

Local authority case study:

Starting strong - a deep dive into Flintshire County Council's support for prospective childminders



Early years children at a childminder setting in Flintshire County Council

Introduction

Flintshire County Council has invested in the sustainability of their childminder workforce by funding Coram PACEY Cymru to provide pre-registration support to those looking to become a childminder. This includes training, advice surgeries, email and telephone support, ensuring prospective childminders have a smooth transition into the role and are fully equipped to start their childminding journey.

2026



Context

Flintshire is in the north-east of Wales with a population of approximately 155,000 (2021). A high percentage of people in Flintshire work full-time (71.4%). This contributes to a significant demand for childcare, with most childminders in the area operating at full capacity and maintaining a consistent waiting list. However, some parts of the locality have either no childminders or only a single provider available, creating notable gaps in provision.

Flintshire County Council has 55 active childminders in the local authority and their childcare team consists of a Childcare Development Manager and two Childcare Development Officers who provide support to childminders and all other registered childcare settings in Flintshire.

Working with Coram PACEY Cymru to support childminders in Flintshire

Flintshire County Council has a strong relationship with Coram PACEY Cymru, investing in pre-registration support for childminders and holding regular meetings to receive updates on the support being delivered within the area. These discussions primarily focus on pre-registration support for prospective childminders: including guidance, training, and progression through the registration process.

Coram PACEY Cymru also provides regular updates on childminders going through the pre-registration process. The local authority told us that they feel supported when making enquires to Coram PACEY Cymru, particularly relating to the pre-registration process, planning and regulatory requirements.

Flintshire County Council also funds Coram PACEY membership for all childminders in the local authority and wider work that supports existing childminder retention. Childminders in the local authority also have access to support offered nationally by Coram PACEY Cymru through Welsh Government funding to the CWLWM consortium.

Why are childminders so important to children, families and the childcare market in Flintshire?

Childminders in Flintshire work flexibly and offer full or part-time care, with many opening before 8am and working after 6pm, meeting the needs of working parents. Childminders offer care for children of all ages from 0-12, allowing siblings of different ages to be cared for together in the same setting. Some childminders provide overnight and weekend care, which provides more flexibility and tailored care to children.

Most childminders can drop-off and collect children from school, pre-school or nursery, supporting transitions between settings. They can offer home-based activities like cooking, stories, messy play, dressing up, gardening and nutritious mealtimes, as well as outings to the park, library and group activities supporting children's holistic development.

Children benefit from the close relationship they develop with their childminder, and many have the same carer from their early years right through their school years. Small groups ensure each child receives a high level of attention to meet their individual needs. This is particularly important for babies, very young children and those with additional learning needs.



How has the role of childminders changed in Flintshire over the last five-ten years?

The role has changed from primarily a home-based, informal style of care into a highly professional, regulated and educationally focused role. Childminders have become:

- Early educators: planning purposeful learning experiences, tracking developmental progress.
- Small business owners: with an increased focus on use of technology including utilising online platforms for funding, payments and bookings, completing online data requests and use of social media marketing.
- Increased safeguarding responsibilities: mandatory requirements have grown to ensure the welfare of the child is paramount.
- Family support workers: building relationships with families, providing advice and support and supporting the identification of children's additional learning needs (ALN).
- Networkers: working more closely with schools, other settings, other childminders and community partners.

Recruitment

Recruitment of childminders in recent years

While there have been new childminders registering with Flintshire County Council over the years, the number leaving the sector outweighs the number joining. People interested in becoming a childminder are signposted to Coram PACEY Cymru for support.

Some newly registered childminders have previously worked in larger day-care settings and bring established early-years experience into their practice. Others have school-aged children and view childminding as a role that aligns well with family life, offering greater flexibility and work-life balance.

Flintshire County Council has a Recruitment and Retention Strategy for all childcare providers. The strategy also focuses on the decline in childminder numbers and what the local authority aims to do to reverse this. The recruitment strategy includes:

- Building sector confidence through improved workforce stability. The council analyses improvements in recruitment and retention across types of settings, including childminders.
- Ensuring Flintshire County Council is seen as a facilitator of workforce stability.
- Supporting flexible staffing while ensuring quality is retained.
- Encouraging settings to maintain a core team of permanent staff for stability.
- Considering shared staffing solutions across smaller providers or rural areas.

"Work will continue to retain childminders and support them to find alternative ways of working that both amplifies the important role they play in the childcare sector and also to meet the needs of parents and carers by providing the much needed flexible childcare. We attend colleges open days and meet with current students to discuss childminding as a possible career."

Victoria Anderson, Childcare Development Manager at Flintshire County Council

Flintshire County Council will continue to offer subsidised training to all childcare providers, particularly the mandatory training required for pre-registered childminders. Flexible training times are offered to childminders to suit their working patterns; both face to face and online. All childminders are encouraged and supported to register their business on [DEWIS](#) to promote their business and be more visible as a childcare provider to parents looking for childcare.

Pre-registration

Support for prospective childminders

Flintshire County Council provides comprehensive pre-registration support, including funding to complete the units needed to register as a childminder in Wales and other required elements. New childminders are also eligible for start-up grants, which enable them to purchase essential equipment and resources up to an agreed value. Mandatory training is offered at a subsidised rate to all pre-registration childminders to reduce financial barriers to entry.

Childcare Development Officers (CDOs) from Flintshire County Council provide support from the first point of enquiry, maintaining regular communication and check-ins throughout the pre-registration process. This ongoing contact helps identify pressures early and ensures that prospective childminders receive tailored guidance and assistance as they progress toward registration.



Retention

What does the team do to support childminder retention?

Flintshire County Council provides Small Capital Grant Funding and a Flying Start Grant which enables childminders to invest in resources that enhance children's learning and development. This might include outdoor play equipment, sensory materials, home adaptations or digital tools.

The local authority facilitates childminder cluster groups to promote local networking and reduce professional isolation. These sessions provide opportunities for childminders to collaborate, share resources, and offer one another wellbeing support. They also create a safe and stimulating environment for children to explore and socialise. Participation in these groups contributes to increased confidence among childminders and supports continuous improvement in the quality of provision.

Other retention support includes:

- Signposting to wellbeing resources and encouraging a culture where childminders feel comfortable asking for help.
- Celebrating Childminding Week annually, holding an event to show support and appreciation.
- Giveaways including well-being vouchers and resources.
- Business and administrative support: helping childminders navigate funding, paperwork, and compliance so the workload feels more manageable.
- Funded Coram PACEY memberships.
- Childminder-only training sessions.

The support offer includes guidance from Childcare Development Officers in the local authority, access to subsidised or free training, and assistance in navigating government-funded childcare initiatives. Childminders receive help in understanding and implementing changes to the National Minimum Standards, as well as support in responding to Care Inspectorate Wales recommendations and developing Action Plans where required.

Responsive assistance is provided during periods of challenge, such as sudden drops in demand. In addition, peer-mentoring arrangements are in place, pairing newly registered childminders with experienced practitioners to strengthen confidence and practice.

Flintshire Childcare Development Facebook group offers benefits for both childminders and the early-years settings in Flintshire. It strengthens communication, builds community, and supports quality improvement in a way that is accessible and immediate.

Supporting children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Flintshire County Council provide the following support for childminders caring for children with ALN:

- Access to advisory teams (Early Years and Childcare Placement Officers): they can offer guidance on strategies, and following Flintshire's ALN Pathway, reasonable adjustments, and how to support specific needs.
- Training and professional development: including ALN awareness, schemas, inclusive practice, communication strategies, and person-centred planning.
- Multi-agency collaboration: links with health visitors, speech and language therapists, early years teams, and family support services.
- Guidance on adapting environments and routines to meet individual needs.

Supporting the families of children with ALN

Parents of children with ALN looking for childcare are always signposted to their local registered childcare providers, including childminders. The Flying Start family support worker will support parents and signpost if the child is eligible for Flying Start funding. The Family Information Service (FIS) can provide signposting information and support and guidance to parents/carers too.

Childminders delivering Flying Start in Flintshire

Flintshire County Council currently have 14 childminders registered to provide Flying Start childcare. All childcare providers in Flintshire are invited to register to become a Flying Start provider. To become a provider, settings make enquiries to Flintshire County Council, they are provided with information detailing the requirements to be a provider (for example qualifications needed, session details, contacts etc.). If they are happy to proceed, Flintshire County Council prepare a personalised contract for the setting which they sign and return. A member of the Childcare Team will then contact the provider (although this can be done before signing a contract if they have specific queries). Once they send a signed contract, their details are then added to Flintshire's list of registered providers for parents to select.

The future of childminding in Flintshire

We asked Flintshire County Council:

If you had a magic wand, what would you offer to retain more childminders in your area?

Greater public awareness campaigns to highlight the value of childminders and attract more families. Recognition and celebration of good practice, helping childminders feel appreciated and respected.

What are the drivers causing childminders to leave the profession in Flintshire?

The key drivers for childminders leaving the profession are personal circumstances, increased paperwork, rising costs and opportunities for more predictable work in other childcare settings.

What would help childminders feel supported to remain in the profession?

"Childminders feel better supported and more likely to stay in the profession when they experience genuine respect for their role, strong professional connection, practical help with the pressures of lone working, and a childcare system that treats them fairly. They value being recognised as skilled early years educators, having access to local networks and peer support to reduce isolation, receiving meaningful and flexible training, and getting clear, responsive guidance from the local authority when they need it.

Financial stability also matters, so timely funded-hours payments, simple processes, and business support all help them feel the job is sustainable. When these elements come together, childminders feel part of a professional community rather than working alone, which makes them far more likely to remain in the sector."

Victoria Anderson, Childcare Development Manager at Flintshire County Council

If childminders no longer existed, what would that mean for children and families in your area?

If childminders no longer existed, the effects on the children and families would be significant. Childminders fill a very particular niche that other childcare settings often can't replicate. Children would miss out on a home-from-home environment, reduced individual attention and they would have fewer flexible learning experiences.

There would be limited availability, other settings may not have the capacity to absorb demand and waiting lists could grow, leaving parents without childcare all together. Childminders are often more flexible with their hours, families may struggle to find childcare that fits shift work, irregular hours etc. This would also mean families could face higher childcare costs. Some parents may have to reduce their hours, change jobs or leave work if they can find suitable childcare.

Testimonial from a registered childminder in Flintshire

"I have been a childminder in Flintshire for 15 years, and during this time the local authority Childcare Development Team have been incredibly proactive in supporting childminders across the area.

Flintshire's Childcare Development Officers regularly organise Childminder Cluster Groups, which provide a valuable opportunity for us to catch up, share good practice, and stay updated on the local authority's priorities, including Welsh and Anti-Racism. We have also been fortunate to have external organisations attend these sessions, offering additional opportunities and experiences for the children in our care.

The Childcare Development Facebook group share important updates, including mandatory training, best-practice guidance, and useful information that helps us stay informed and confident in our roles.

Flintshire local authority provide childminder-only training sessions, which are especially helpful as many of us are unable to attend daytime courses due to our working hours.

I have been lucky enough to access the Small Capital Grant, which has made a significant difference to both my indoor and outdoor areas. The improvements have greatly benefited the children and enhanced the quality of my setting.

I always know exactly who to contact if I need support for myself or for the children I care for. The team are consistently responsive, approachable, and willing to visit my setting whenever needed. Their support has been invaluable to my practice."

Registered childminder in Flintshire

Coram PACEY connect services

Coram PACEY Connect is a package of services designed to help local authorities and other key partners support childminders in their area. Coram PACEY Connect offers support that is flexible, tailored to your local need, available virtually and delivered by early years and childcare experts.

Services include: Pre-registration support, professional development and training, consultancy support and promotion of quality childcare.

Visit our website for more information: www.corampacey.org.uk/get-involved/pacey-connect/ or **download our brochure**

Childminder support contracts

Coram PACEY can deliver **childminder support contracts** in other parts of England or Wales, in the same way as Flintshire, working for local authorities to recruit and retain a dedicated and passionate workforce in areas of need. We support local authorities to implement a childminding strategy to support the sustainability of childminders in their area for years to come.

If you would like to talk through how we can deliver a similar service to Flintshire, or tailor one more suitable to your area, please contact Claire Protheroe, Head of Contracts and Projects: claire.protheroe@corampacey.org.uk