate fully from premises outside the home. Take-up remains low but some childminders use these arrangements to offer care from community halls or school sites for part of the day, or less occasionally, full-time. This flexibility allows some childminders to adapt their environments to meet the needs of children and families or navigate restrictions from landlords and covenants that prevent them running businesses from their home.

Qualities of a childminding setting

Research has consistently shown that children benefit from environments with smaller group sizes and lower adult-to-child ratios (Vandenbroeck et al., 2021). These settings support relationships, individual attention, and calmer environments. These qualities are intrinsic to childminding, where the smaller numbers of children allow childminders to respond closely to each child's interests, development, and wellbeing.

While research tends to focus largely on group settings, the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED) in England linked childminder use with positive differences in social, emotional, and language development, including prosocial behaviour and self-regulation for children aged two- to three-years-old. There are also smaller scale, positive findings for behavioural self-regulation and lower levels of emotional symptoms such as being worried, unhappy or nervous (Melhuish et al., 2017).

“Parents need and deserve safe, quality education and care for their babies and children. Childminders provide that unique mix in a nurturing environment that feels like home – while often being just around the corner.”

Sir Martyn Oliver,
His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted



Babies

Families and childminders consistently highlight the particular benefits of the intimate home environment for babies and very young children. This environment supports early child development through warm, responsive interactions, helping babies feel safe and build secure attachments which are fundamental to their emotional wellbeing and confidence.

81% of childminder survey respondents said they currently care for a baby within their setting or have done so within the last 12 months. This highlights the significant role childminders play in providing early care for the youngest children, supporting their development through close relationships, individual attention, and frequent back-and-forth interactions to support early language and cognitive development.

Parents told us that a key strength of childminding is the willingness and ability of childminders to follow babies' home routines, including feeding, sleeping, and comforting patterns. This continuity helps babies feel secure and supports smooth transitions between home and childcare, while also creating consistent and enriching opportunities for early learning, language and communication development, and socialisation in mixed-age groups.

87% of childminders reported that they are able to follow babies' typical home routines, with **6%** saying routines are followed exactly the same and **81%** saying they are mostly similar. Parental confidence in childminders caring for babies is consistently high, with trust and reassurance highlighted in our focus groups. **94%** of childminder respondents strongly agreed that parents feel confident leaving their baby in their care, with the remaining **6%** agreeing.

During our focus groups, families spoke about the reassurance that comes from having a trusted professional to support them during the early stages of parenting. Many described childminders as a valuable source of advice and guidance, particularly for first-time parents. We heard examples of childminders actively supporting breastfeeding, including welcoming mothers into the setting to feed their baby as needed. Childminders also spoke about the importance of regular conversation, singing, and play in helping babies develop early communication skills and build social engagement skills.

Across conversations with both parents and childminders about baby provision, the themes of warmth, trust, and strong relationships were consistently highlighted. Parents spoke about the care, attention, and emotional connection their babies experienced, while childminders described the importance of creating a nurturing environment that mirrors the comfort and familiarity of home, supporting the child in their early development.

"Babies benefit most from the continuity between home and my setting. By following their usual routines, they feel secure, relaxed, and settled. Working in close partnership with parents allows me to support babies' individual needs, including sleep, feeding, and comfort, while maintaining consistency between home and my setting. This helps babies' transition smoothly, supports their emotional wellbeing, and allows them to thrive in a calm, nurturing home-from-home environment." **Childminder survey respondent in England**

"I offer at least six long, slow settling sessions, with at least two of them being stay-and-plays. This gives both parents and babies the opportunity to feel familiar and comfortable with the environment with excellent ongoing communication. Most of the parents of the babies come into my home and chat with me for a significant period of time at pick up. Some even breastfeed babies before leaving which helps with the bedtime routine at home." **Childminder survey respondent in England**

The magic of play

Learning in childminding settings has distinct features, typically built around play and everyday experiences in the home environment. Childminders told us that they know the children in their care well and are therefore able to plan activities that reflect their individual interests and development. This allows children of all ages, from infancy upwards, to explore learning in ways that feel enjoyable and meaningful.

"[The children] are masters of their own curriculum and their own development and because I know them inside and out, I know how to scaffold and build on that. It's the beauty of knowing your children and giving them your all. Some need a little bit of extra support, but they all have the same opportunities that are shaped individually to their needs." **Childminder in the Isle of Wight, England**

"For us, the joy of childminding was the personalised care and attention that isn't always possible in larger settings. Our childminder regularly introduced tailored activities, even creating an additional project over a few weeks just for my three-year-old, helping him to build a book and decorate a large model of a book character he was inspired by at the time. We still have the model!" **Father of a four-year-old child**

"Maths and English are integrated into everything we do. We make them an integral and natural part of our daily routines and activities and as a result our children make excellent progress. When recently working on prepositional language we asked our neighbours to hide toy dinosaurs in their gardens and windows so that we could go out and spot them 'on top', 'behind', 'next to', 'underneath' etc. Working in collaboration this way draws our community together and gives the children a sense of belonging here at their second home whilst learning." **Childminder in Redcar and Cleveland, England**

"Alongside play-based learning, childminders are well placed to support freely chosen, child-led play. Whilst this may align well with their own playful approaches, it is especially true where childminders have undertaken additional training in playwork. Childminders also provide opportunities for children of different ages to play together especially where after school and holiday provision runs along with care for pre-school children. In Wales, one of the first settings to undertake Play Wales' Chwarae o Safon - Playwork Quality Mark, was a childminder who wanted to demonstrate her commitment to the provision of quality play experiences in childminding."

Martin King-Sheard, Assistant Director, Play Wales



 @heartzheartchildcare

Daily routines and close relationships support personal, social, and emotional development, helping children learn to manage feelings, build confidence, and form secure relationships with the adults and children in the setting.

Physical play, outdoor activities, and hands-on experiences promote physical development and activity, supporting coordination, movement, and contribute to the child's health and wellbeing. Storytelling, mark-making, and sharing books support early literacy, helping children develop an understanding of language, sounds, and build a love of reading.

Everyday experiences such as counting ingredients, sorting objects, or comparing sizes help build early mathematical understanding, while creative play, music, storytelling, and exploring the local community encourage cultural awareness and creativity. Together, these opportunities help children build confidence and independence while developing the essential knowledge and skills that form the foundations for lifelong learning.

"We are very much child-led. I take a great deal of time to build solid relationships with the children, so it doesn't take long to understand what type of day they want when they arrive each morning. We very much follow each child's individual needs providing an environment that supports inquisitive and self-directed play. Our resources are heavily balanced towards open ended play, so lots of loose parts where the children are free to use their imagination. Just watching the myriad of ways a child uses just one particular resource really reinforces the benefits of this type of play." **Childminder in Flintshire, Wales**

How can we support childminders to deliver this on a BIGGER scale for GREATER impact?

Childminders are experts in play-based learning, and the rich play experiences children have in their care should continue throughout their educational journey. Play-based learning must be recognised, protected, and embedded within policy and educational frameworks. In England, the Play Commission's call for a cross-departmental National Play Strategy presents an important opportunity to strengthen this approach, building on the progress already seen in Wales, where a long-term national focus on children's access to play has driven positive change (Play Wales, 2026).

"Through inspection and ongoing engagement with the sector, CIW sees how childminders use the home-based environment to build secure relationships, respond to individual needs and support children's wellbeing, play, learning, development and communication. This personalised approach, combined with strong professional practice, enables children to feel settled, confident and engaged in their play and learning, while offering families trusted, community-based childcare."

Ceri Herbert, Head of Inspection, Childcare and Play Inspection, Care Inspectorate Wales



A spotlight on speech and language

A child's overall development is closely linked to language and communication, with early interactions playing a key role in supporting learning across all areas. In childminding settings, language is developed through everyday, meaningful experiences. For example, hands-on activities such as exploring food and talking about its taste, texture, and preparation provide natural opportunities to build vocabulary, build confidence and extend conversation. Songs, poems, and rhymes support repetition, rhythm, and language patterns, while shared reading and discussion of stories help develop comprehension and encourage children to respond and ask questions.

Childminders told us that role play and imaginative play using open-ended materials and loose parts are particularly effective in promoting communication, as children create narratives and explore together. These experiences are strengthened through authentic, back-and-forth interactions where adults respond to children's ideas and build upon their language in the moment. In our focus group, a parent of a non-verbal child described how her childminder introduced sign language to support communication, enabling her child to express their needs and participate fully. She also highlighted that continuity of care was essential, as her child had remained with the same childminder from infancy through to after-school and holiday care, allowing a strong relationship and shared understanding of communication to develop over time.

"I trained as a play worker, working alongside professionals like music therapists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and reflexologists, I bought what they did in their sessions into the play space. The difference it made to the lives of those families was huge. It has driven me to continue developing my own skills and understanding, so I can offer children a space that nurtures their individuality and meets them where they are. Since then, I've studied a range of pedagogies, play theories, behaviour strategies, and child development approaches to build a "toolkit" that I can draw on daily in my setting." **Childminder in Ceredigion, Wales**

"Nearly two million children in the UK have speech and language challenges. In some disadvantaged communities, half of the number of children start school struggling to talk and understand words.

"Childminders play a critical role in supporting children's speech and language development in the early years. They can make a real difference, helping children get the strongest possible start.

"We welcome Coram PACEY's Magic of Childminding report, which shines a light on the essential role childminders play in supporting our youngest children."

Carol Payne,
Deputy Chief Executive of Speech and Language UK



Outdoor activities, trips and physical activity

Outdoor experiences are a regular part of life in many childminding settings and a theme that children consistently highlighted. Children often spend a significant amount of time outdoors, both in home gardens and through trips into the local community. Visits to parks, libraries, shops, and local groups support physical development, confidence, and social skills.

Regular trips out of the setting also help children develop an awareness of their local area and community. Parents told us these outings mirror typical family activities, helping children build familiarity with everyday experiences and develop independence.

In our childminder survey:

98%

of childminders said they have access to a garden or outdoor space attached to their childminding setting.

66%

said they spend time outdoors daily, with a further 29% answering "most days" 39% of childminders take the children on trips out into the community daily, with a further 35% answering "most days".

93%

told us they feel their setting enables children to feel part of their local community.

"Learning outdoors gives children the opportunity to lead the way and take risks. Children naturally self-regulate outdoors which is extremely beneficial for their mental health. Exploring areas with rough terrain, slopes and fallen branches provide great opportunities to develop gross motor skills and balance, as well as small leaves, twigs and stones encouraging fine motor skills. Big open spaces are great for allowing the children to run off lots of energy and rolling in the grass and squishing mud is a great sensory experience." **Childminder in Cheshire West and Chester, England**



Sustainability and nature

Many childminders also embed sustainability and nature into daily routines. Activities such as gardening, recycling, outdoor exploration, and learning about the natural world help children develop early awareness of environmental responsibility.

In our interviews, childminders described “sowing the seeds” to help children build an understanding and respect for nature and biodiversity. Many expressed pride in the love of nature they are instilling in children, with sustainability embedded into everyday learning and made possible through the flexibility and freedom of childminding.

Many childminders told us that sustainability is an integral part of their daily practice. Children learn to respect the natural world through experiences such as caring for plants, saving water, recycling, and exploring local wildlife. Older children were described as developing an early understanding of environmental issues such as climate change and a growing sense of responsibility for the world around them.

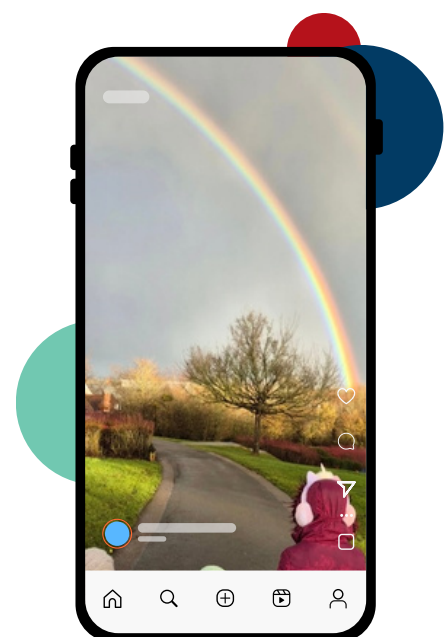
Regular outdoor experiences help children build attachment to nature and develop respect for wildlife and the environment. Even those with smaller spaces described creative ways to embed sustainability, such as growing plants in containers and making use of local green spaces.

“Sustainability is an overarching theme for us. We have a greenhouse where the children help to grow fruit and vegetables. The excitement they show when they get to pull up the carrots and potatoes they have loved and nurtured for months and then see them on their lunch plate is just magic to observe. We also save the seeds from our own sunflowers to replant the next year. I get the children’s families on board too and I often see if I can use what they are disposing of. Passing on their best flowers are a perfect example as the petals provide a perfect loose part to be used in our outdoor kitchen. I have the best memories of making petal potions when I was a little girl so I’m hoping my little ones do too.”

Childminder in Flintshire, Wales

“Childminders are an important part of the Early Years sector and are uniquely placed to support children and families with the ambition of the Best Start in Life strategy.”

Sue Robb,
Best Start in Life Champion, Department for Education



 @littleacornschildminderbanbury

"We reuse and recycle lots of things. They know that we collect the rainwater when we water our plants. We're very lucky the allotment is on the beachfront, so we go down to the beach, and we get seaweed because seaweed is full of nutrients and is better than buying fertilizer for the soil as it's natural. Those little things are a huge learning opportunity for them." **Childminder in the Vale of Glamorgan, Wales**

"In our childminding setting on a family-run farm, children benefit from unique, real-life learning experiences that cannot be recreated indoors. They learn by actively taking part in everyday farm life, such as feeding lambs, collecting goose eggs, and helping care for animals. These experiences help children understand responsibility, empathy, and life cycles in a meaningful way. The farm also supports communication and language as children hear and use new vocabulary linked to real activities and are encouraged to talk about what they are doing." **Childminder in Kent, England**

Some childminders in England operate a fully outdoor setting in a range of environments, such as local woodlands or coastal locations. In these settings, learning through nature, exploration, and managed risk is core in their provision. This highlights the flexibility of childminding and how provision can be adapted to meet the needs of different children.

"I focus on offering a freedom-centred 100% outdoor play and learning environment for school-aged children in which they can be free to follow their imaginations, and I can hopefully share with them a little of my creativity and love of nature. I offer after school clubs, holiday clubs and whole day sessions for children who are home-educated or unable to attend school. I still have strong connections with many of those children I cared for as babies and it has been wonderful to see them blossom through trust and gentle support in nature." **Childminder in Cambridgeshire, England**

How can we support childminders to deliver this on a BIGGER scale for GREATER impact?

Access to nature and green spaces remains deeply unequal, with children in disadvantaged areas more likely to miss out. Expanding access to childminding provision for families would provide more children the opportunity to benefit from the outdoor-rich experiences that childminders provide. Removing barriers that prevent childminders from operating in rental and social housing would help increase provision in under-served communities, ensuring more children can experience the developmental and wellbeing benefits of regular time outdoors.

"They see animals and plants and explore their life cycles and bird-watch. The vocabulary benefit is incredible, at just three-years-old my daughter can name trees, bird breeds and explains to me how you grow plants."

Parent of a three-year-old



Animal friends

Access to pets is a distinctive feature of many childminding settings that was highlighted in our focus groups as a benefit. Interactions with animals can support children's emotional development, empathy, and confidence. Caring for pets can also help children learn responsibility and respect for living things and the world around them.

In Coram PACEY's 2026 survey, almost two-thirds (**65%**) of childminders reported having a pet within their setting. The most common pets were dogs (**41%**) and cats (**24%**), but there was wide variety reported across settings. Children in childminding environments might encounter rabbits, chickens, parrots, reptiles, insects and even farm animals such as horses, pigs, alpacas and more! This variety adds to the richness of the learning environment, offering children unique experiences that are not always available in larger or more formal childcare settings.

"Our childminder has a huge garden, which I don't have. I've got a very small patio, so it's, it's really nice that my daughter does have that outdoor space to play in. And she also has two dogs – my daughter's always been really keen on dogs, and that was a plus, because we're not going to get a dog, I can't commit to that. But it gives her that kind of contact and she's growing up really comfortable around dogs, without having one in our home." **Mother of a school-aged child who has attended childminder since seven months old**

"We have several pets: Betsy and Lola are King Charles Cavaliers who love to go on walks, eat snacks and have cuddles. They have worked wonders on many children who came to the setting with a fear of dogs. Freckles and Tiff the rabbits and Naz and Smudge the guinea pigs love it when the children use their chopping skills to make them a salad. May and Shadow the ponies live on a nearby farm, and we visit them to practice our safety around larger animals and to help with the farm jobs. Children are taught from an early age how to treat animals with kindness and respect and these life lessons are so transferable to their interactions with people." **Childminder in Redcar and Cleveland, England**



Mealtimes and nutrition

Mealtimes in childminding settings are often home-based and social experiences. Many childminders prepare home-cooked meals and snacks, providing children with exposure to a range of healthy foods.

This approach aligns closely with public health priorities in England and Wales, where the early years have been recognised as a critical time for establishing positive relationships with food that lead to healthy outcomes later in life. National policy agendas such as 'Giving every child the best start in life' in England (2025) and 'Wales' Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales' (2025) emphasise the role of early years settings in prevention of obesity, supporting healthy growth, and reducing inequalities through early childhood.

According to our survey findings, childminders take different approaches to providing food and snacks for the children in their setting:

45%

provide all meals and snacks.

27%

provide snacks, and parents provide meals.

14%

said parents provide meals and snacks.

13%

take a flexible approach depending on the child.

Mealtimes in childminding settings often reflect the routines of family life, with children sitting together to share meals around a table. This shared approach creates valuable opportunities for learning and social development. In our survey, **73%** of childminders reported that children always sit together around a table to eat, with a further **21%** saying children usually sit together, allowing some flexibility where needed. The remaining childminders take a more flexible approach depending on the needs of individual children.

"They bring their own packed lunches, and we'll have conversations about what the other children are eating. If they're looking and asking about each other's food, I will then buy some for them to try. During lunchtime we'll talk about what's going to happen in the afternoon. You can develop speech, we can talk about different types of food, we'll talk about what food they like and what they're eating at home and different snacks we could try. We'll go to the supermarket and buy these snacks as a part of this experience." **Childminder in Lancashire, England**

"We have worked with several children in recent years who have struggled with severe picky eating or food sensory issues. Our apprentice has taken a particular interest in this and is working with some of our children one-to-one to help them to feel safer in food exploration. One child in particular has been a huge success story for her, trying several new foods and expanding her accepted menu. Babies particularly benefit from being around a table with others as they mimic skills and learn to sit in a group for a period of time." **Childminder in Redcar and Cleveland, England**

"Childminders are doing profoundly important, often overlooked work when it comes to children's food and nutrition. Research shows how deeply committed childminders are to getting food right for the children in their care, including for families navigating food insecurity and deprivation, and many do so at significant personal cost. That commitment deserves recognition, proper support, and a policy environment that takes the early years food environment seriously."

Eating together provides a wide range of developmental benefits. Children are able to model behaviours such as using cutlery, trying new foods, and practising good table manners. Mealtimes also support communication and language development, as children engage in conversation and learn to listen and take turns. These shared routines encourage socialisation, independence, and confidence, while helping children develop positive relationships with food and healthy eating habits.

85%

said they have seen a positive change in children's attitudes or relationships with food while in their care.

62%

said children actively participate in the preparation and cooking of meals and snacks.

Food and sustainability

Childminders often embed sustainability into the meals they prepare, helping children understand where their food comes from. Some told us they are fortunate to have access to on-site or community allotments, while others make use of small spaces to grow herbs, fruits, or vegetables. Children are often involved in planting, caring for, harvesting, cleaning, and preparing ingredients, giving them a strong sense of purpose and achievement. These hands-on experiences help children understand how food is grown, encourage healthy eating, and build an early awareness of sustainability in ways that feel practical and meaningful.

"I am currently stood in my kitchen watching the children in my garden, with my assistant, munching on carrots that we've just picked. We have just planted raspberry canes and whilst we were there, we've picked some purple sprouting broccoli, some carrots and some kale. They're now poking the green bit of the carrots through the hutch for the rabbits because, you know, waste not want not. That understanding of where food comes from is so crucial, I think a lot of people don't always really understand it. It's so easy these days as everything's so immediate, we go to a supermarket, pick up our food and that's it. But we get to appreciate the journey of our food and to be part of it." **Childminder in the Isle of Wight, England**



Siblings, only children and continuity of care

The mixed-age environments of childminder settings create valuable opportunities for peer learning. Childminders reported that younger children observe and learn from older children, while older children develop confidence and responsibility by supporting younger peers. This structure can be particularly valuable for only children, who benefit from experiencing group dynamics in a small, supportive setting.

“The relationship my daughter has built with children of other ages is a much more of a family dynamic, than if she'd been in a nursery, where they're in rooms based on age, they don't have those relationships. As an only child, I think that's been really important, that she does have relationships with older and younger children on a day-to-day basis.” **Mother of a seven-year-old**

76% of childminders surveyed by Coram PACEY said they care for sibling children in the setting. 16% of childminders care for their own children in the setting.

Childminding settings also often care for sibling groups. This allows brothers and sisters to remain together and supports children who may otherwise attend multiple settings. It also provides a practical solution for parents dropping off or picking up sibling groups from a single setting.

Continuity of care is another important feature that was highlighted by childminders and parents. Children may remain with the same childminder for several years, creating stable relationships that support emotional security and confidence through their early years and beyond.

“The older children take on very supportive roles helping teach the younger ones with counting, baking or a new dance routine. They model how to solve conflicts when the younger ones are disagreeing. They discuss what to expect at school and when a younger one starts school the juniors sign up for mentoring to be able to go check in on them in foundation classes. They walk with them on the way back from school and reiterate what I teach regarding road safety. They also share their pride and sense of accomplishment when the younger ones eagerly tell them what they've done that day.” **Childminder in East Riding of Yorkshire, England**

“The mixed-age dynamic supports positive behaviour and cooperation. Children learn to be patient, take turns, and consider the needs of others. Sibling-like relationships are formed, where children look out for one another and celebrate each other's achievements. As the ages for before and after school are a mixture, they return so eager to celebrate whenever one of their friends gets a certificate in assembly or want to offer support if they have seen a friend that was sad during break or lunchtime. When they all sit together, they discuss what happened and how to support their friend for the future.” **Childminder in Norfolk, England**

“I love going to the museum with you, I love going to have picnics and I like to do colouring, I like to read books, and I like to have cuddles.”

Seven-year-old

Smooth transitions

Children experience a variety of transitions, from minor changes to their routine, trying new foods or unfamiliar activities, to more significant milestones such as starting at an early years or childcare setting, a new school or changes to their home lives. These events can be challenging for young children, but the continuity offered by childminders supports smoother transitions.

Childminders can build a deep understanding of each child's routines, strengths, interests, and any emerging needs. During our focus groups, parents spoke about the value of having a consistent caregiver who knows their child well and can support them through important milestones, particularly when starting school. Parents described seeing their child's confidence grow alongside increasing independence.

Childminders often take an inclusive and flexible approach to transitions, adapting settling-in processes to meet individual needs. Some described arranging visits to new settings alongside families, holding informal gatherings to introduce new families, or gradually introducing new routines. Others use photographs to familiarise children with new environments or faces, helping them feel more confident about upcoming changes.

"Being part of children's lives goes long beyond their childminding years. One of the children I used to mind came to me as a baby and left in September to go to school. He was 11 and he'd been having a difficult time readjusting to the transition. A few times a term he'll walk here from school, and he'll have a snack and we chat and play cards." **Childminder in the Vale of Glamorgan, Wales**

"I care for children whose parents have separated, and the children have been with me for a long time. Here is very happy place where they can forget things that may be going on at home and talk about it with me. It's nice to be able to hear their worries, help relieve some of them and to explain that things are a little tough but they will work themselves out. I've done training on expressing emotions." **Childminder in the Vale of Glamorgan, Wales**

How can we support childminders to deliver this on a BIGGER scale for GREATER impact?

Many childminders are already demonstrating excellent practice in supporting transitions, working closely with families, early years settings, and in some cases, schools to prepare children for their next stage of learning. However, what is needed is a more joined-up, consistent approach to ensure this good practice is consistently supported and available to all children.

Government-backed infrastructure for partnerships between schools and early years settings should be strengthened and must explicitly include childminders. Dedicated funding to promote best practice, support transition activities, joint visits, and communication with receiving settings would help build stronger relationships and ensure children experience consistent, well-supported transitions.

It is an honour to have read the Magic of Childminding report and how childminders can support children's holistic development within the home environment. On a personal level, I used a childminder for my own children, as due to my irregular working patterns this was the best option for our family's needs. My children still went to their childminder in the first year of secondary school, which helped massively with the transition from primary school.

Laura Henry-Allain MBE, Educationalist and author

"At G's house I love playing on the pink bike and I love reading books together"
Three-year-old

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) / Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Childminding settings can offer highly personalised support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in England and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in Wales. Smaller group sizes allow childminders to adapt routines and environments to meet individual requirements. Their relationships with families and professionals help ensure consistent and responsive care.

Many childminders are among the first to notice when a child may need additional support. Because they work closely with children over long periods and across different stages of development, they are well-placed to identify emerging needs and work with families to seek appropriate support. Parents described how their strong relationships helped build trust and confidence, enabling families to raise concerns early and access advice.



Childminders frequently work in partnership with parents, local authorities, health professionals, and specialist services to support children's development. Examples highlighted in our research include attending meetings, contributing to support plans, adapting activities, and creating tailored learning opportunities. Despite often working independently, many childminders demonstrate a high level of commitment to inclusion and work proactively to ensure children with additional needs are supported to thrive.

Supporting children with ALN in Wales

"I have undertaken additional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) this year to help to create a neurodiversity affirming practice. The physical environment is a huge part of this with plenty of natural lighting, calm, uncluttered, free from unnecessary visual noise, monitoring auditory noise levels and being mindful of smells. Simple adaptations can be made, for example amending arrival times so a child who struggles with the transition is the only one arriving at a particular time. Transitions can be a trigger point so giving children time to settle before we then transition again to walk to school is important. I've worked hard to create a calm, inviting and uncluttered entrance hallway where I will often have a familiar or preferred activity or resource immediately available to aid that transition to the setting." **Childminder in Flintshire, Wales**

"For children with ALN I believe we need to become a part of their world - it is not for them to fit in our world."

"We initially felt very nervous about leaving our child with ALN due to his complex needs and difficulty in expressing himself, but we were quickly put at ease. Our son had a beautiful and adapted, slow transition into the setting. Whilst my son is non-verbal, his bright smile when he greets [childminder] at the door to start the day, is a clear indicator of how he feels there.

Our child has benefited enormously from being at our childminder's setting. He is part of the family there, whilst his unique needs are met, he is treated with the same care, joy and confidence as any other child." **Parent of a child with ALN**

Supporting children with SEND in England

"My daughter's been with her childminder since she was a baby. [Our childminder] has definitely gone above and beyond. She helped me through the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process, pushing back after initially being told we couldn't have EHCP funding for childminders – you definitely can! This funding meant she reduced her ratios, so that she had fewer children, so that she had more capacity to deal with my daughter's care. But it was important for me that, my daughter got to stay within a setting where she was interacting with children who were typically developing, and my childminder has always been really good at making sure the other children included her.

She's been brilliant. She does respite care for me occasionally, she'll do the odd overnight, which is funded by social services short-breaks funding. She specifically advertised for a term-time-only child so that she could continue to look after my child during school holidays, because she knew how difficult it would be for me to find alternative care. She's managed to do after-school care as well, which is amazing, because her specialist school doesn't have after-school provision. She's sourced all sorts of alternative funding to get things, so she's got a ramp so that in the winter she can get my daughter's wheelchair into the cabin. She's sourced funding for an activity chair in the setting, which she eats in, she draws, she has at the table, so for drawing and crafting and so on. She also went in and spent a morning at my daughter's school to see what they did at school to help prepare my daughter for transitions. She's just done so much more than I could ever have asked for, really. The magic of childminding is well, everything to me, really. You know, it's I couldn't get where we are without her, in all honesty." **Mother of a six-year-old who attends a specialist school and childminder**

"At Dingley's Promise, we are aware that childminders are a key part of the early education system - especially for children with SEND and their families. For many families of children with SEND, smaller settings can feel more personal and less overwhelming for their children. Childminders can be the entry point to the education system for these families before they move on to larger settings as their confidence builds. We believe that without childminders, it is likely that more children with SEND would not be able to access an early education as their parents may not feel confident that larger, less personalised settings would be suitable for their needs. That is why it is vital that we protect our childminders and ensure that they are able to access the necessary funding and support to be inclusive, in the same way that any other setting would."

2m

almost 2 million children in the UK have speech and language challenges.

29%

of childminders care for children with diagnosed SEND/ ALN.

33%

of childminders care for children waiting to be assessed.

How can we support childminders to deliver this on a BIGGER scale for GREATER impact?

While childminders already play a significant role in supporting children with SEND and ALN, more can be done to ensure they are fully supported and recognised within the wider system.

A key challenge is the lack of access to dedicated funding and investment for childminders supporting children with additional needs. Many must source funding themselves, navigate complex processes, and advocate on behalf of children in their care. This creates significant pressure and can act as a barrier to offering inclusive places. Greater integration of childminders within SEND and ALN systems is needed. They should be recognised as equal partners alongside nurseries and schools, with clear pathways to funding, training, and specialist support.

In England, proposed SEND reforms present an opportunity to strengthen support, but childminders must be explicitly included. For example, access to specialist advice, such as the proposed "Experts at Hand" model, should be equally available to all early years providers, including childminders, rather than focused primarily on school-based settings.

Access to funded training is another critical area for improvement. High-quality training supports confidence, knowledge, and inclusive practice, yet current funding structures can exclude childminders. For example, childminders in England are likely to be excluded from the recently announced Inclusive Early Years Fund, limiting access to targeted support. CPD opportunities must be fully available to childminders, taking into account their working hours and accessibility. Providing funding to enable attendance during normal working hours - supported by planned "inset days" for families - would help ensure childminders are not financially disadvantaged.

The Government should actively consult with childminders to understand the barriers they face in supporting children with SEND and ALN. This would help identify practical solutions and ensure policies reflect the realities of home-based childcare.

Stronger recognition, funding, and inclusion of childminders within SEND and ALN systems would support providers and increase the availability of inclusive childcare places for children and families.

"Childminders offer something truly unique for neurodivergent children and their families. The home-based environment naturally creates a space that is calm, predictable and emotionally safe, something many neurodivergent children deeply need. As a parent of neurodivergent children myself, I experienced this firsthand. My childminder provided consistent, attuned care in a quiet, understanding environment where my children could simply be themselves. Just as importantly, the relationship we built as parent and childminder became a cornerstone of my journey as a SEND parent, offering trust, reassurance and shared understanding at a time when I needed it most."

A spotlight on school-aged children

Childminding offers continuity for school-aged children through before-school, after-school, and holiday care in a familiar setting. This helps them maintain long-standing relationships with the childminder, staff, and peers they have often known for years. This stability supports children to feel secure and confident in their environment and promotes wellbeing. It encourages strong friendships, mixed-age socialisation, and helps build independence, confidence, and a sense of belonging throughout their primary and even secondary school years.

73%

of childminders told us they care for school-aged children.

90%

of these childminders said they cared for the school children in their early years too.

86%

provide school drop-off and/or collection.

As well as being an important place to unwind and relax before and after a school day, childminders told us their school-children commonly partake in creative activities, free play, spend time outdoors, socialise with the other children, enjoy meals and snacks and do their independent work and reading in their setting.

“School-aged children in my care enjoy a balance of relaxation and play after the school day. They often take part in arts and crafts, shared games, and social time with one another. I provide a wide range of resources including board games, reading books, magnetic blocks, puzzles, and a variety of toys that encourage creativity and imaginative play. Children are able to choose their own activities, allowing them to unwind, socialise, and engage in meaningful play after a busy day at school.” **Childminder survey respondent in England**



How can we support childminders to deliver this on a BIGGER scale for GREATER impact?

Childminders should be recognised by schools and government as a key part of the school-aged childcare system. Their extended hours often go beyond those offered by other school-aged providers, making them a highly flexible and valuable option for families. This impact can be strengthened and scaled by improving partnerships between schools and childminders, ensuring better communication, referral pathways, and integrated planning.

In England, we would like Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs) to include targets on the mix of different provider types delivering 'wraparound' care, to ensure fair opportunities for all providers and avoid harming competition or undermining the sustainability of existing providers.

We asked childminders about how they work with schools and other services:

Whilst **73%** of childminders we surveyed say they have a close working relationship with the schools that their minded children attend, this is an area that could be strengthened through the introduction of formal arrangements. Childminders can be a bridge of support for children and families navigating services and doing so would strengthen this.

Childminders told us about their collaboration with other settings and wider community services to ensure joined-up support for children and families, especially when a child attends multiple settings. They take a proactive approach to communication and information sharing, helping to ensure consistency and continuity across settings. Childminders may also seek out specialist training or advice to better meet individual needs, and frequently act as an advocate for the child and family, helping them access the most appropriate services and support.

"When [twelve-year-old] left primary school, myself or one of my team would take her to a specialist SEND school in the car. I met with her school teachers and discussed that over a few months we would be stepping back with the aim for her to walk independently. Over many weeks we made sure [child] knew each stage. Some of which was her walking a few feet alone, but she achieved it! Now she walks alone and messages me on her arrival and when she is on her way back to mine in the evening."

Childminder in Bexley, England specialising in wraparound and school holiday provision from her home and a church hall

79%

support school transitions.

71%

share information about children's needs.

68%

communicate about behaviour and wellbeing.

45%

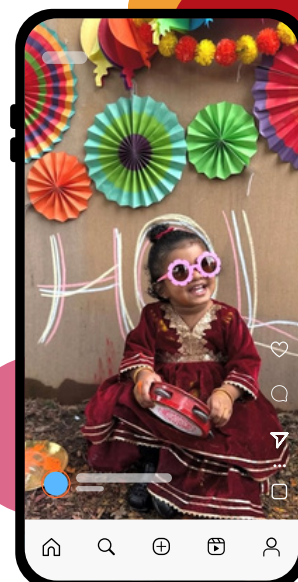
support schools with SEND/ALN or further support.

33%

attend meetings where appropriate.

5%

provide childcare on external premises (England).



The MAGICAL
impact of
childminding on:
FAMILIES



FAMILIES

Choosing childcare is a significant decision for families, and one that is rarely taken lightly. Families told us they look for settings where their children will feel safe, valued, and supported. The home-based, tailored offer and community feel provided by childminders appeals to families because it reflects the environment of family life. This familiarity can ease transitions for young children and provide reassurance for parents during what can be an emotional and important stage. Childminding also often offers a level of flexibility and personalisation that supports families with a wide range of needs. As well as offering a distinct pedagogical approach for children, childminders' provision is underpinned by strong and long-term relationships that form naturally between the childcare professional, the children in their care and their families. In fact, it is not uncommon for childminders to care for generations within the same family - supporting not only the children in their care, but later the children of those children.

Choosing a childminder

In research studies, communication, emotional rapport and trust have been identified as key in the relationship formation between childminders and the families they support (Ang et al., 2017). This was reflected in our parent interviews, where parents spoke of the natural process of finding their childminder through personal connections and recommendations, and building a natural relationship with them.

Families spoke about the reassurance they felt knowing their childminder genuinely enjoys their role and is passionate about supporting children's wellbeing and development.

Children described feeling "at home" and "happy" in the childminder setting, highlighting the sense of comfort and belonging it provides. For parents, this emotional security reinforces confidence that they have made the right childcare choice, knowing their child is safe, settled, and well cared for in a nurturing environment.

Childminders told us that parents particularly value this continuity and the sense of a stable, familiar relationship where their child is known well and nurtured as an individual.



"The magic of childminding is, quite simply, love in action. It is the fact that our children have gone each morning to a real home, not an institution, where they are held, known, and cherished as an individual. It is the seamless, unhurried transition from our home to another home, where they never had to feel the shock of a world too big or too noisy or too impersonal."

Flexibility and offer

Childminders often provide flexible hours that meet the needs of modern family life. This flexibility can be particularly important for families working outside traditional hours, including shift workers, single parent households, and families balancing multiple responsibilities.

“My daughter is seven and has been with her childminder since she was seven-months-old. I am a solo mum and work for the NHS as a nurse, and when it came down to it, the childminder was able to meet the hours that I needed - she offered much more flexible hours than the local nurseries. I still work some weekends, which, while officially she doesn't offer weekend childcare, she always has for us. So, she's always been really flexible if I've needed to extend a day by a couple of hours, or change days.” **Mother of a seven-year-old**

“I had a parent who worked in healthcare with hours that are not your typical nine to five. I would have her child from 7.30am even though I typically don't start work until 8.30am. That's the magic of childminding, giving children breakfast here, then taking them to school or picking them up when the parent is in a meeting. We are flexible in so many ways.” **Childminder in Westminster, England**

Most working families cannot finish work when the school bell rings, so holiday care and wraparound provision for school-aged children are important features that families can find in childminding provision. Childminders frequently care for siblings, making drop-off and pick-up arrangements simpler and more seamless for parents, reducing stress and helping families manage busy schedules. Many working parents do not have enough annual leave entitlements to cover the full duration of school holidays and closures, so childminders have a particular benefit of being the provider type most likely to be open year-round. This includes cover during the Christmas period and for teacher training days, and being the provider type most likely to offer a full day of provision from 8am to 6pm, and often beyond these hours (Coram Family and Childcare, 2025).

76%

provide school holiday care.

42%

provide emergency/ ad hoc care.

72%

provide morning care before 8am.

15%

provide evening care after 6pm.

6%

provide overnight care.

5%

provide respite care.



 @theyoungoneschildminding

"The fact that she's been able to continue in the same environment and go back for school holidays and then wraparound care with school and have that continuity has been brilliant, and that's not something I was really thinking about, when she started as a baby." **Mother of a seven-year-old.**

Emergency and ad hoc care

Parents told us that during unexpected or emergency situations, childminders provided valuable support. Their capacity to offer emergency and ad hoc childcare can help families manage sudden changes, such as illness, work demands, school closures and more.

This was reflected in our childminder survey where a large proportion of childminders said they were able to offer flexibility and adaptability for families:

80%

offer flexible start and finish times.

70%

offer short-notice cover for unexpected changes.

54%

offer part-time care.

41%

offer variable days each week.

24%

offer shift-based care.

13%

offer split sessions.

"We have supported a child through the loss of a grandparent. We made space for her to talk about him and her feelings whenever she needed to and used books and resources in the setting to support her understanding. As this family also had a newborn, we took a 'whole family' approach, offering newborn care alongside the older sibling so that the parents could visit the hospital and taking the baby instead of the older child so that she could have time alone with her parents. It is a huge measure of the trust our families have in us that they felt comfortable leaving their three-week-old baby with us." **Childminder in Redcar and Cleveland, England**

"I support a family who have just separated. Mum's had to deal with Universal Credit and a change in her income. Whatever I can do to help I do. She had an appointment and I had the little one for her as an extra. It's because she didn't want to drag him along, and I had him just to ease the stress a bit." **Childminder in the Isle of Wight, England**

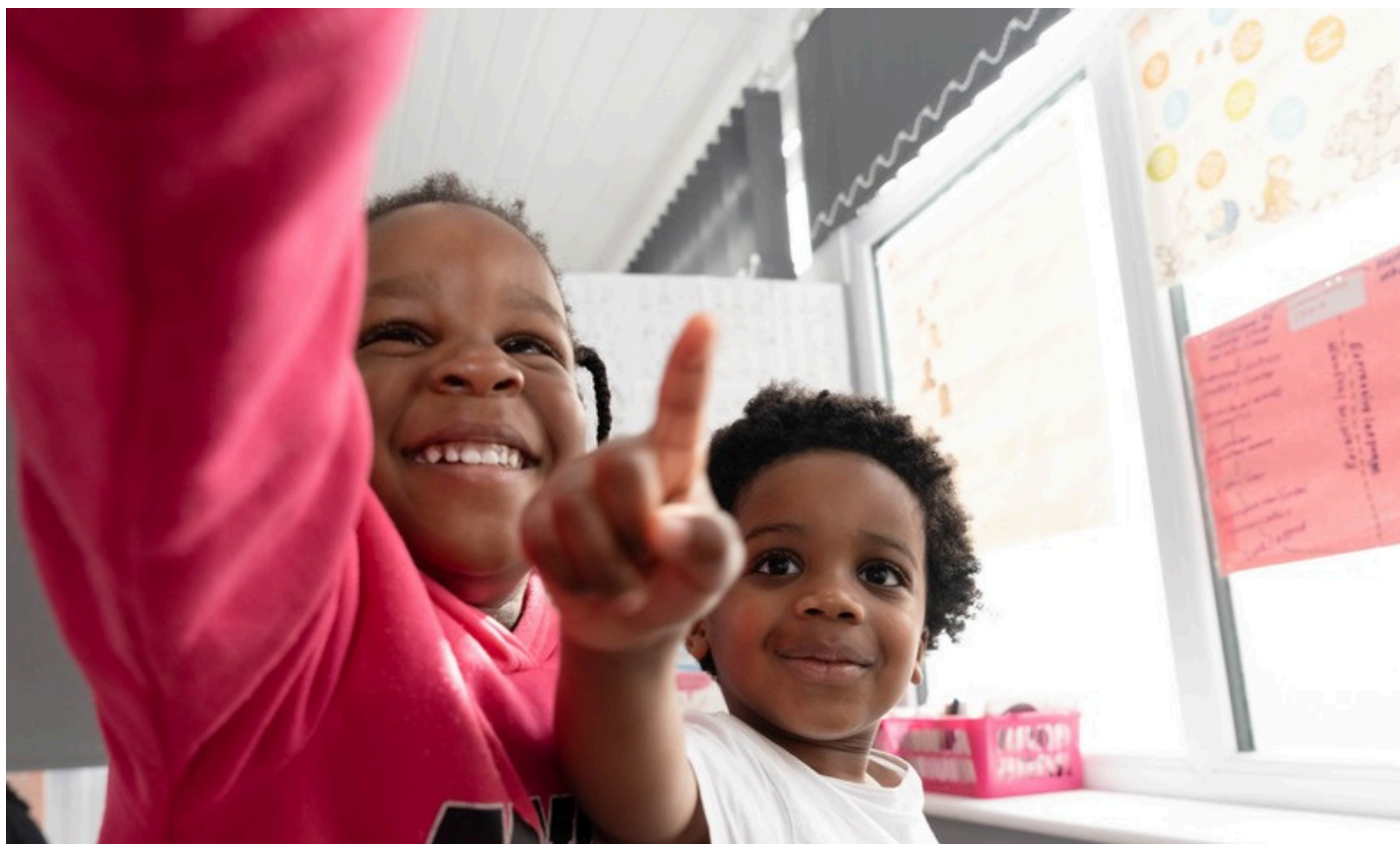
Value for money

For many families, childminding offers a cost-effective childcare option that can be tailored to their working patterns. In its 25th annual Childcare Survey, Coram Family and Childcare (2026) demonstrate that families in England and Wales pay less on average per week accessing childcare through a childminder than other provider types.

Furthermore, analysis of providers' finances in England found childminders to be the least likely to impose additional charges, with only **67%** making additional charges to parents (compared to **91%** private group-based settings and **84%** nursery class childcare settings). "This is despite childminders having the highest proportion of costs attributable to food and materials" (Department for Education, 2025).

"As a mum, I have personal experience of just how magical childminders really are. Christmas parties, soft play trips, arts and crafts, baking, library outings, rhyme times, walks and meet-ups with other childminders and children - all wonderful things experienced by my son with our childminder, who very much became an extension of our family. The flexibility of care that she provided also enabled me to return to work in a way that genuinely worked for me and my family - with care ranging from just a few hours per week, up to my son spending time with our childminder again in school holidays after he had started school."

Rachel Grocott, CEO of Pregnant Then Screwed



"My favourite activity is playing with the playdough because I like making bugs with them."

Early years child

Inclusive environments and reflecting diversity

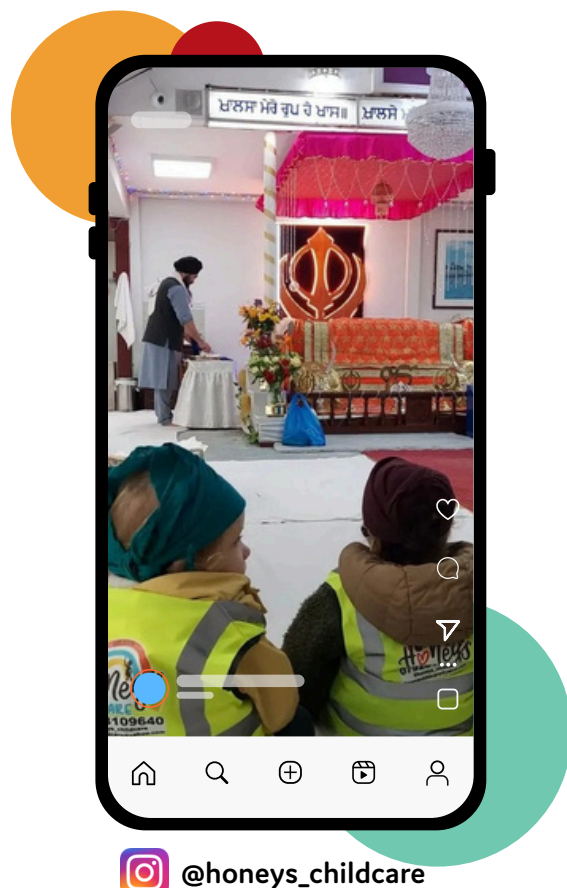
The home-based nature of childminding allows families to choose settings that reflect their own values, routines, and cultural backgrounds. Childminders are often able to incorporate family traditions, languages, and cultural practices into daily life, supporting inclusion and helping children feel seen and understood. This can be particularly valuable in supporting attachment, continuity between home and setting, and positive self-identity. This benefit was highlighted strongly in our parent interviews as vital in choosing childminder provision for their family.

“As an immigrant in the UK, what I was always looking for was somebody who's an extension of my family, and I know that nurseries work for some people, but they didn't work for me. I wanted my son in an intimate situation where his needs were catered for, and where it felt like I was a part of a community which was supportive. So, I wouldn't change it for the world.” **Mother of a two-year-old**

“Where we live, it's unique in the sense that it's highly affluent, but also really deprived at the same time. From our engagement with the local community children come into contact with people for example who English is not their first language or people who use food banks. As a setting, we're representatives of what our community looks like. I'm a black woman, my assistant wears a Hijab, so they grow up with that wider awareness of the different people that make up the world. We mark Black History Month, Ramadan and the children taste different foods. Today, on our way home, we stopped off at the local Caribbean shop and they look at mangoes, they look at yam and it is unique for us because we live in a very culturally diverse, rich environment.” **Childminder in Westminster, England**

“Childminders have a fundamental role to play in ensuring many children are able to access their rights in the early years of their lives. By providing play-focussed learning in inclusive, safe and nurturing environments, childminders promote children’s rights and help them to grow and develop during their critical first years.”

Hugh Russell, Chief Executive of Children in Wales



 @honeys_childcare

Support beyond childcare

For many families, the relationship with a childminder extends beyond practical childcare. Families told us that over time, childminders often become trusted sources of advice and reassurance. They support families through milestones such as toilet training, weaning, behaviour changes, starting school, or managing routines. They offer specialist advice and help when families are experiencing challenging circumstances, made possible by the deep understanding of families' social context, situation and established interpersonal relationships.

This level of trust means that childminders can become an extension of the family's support network. Parents told us they value having someone who understands their child well and who can offer consistent guidance and encouragement.

Overall, childminding provides families with flexible, reliable, and relationship-based care that supports both children's development and family wellbeing. Recognising the role childminders play in supporting families highlights their importance not only as childcare providers, but as trusted partners in family life.

"I have supported a single-parent family where the parent was undertaking further study. During a placement period, they required additional childcare days as well as extended hours, with their child in my care from breakfast through to the evening. I also considered the wider wellbeing of the family. I recognised that after a long day of study and placement, the parent would return home tired and still have responsibilities to manage. To support them further, I would often prepare an extra portion of the child's dinner for the parent to take home. This small gesture helped to ease some of the pressure on the parent and ensured they also had a nutritious meal without additional effort." **Childminder in Norfolk, England**

"I think it's the relationships, the relationships in that community, the kind of long-term relationship that we've been able to have with [childminder], rather than having to transition through different sorts of childcare. And those relationships and that community she has with the other children, and the other families. I think that's really special." **Mother of a seven-year-old**



“We went through an immigration issue that caused complications with our housing. Our childminder basically held my hand through it, because as an immigrant... you don't know who to contact or who to talk to in order to guide you through quite a humiliating process where you keep getting told “no”, but there is a “yes” somewhere along the line. Sometimes she helped to advocate for me, because sometimes I was just fighting to keep my head above water, and I couldn't even advocate or speak up for myself. I don't think there's anything that she would not do to help us, because she did try. She really did try, she put us in touch with the right people, she kept asking questions, she showed humanity, I guess, and no judgment, even if it was me being anxious about opening an email, she'd be like, “okay, come through, we'll open it together.” I guess it's that humanity that speaks volumes for me.” **Mother of a two-year-old**

“Within my setting, a lot of the parents have become close, we have meetups and they have become friends. The meetups developed quite organically. I encourage families to let me know what they're doing and most often, a lot of them meet up at the weekends and they send me pictures of them going for a walk together or going to the park. Living in a big city is quite transient. A lot of families are working here, but they're not really from here, so a lot of people are on their own. This is the magic of childminding, of being able to facilitate that kind of connection and getting families away from that feeling of loneliness.” **Childminder in Westminster, England**

“Parents don't just rely on us for childcare. They rely on us emotionally. We become part of their family - and they become part of ours.”

Childminder in England

Supporting families in challenging times

These two further case studies show how childminders continue to support families in meaningful ways, particularly during times of unexpected challenge. They highlight the flexibility, compassion, and reassurance that trusted relationships make possible.

“We were in hospital last year with my daughter. Our childminder was just so supportive, meal prepping for me and filling the freezer while we're in hospital, so we didn't need to be worrying about that. My child had a diagnosis of type 1 diabetes, followed by a diagnosis of coeliac disease. When you're told that, you're not sure if they're going to cope, or be able to meet her needs, and she was just really quick to reassure me. We were in hospital for 5 days, when [child] was diagnosed, and I didn't know how it was going to affect us. I didn't know if I'd need to stop work, or whether she'd be able to continue to go to childcare. Our childminder just said, don't worry about it, we'll learn what we need to do, and make that happen. We got the childminder in to see the dietitian before we had had a session with the dietitian ourselves, and then she came along to the first clinic appointments with us, with the diabetes team.” **Mother of a seven-year old**

“When I am here it feels like home”

Five-year-old

“Last year, one of the children in my care lost their Mamgu (Grandmother) quite suddenly to a short illness, a wonderful woman who I’d had the pleasure of getting to know during pick-ups and drop-offs. What mattered most in those first months was doing whatever was within my power to help get them through it. I couldn’t make it better, I couldn’t take the pain away, but I could make sure the little boy had a steady, predictable, place to be while his family dealt with the turmoil. To begin with I was able to offer flexibility in the evenings, so they didn’t have to worry about hospital appointments. If I had ad hoc spaces when the other children were ill or on holiday, he would come on those days. I am in constant conversation with my families and having those pictures and videos and updates of what we were getting up to, knowing with certainty that the child is safe, loved and cared for, meant one less thing to have to think about. Having to work out the logistics of childcare whilst navigating grief doesn’t bear thinking about so when the time came I did what I could, speaking to other parents to see if we could move days and create wiggle room, talking it over and helping to think through options with mum until eventually we had a plan and childcare at least, was taken care of.” **Childminder in Ceredigion, Wales**

“Families don't want a 'one size fits all' childcare system. They want choice. They want to choose an environment that suits their child's unique needs - particularly when they are babies - and they want hours that fit their work. That magic of childminding is that it offers all that and more. Yet for far too long, the unique contribution of childminders to families' lives has been overlooked.”

Sarah Ronan, Executive Director, Early Education and Childcare Coalition

Supporting adoptive and foster families

We heard from childminders who play an important role in supporting adoptive and foster families by offering stable, flexible, home-based care. They highlighted that the calm, small-group environment helps children build trust and feel secure, particularly after changes in their lives. Families told us that childminders often work closely with them and other professionals to adapt routines and meet individual needs.

“My daughter is adopted and [my childminder]’s been amazing with that as well. I’m a single adopter, and in our area, it’s a very typical ‘mum, dad, two children’ kind of thing. So our childminder’s been amazing. She’s bought books on single parents, she’s bought books on adopted parents, on different types of families, just to introduce that to all the other children in her setting as well, so they have that wider knowledge beyond your stereotypical children and families, which has been really important. I mean, my daughter doesn’t fully understand due to her disability. But it’s really... it’s important for me that the other children do get it, absolutely.” **Mother of a six-year-old**

“[Child] is adopted and since she joined us in January, I have worked closely with her psychologist and Mum to devise a settling-in schedule so she can adapt into childminding. I am delighted that [child] has made the transition and is part of our team and Mum is ready to return to work. This week saw her Mum’s very first Mother’s Day, which was very special for them both and we assisted her with making gifts and a card.” **Childminder in Bexley, England**

"I adopted my daughter last year aged three, and having experienced considerable loss and trauma in her life, she is understandably anxious, especially in new environments and when separated from me. I chose a childminder setting because I felt it would provide a nurturing environment which would help her to feel safe and secure.

[Childminder] was very understanding and took the trouble to adjust her rota so that she could be available for all of [child's] pick-ups from school during the transition period. She also took the time to find out about [child's] interests and was intentional in spending dedicated time with her 1:1 to build trust and rapport.

This approach has allowed her to flourish from a scared little girl who was initially unable to separate from me, to a confident little girl who last evening told me off when I picked her up from [childminder's] at 6pm! She said 'Mummy, you've come too early, I was having fun playing outside and wanted to stay longer'. To me that truly is a miracle." **Parent in Bexley, England**

How can we support childminders to deliver this on a BIGGER scale for GREATER impact?

Stronger, more direct relationships between children's social care teams and childminders would build local networks of support. This would enable foster and adoptive families to be connected more quickly with trusted childminders, particularly for emergency and respite care, ensuring timely and reliable support throughout their adoption or fostering journey.

"I know from personal experience how important the familiarity and nurture of home-based childcare can be for a child with additional needs. For those who are adopted and have experienced loss so early in their lives, the nurture and continuity of relationship from a skilled childminder not only enriches the network of support to enable them to find their feet but to make it possible for them to spread their wings and learn to fly."

Dame Carol Homden, CEO of Coram



 @samgoldsworthy_childminding



The MAGICAL
impact of
childminding on:
COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITIES

Local communities

Childminders play an important role within their local communities. Often working from their own homes, they become well-known and trusted figures in their neighbourhoods. In our research, parents described their childminders as pillars of their communities - supporting families, connecting services, and contributing to the social fabric of the areas in which they live and work.

For children, childminding offers regular opportunities to explore their local environment. Trips to parks, libraries, shops, community groups, and local events help children develop familiarity with their surroundings and gain experience and knowledge (Aaronicks, 2023). These everyday experiences build a sense of pride and belonging, helping children develop an understanding of the communities they are part of. Through these experiences, children gain cultural capital - learning how to interact in shared public spaces, understanding local routines, and becoming confident participants in community life.

As referenced earlier, regular outings are a key feature of many childminding settings. These trips often mirror the experiences of family life, such as visiting local parks, attending playgroups, or taking part in community celebrations. In this way, childminding reflects the rhythms of family days out, helping children experience learning and exploration in ways that feel natural and meaningful. These activities support children's social development, independence, and confidence while strengthening their connection and pride in the places where they live.

"I love the updates we get from our childminder about the days out and activities my son's doing, they really help us feel connected to his day and gives us plenty to chat about at home. As he's an only child, it makes me incredibly proud to see him as part of a group, seeing pictures and videos of him interacting with children of different ages and looking so confident and at home with them all. It also gives us fantastic inspiration for our own family days out at the weekends - many of the places we visit now are ones that have already been tried and tested by our childminder." **Father of a three-year-old**

"Hertfordshire is home to a large and well-established childminding community, making childminders an invaluable provider of early education and childcare across the county. They offer reliable, flexible, and personalised care that supports parents and carers to balance professional and family commitments. As trusted, home-based professional early educators, childminders build strong, lasting relationships with children and their families, offering a consistent and nurturing environment in which children can thrive."

Charlotte Marsden,
Early Years Service, Hertfordshire County Council



Childminders also contribute to the wellbeing of their communities in practical ways. Their presence supports local businesses, community venues, and public services. Childminders described their frequent visits to local shops, libraries, and play spaces which bring consistent footfall to businesses and help sustain valued community resources. Childminders also build informal networks with other families and professionals, hosting stay-and-plays and other events to help supportive and connected neighbourhoods.

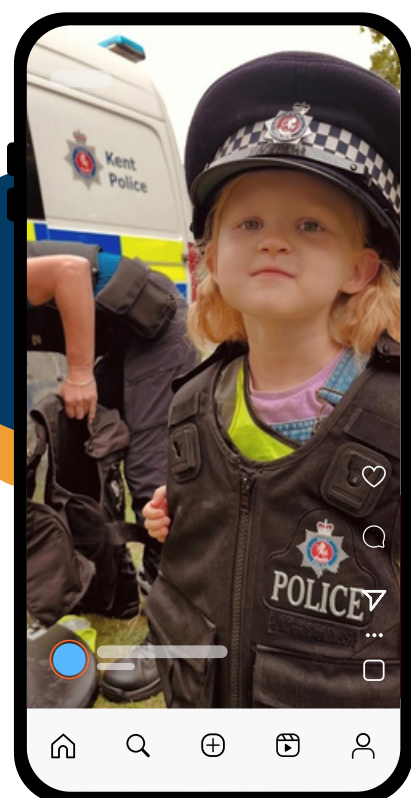
“We go to the library to read and learn about caring for library resources, sharing with others and practicing our conversation skills with the Librarian. We go to post crafts to other childminding settings and cards to our holiday friends and learn about the Postman's job and where the parcels go. We visit a local community farm to learn about different animals and speak to volunteers there to find out more about them. We go on local litter picking walks that the children really enjoy as they don't like the birds and wildlife to get caught or poorly and we discuss how rubbish should go in the bin. These activities help teach the children about how to care for your community as well as on a larger scale of caring for the world we live in.” **Childminder in East Riding of Yorkshire, England**

Many childminders actively participate in local groups and activities, forming relationships with other early years providers, schools, and community organisations. These connections strengthen local support systems and create opportunities for collaboration, shared learning, and community engagement.

“Every Christmas the children make handmade Christmas cards for the local care homes and once they are all handmade with love, we deliver them and this really is such a special part of our year. The children and the residents love it, you can see faces light up, intergenerational care is so beneficial and beautiful to be able to engage with the local community. The children develop confidence, a sense of belonging, and an understanding of different people and cultures within the local area.” **Childminder in Stockton-on-Tees, England**

“Childminders are an essential part of Early Years and Wraparound childcare provision within North Yorkshire Council, offering high-quality, flexible care that supports working families and contributes to local communities. They play a particularly important role in the county’s rural areas, where group-based childcare is often not viable. Their presence ensures that families across North Yorkshire can access reliable childcare close to home. This helps maintain parental choice, supports local employment, and ensures children have the opportunity to thrive in a safe, familiar environment.”

Sarah Blake,
Children's Partnerships and Sufficiency, North Yorkshire Council



Local authorities

The role childminders play within local communities also connects closely to the responsibilities of local authorities. Childminders form a vital part of local childcare sufficiency, offering flexible, accessible provision that supports working families and complements other childcare services. Childminders account for **42%** of all provider types in England and **39%** in Wales, a significant part of the childcare market that local authorities rely on.

It is also at the local authority level where dedicated childminder support, from pre-registration right through a childminder's journey, can make a huge difference to practice, quality and morale in the sector and help reverse the decline in childminder numbers.

Recognising the community role of childminders highlights their value not only as childcare providers, but as contributors to strong, connected, and resilient local communities.

67% of the children in Flintshire with ALN supported by childminders have transitioned into an education place in specialist provision.

"Childminders offer care and development opportunities that can be tailored and bespoke to meet every child's needs. As a local authority, we encourage parental choice, in many instances, where children have additional needs (medical conditions, physical disabilities). The enhanced needs of these children require bespoke care, liaising with Health Professionals (including Dieticians, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists) and additional training such as administering feeds through a nasal gastric or PEG feeding tube. Since 2020, (in Flintshire) 86% of the children with ALN supported by childminders have transitioned into an education place in specialist provision." **Victoria Anderson, Childcare Development Manager at Flintshire County Council**

"We hope to get more childminders on board in these five areas and create another 150 wraparound places across the county by the end of the year. Recruitment of childminders is a major focus for us at the moment, particularly to support wraparound care, as childminders are able to offer the flexible hours that are needed." **Annette Brooker, Head of Early Years, Childcare and School Readiness Service- Cambridgeshire**



Our MAGICAL
community of
CHILDMINDERS



CHILDMINDERS

Childminding offers significant benefits not only for children and families, but also for the childminders themselves and their wider households. Establishing a childminding business provides both professional opportunities and personal fulfilment, while allowing many to balance family responsibilities with earning a living.

Many childminders told us that their decision to enter the profession began with the need to care for their own young children while maintaining an income. Childminding offers a practical and flexible way to combine caring responsibilities with work. This flexibility benefits not only the childminder but their family, enabling them to remain economically active while supporting their own children's early years.

Running a childminding setting also means running a small business with the responsibility that comes with managing this role. Childminders are self-employed professionals who are early years educators and childcarers, meet regulatory requirements, manage complex businesses, communicate with families, and so much more. Being self-employed provides autonomy, the opportunity to shape their work around their values and circumstances and develop a wide range of skills.

Because childminding takes place in the home, it often involves the wider household. During our setting visits, it was clear that family members play a role in creating a welcoming environment and supporting the daily routines of the setting. In our childminder survey, **20%** of childminders said they have a staff member who is part of their family and **16%** said they care for their own child in the setting. This can create a shared sense of purpose and strengthen family relationships, while allowing work and home life to be more closely aligned. Childminders described to us how children in their care become extended members of the childminder's family, reflecting research findings from Aaronicks, 2023.

Professional opportunities and personal fulfilment

Childminding can provide strong professional satisfaction, and what came through strongly in our research is how deeply childminders love their roles and enjoy spending time with the children and families they support. Childminders described the long-term relationships with families and fulfilment of seeing the children they care for grow and progress over time. Opportunities for ongoing training and professional development allow many to deepen their knowledge and specialise in areas such as SEND/ALN, behavioural support, nutrition and more.



Men in childminding

Although the vast majority of childminders are women, men also play an important role in childminding. Department for Education statistics (2025) indicate that men make up a slightly larger proportion of the childminding workforce in England than in other types of childcare provision (**3%, compared to 2%**). This represents an important strength, as male childminders, apprentices, and assistants provide positive role models for children and help to challenge gender stereotypes associated with caring roles. This strength shone through in our setting visits and childminder interviews.

Many childminding businesses are made up of husband and wives or partners as co-childminders or one taking up the role of childminding assistant.



“What I like best about my job is being a male role model for children and offering a different perspective to support their learning and development and building their confidence and socialising skills. I also enjoy networking with local childminders and sharing ideas and best practice. I have faced some stigma with the role and how it’s typically considered and perceived as a woman’s job, and sometimes the lack of men in childcare can make it difficult to make friends with local male practitioners. But I highly recommend working in childcare. it’s a very rewarding career which is fun, and with full commitment, planning and lots of hard work, can make a real difference to the learning experiences and opportunities for young children.” **Childminder in Staffordshire, England**

“My husband joined us as an assistant after leaving a 30-year teaching career as he is living with aggressive prostate cancer. He instantly became everyone’s favourite and is widely known as ‘Uncle’. Our four-year-old adores having a house full of friends and my older children all help with the minded children whenever they want to. The children even refer to each other as ‘brothers and sisters’.” **Childminder in Redcar and Cleveland, England**

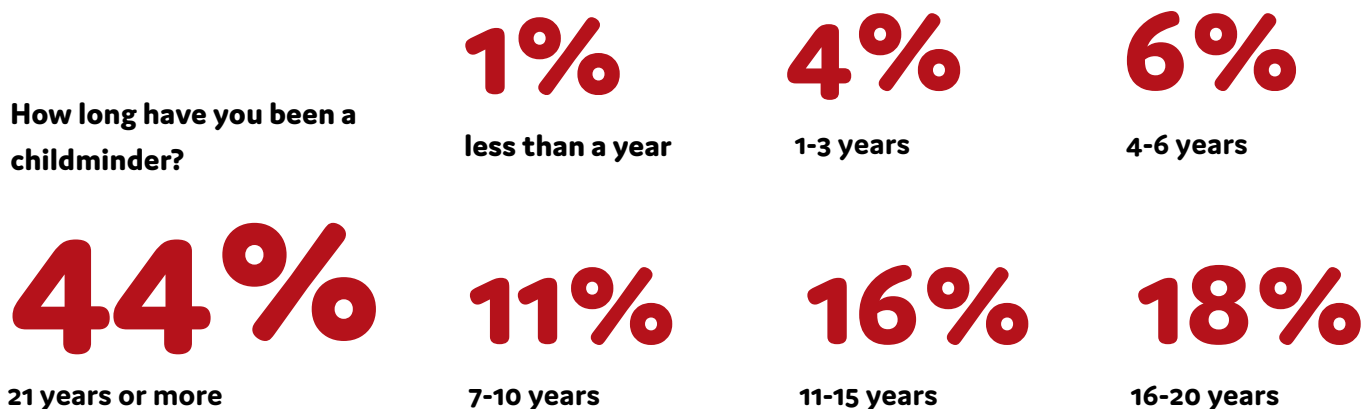
3% of childminders in England are male.

2% of the workforce in other provider types are male.

Many childminders also contribute beyond their own settings. Experienced practitioners often support others through mentoring, networking, and sharing good practice. They work with other early years professionals and services, helping to build local networks of support for children and families.

“I like drawing, I like talking with my friends, I like playing, I like seeing you [childminder].”

Six-year-old



Overall, childminding provides a route into self-employment, professional development, and meaningful work that fits around family life. Supporting childminders means supporting a skilled workforce who not only care for children and families, but also contribute to their local communities and the wider early years sector.

What makes this vocation so magical?

The childminders we interviewed demonstrated a strong sense of passion and pride in their work. Many spoke about the deep care they have for the children and families they support, and the satisfaction that comes from seeing children grow and thrive over time. While childminding can be demanding, and at times very challenging, childminders consistently described it as highly rewarding work that brings a strong sense of purpose and identity. This passion was also recognised by parents in our focus groups, who spoke about their appreciation of the commitment childminders show and the pride they take in their professional roles.

"One of the proudest moments in my childcare career has been setting up and organising a weekly play session at a local residential home for elderly residents. This initiative was particularly meaningful to me because it bridged the generational gap, offering both the children and elderly residents an opportunity to connect, learn from one another, and experience joy together." **Childminder in Cambridgeshire, England**

"I love having agency over my day and the autonomy childminding provides. We literally can change our plans at the drop of a hat depending on the weather or how the children are feeling that day. I love being able to implement change for the benefit of the children without having a chain of command that has to agree to it first. If I read something or learn something from trusted peers or a training event I can try it out immediately. This role, especially in the rural area in which I live, can be isolating and lonely. I know at the drop of a hat I can get help and advice or just a listening ear whenever I need to." **Childminder in Flintshire, Wales**

"The magic of childminding is that you're all in. I think it's a job that you do with your whole heart and soul and the children and the families feel that. We talk a lot about the importance of the unique child, the team around the child, community, this sort of village raising a child. I think the magic of childminding is you are so much a part of that village. You are a family and a team, this unit together, providing the very best for a child with everyone focused on the direction of this child. I've said I've worked in - apart from being a nanny - every facet of childcare and I never experienced such a holistic style of care and education for children as in childminding." **Childminder in Oxfordshire, England**

“For me, the magic is in the small everyday wonders. It is the shy smile from a baby who has found separating from their parents scary, the burst of pride in my chest when I see a child master a new skill, the belly laughter that rocks my assistants because we love working together so much. It is in the interactions we have with parents. The mother who cried with relief when we had space for her child because a large setting really wasn't right for them, the messages we get from families telling us how grateful they are for our support during difficult times and the conversations we have on the doorstep about the amazing progress their child is making. It is looking round our home when it is full of love, laughter and learning and knowing that we have built that through our dedication, resilience and absolute commitment to early years.” **Childminder in Redcar and Cleveland, England**

"Childminders are a critical part of the early years workforce, providing the flexible childcare that parents depend on to go to work and the high-quality, inclusive early education that supports children's development.

We've seen in our research that many countries have launched specific childminding strategies, providing training that suits childminders, investing in adequate funding rates, and recognising the value of home-based early education. Its time for our government to do the same. Childminders deserve recognition, and families deserve choice."

Sarah Ronan, Executive Director, Early Education and Childcare Coalition

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Childminders make a significant contribution to children, families, communities, and the wider economy in England and Wales. They support children's learning and development, provide trusted and flexible care for families, strengthen local communities, and play a vital role in supporting parents.

This report highlights what childminders are already achieving, often against a backdrop of ongoing challenges, including funding that is not designed for the childminding model, workforce pressures, and a lack of sustained strategic investment. Despite these barriers, childminders continue to deliver high-quality, relationship-based care that meets the needs of modern families.

There is clear potential to achieve even more. With greater recognition, targeted support, and long-term investment, the impact of childminding could be strengthened and expanded to benefit more children and families.

The following section sets out specific recommendations for governments in England and Wales to support and grow the childminding workforce, ensuring its continued contribution to families, communities, and local economies.

Recommendations: England and Wales

Urgent action to support recruitment: We are calling on governments in England and Wales to fund universal, national programmes to support prospective childminders through the pre-registration process, ensuring accessibility and consistency.

Retention of skilled and dedicated childminders: Accessible post-registration support would enable the professional growth of childminders with mechanisms to reduce isolation and provide emotional support. We would like to see strengthened childminder networks and investment in mentorship opportunities for peer-to-peer support.

Increased parental awareness: Awareness of childminding remains too low, with many families unaware of what childminders offer or how to access them. More needs to be done to share information about childcare options earlier, including during pregnancy, with health professionals such as midwives and health visitors playing an important role in signposting families. There is a strong case for government-backed national awareness campaigns to promote childminding in England and Wales, building on initiatives such as Coram PACEY's *Magic of Childminding* campaign. Alongside this, local authorities should ensure parents can easily access clear information about childminders in their area.

Childminder research: Childminding remains under-researched in comparison with group settings. The Independent Review of Childminding in Wales published in 2023 shone some light on this area. It is also positive to see a dedicated project focused on childminding in England from the Nuffield Foundation and UCL, which is funded until February 2027. Alongside dedicated research, we need to see more childminder inclusion in wider studies on childcare, early education and learning and child development where they are too often excluded. In particular, work should be done to evidence the experiences of children themselves - particularly with respect to children with specific circumstances and needs, such as the experiences of children with SEND and ALN.

Making Tax Digital: HMRC must re-think its approach to the way that Making Tax Digital applies to childminders in the UK, given the stark impact we have warned these changes will have – particularly the loss of the blanket 10% wear and tear allowance. This policy, alongside a backdrop of other governmental updates and cost-of-living pressures adds to the burden felt by childminders.

Local planning, landlords, commercial waste and environmental health: These barriers remain a huge challenge for the registration of prospective childminders, with too many facing a “postcode lottery” and inconsistencies across neighbouring areas. We are calling for a joined-up, national approach to define and clarify local planning, commercial waste and environmental health requirements to reduce the burden felt by childminders. Alongside this, a dedicated campaign aimed towards landlords and housing associations would improve understanding and awareness of childminders’ work and better support them to run their business.

Recommendations: England

Childminder funding rates: There is widespread acknowledgement that the hourly rate for three- and four-year-olds in England is insufficient to cover delivery costs. Childminders operate at much smaller ratios than nurseries (being mandated to have no more than three early years children per adult, including a maximum of one baby under the age of one) and are therefore much more impacted by the low rates and less able to offset losses. We are calling for Government to re-think its approach to funding rates in England and consider a childminder-specific approach that better supports childminders and prevents them having to make difficult business decisions, such as restricting funded places for older children.

Related children: We are calling for reform of the current rule that excludes non-parental relatives from providing funded childcare to related children in England. The same rule does not apply to children in group settings or for childminders in Wales. This would help us retain a significant number of childminders who we fear might otherwise leave the profession.

SEND-specific support: Given their vital role in supporting children with SEND, we want childminders recognised as a key part of the national SEND system to provide more places for families with SEND. This means improving access to SEND-specific funding, training opportunities that recognise childminders' context and working hours and allow them to upskill and develop their knowledge.

Mandatory early years training: We are calling for the reinstatement of the requirement for childminders to carry out formal EYFS training to join the Early Years Register, which was removed in 2024. This will raise perceptions of professionalism and quality and bring childminder requirements in line with the rest of the sector.

"As new childminders can be individuals with little experience in early years education, it is essential that formal training is in place. This training should provide a thorough explanation of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, including how to work towards, evidence, and meet each section. Even for those with prior experience in early years settings or teaching, the transition to childminding can be significant, as the context, responsibilities, and approach differ in many ways. Formal training ensures that everyone new to childminding, including assistants working with children, develops a consistent understanding of high-quality early years practice. It also helps position childminding as a professional and valuable part of the early years sector, and provides increased confidence with parents looking to use a childminder to provide care for their child".

Jenny Bond, Early Years Entitlement Expansions and Wraparound Childcare, Thurrock Council

Recommendations: Wales

Funded programmes in Wales: We are calling on Welsh Government to enable childminders to deliver all childcare and early education funded programmes including Flying Start and Nursery Education. A clear, consistent approach reducing barriers would support childminders to deliver funded high-quality childcare and early education in Wales.

Ratios: Following our call to Government, we are pleased that Welsh Government have listened to voices from the sector and changes to ratios for childminders are planned to be implemented in June 2026. These changes will support continuity of care for children, parental choice of provision and sustainability of services and we call for timely publication of these.



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We are grateful to Pregnant Then Screwed and Coram Family and Childcare for supporting the recruitment of parents for our focus groups, and to the parents who generously shared their experiences and perspectives.

We would also like to thank the almost 1,000 childminders who participated in our 2026 childminder survey, as well as the many childminders and parents who contributed through case studies, calls, and correspondence on a range of topics.

Special thanks go to the childminders who kindly opened their doors to allow us to visit their settings for filming and photography, and to the children and families who shared their time and experiences with us.

With thanks to Helen Donohoe for her literature review on home-based childcare research, conducted in autumn of 2025. Finally, we extend our thanks to all the contributors quoted in this report for their valuable insights and expertise.

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METHODS

This report draws on a mix of qualitative and quantitative research to capture the experiences of childminders, families, and sector professionals across England and Wales.

A large-scale survey of 913 childminders across England and Wales was undertaken by Coram PACEY to gather wider evidence about practice, environments, and the support childminders provide. Findings from this survey are used throughout the report to illustrate common themes and insights.

We conducted in-depth phone and written interviews with 19 childminders and 18 parents to explore their experiences of providing and using childminding services. These interviews provided insight into the day-to-day realities of childminding and the relationships that support children and families. We asked childminders and parents to partake in activities with their children to draw out their insights and experiences of what it is like to attend a childminding setting.

We carried out visits to childminding settings, where we spoke directly with childminders, their family members and assistants, as well as the children attending the settings. These visits provided valuable on-the-ground insight into daily routines, learning environments, and the home-based nature of childminding.

In addition, we held two parent focus groups to explore families' experiences of choosing and using childminders in more depth, and spoke with experts spanning a multitude of disciplines including the early years, childcare, family support, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND, England) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN, Wales) to provide wider professional context.

A key aim of this report was to ensure that the voices of those directly involved in childminding were central to the report. Throughout the report, quotes and case examples from childminders, parents, and children are used to illustrate key themes and bring the findings to life.

Together, these methods provide a robust picture of childminding in England and Wales, combining lived experience with broader data to highlight both the impact and the potential of childminding within local communities and the wider early years sector.





"This report has been produced to showcase the magic of childminders, and the positive impact they have on children, families and the communities they serve. It is also our love letter to the sector, thanking them for the incredible work that they do day in, day out."

**Ka Lai Brightley-Hodges,
Head of Coram PACEY**



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