

Childminding

National standards for under 8s
day care and childminding

SureStart

Introduction

The Government is committed to promoting the welfare and development of all our young children. Good quality care and education in the early years raise educational standards and opportunities, and enhance children's social development.

The Government is determined that all child care services, be they new or established, provide a secure and safe environment for children, not least so that parents can have confidence that their children are well looked after.

About the national standards

The national standards represent a baseline of quality below which no provider may fall. However, they are also intended to underpin a continuous improvement in quality in all settings.

There are 14 national standards. Each standard describes a particular quality outcome, and is accompanied by a set of supporting criteria giving information about how that outcome is to be achieved. Regulations under the Children Act require providers (technically the registered person in each setting) to meet the 14 standards and to have regard to the supporting criteria. The law also requires Ofsted to have regard to both the standards and criteria.

The national standards do not override the need for providers to comply with other legislation such as that covering health and safety, food hygiene, fire or planning requirements.

Applying the supporting criteria

The criteria differ between each of the five categories of day care and childminding provision:

- full day care
- sessional day care
- crèches
- out of school care
- childminding

In addition, a number of annexes have been attached where appropriate, explaining how the criteria are applied to overnight care, facilities caring for babies and open access schemes.

Providers will normally show that they are meeting the headline standards by following the criteria. However, the criteria do not have to be followed to the letter if the provider can demonstrate, and Ofsted is satisfied, that the standards are being met in a different way. There are two exceptions to this.

First, certain criteria refer to requirements that are set in the regulations (Day Care and Childminding (National Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 No.1996, and other regulations under Part XA of the Children Act 1989) for example, the requirements on physical punishment and record keeping. Clearly providers are obliged to meet these requirements and so the flexibility which applies to the other criteria will not apply in this instance. Footnotes to the text of the criteria highlight where this is the case.

Second, standard 2 says that the provider must meet the requirements for adult: child ratios and training and qualifications which are set in the criteria, although they do incorporate a degree of flexibility (for example, the action plan process allows the qualification requirements to be met over time where they cannot be achieved immediately).

Most providers will be clear into which of the five categories of childcare their setting falls, and therefore which criteria apply. There will be circumstances, however, where a particular setting displays characteristics of more than one category. In these cases Ofsted will notify the provider which category of childcare is being used for registration, and whether any additional or alternative criteria are appropriate.

For example, although a setting operating for 4½ hours is treated as full day care, there may be full day care criteria e.g. those referring to laundry and other premises facilities which are not appropriate because the setting is operating for a period only just over the limit for sessional care. In these circumstances, the relevant sessional day care criteria may be applied.

Also, for example, where a crèche facility offers full day care for a short period of 6 weeks during the summer holidays, certain full day care criteria may be applied for that period.

In all cases Ofsted's exercise of discretion in applying the supporting criteria will:

- be focused upon the outcome for the child or children being cared for, and in their interests;
- be a professional judgement;
- be an individual decision based upon a recognition of the uniqueness and abilities of the provider;
- be fully and explicitly explained and justified in writing;
- remain consistent with the outcomes required by the 14 national standards.

Glossary

Registered person: a person deemed qualified to care for children and whose name appears on the certificate of registration. The registered person has overall responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of the national standards are met. A company, committee or other group may be the registered person.

Parent: any person with parental responsibility for a child.

Early Years Childcare Inspector: a person employed by Ofsted who is responsible for regulating and inspecting day care and childminding provision.

National standards

Childminding

Definition

A childminder is registered to look after one or more children under the age of eight to whom they are not related on domestic premises for reward and for a total of more than 2 hours in any day.

National standards

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Equipment: Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

Standard 6

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Health: The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

Standard 8

Food and drink: Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

Standard 9

Equal opportunities: The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

Standard 10

Special needs (including special educational needs and disabilities): The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

Standard 11

Behaviour: Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

Standard 12

Working in partnership with parents and carers: The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

Standard 13

Child protection: The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

Standard 14

Documentation: Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, and to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the children's parent.

Annex A

Babies/children under 2: These are additional criteria to be met by childminders who wish to care for babies.

Annex B

Overnight care: These are additional criteria to be met by childminders who wish to care for children overnight. (N.B. If a child is cared for a continuous period of 28 days or more, s/he is regarded as a foster child and the carer must notify the local Social Services Department.

Standard 1

Suitable person

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

Supporting criteria

- 1.1** The registered childminder complies with all conditions of registration, including any which require them to submit to a vetting procedure whereby the information supplied is verified with the relevant sources.

The vetting procedure, which includes criminal records check, will enable the early years child care inspector to determine the suitability of those caring for, or having regular contact with, children. If the registered person fails to comply with such a condition the early years child care inspector may, amongst other things, take this into account in determining their suitability.

- 1.2** The registered person, any assistant and any person over 16 living in the household in which the childminding is carried out have not been convicted of an offence or been the subject of an order which disqualifies them from registration under regulations made under schedule 9A of the Children Act 1989.*

Where disqualification arising from an offence carries a time-limit in the regulations, and that time-limit has expired, or where an offence mentioned in the regulations made under schedule 9A was not subject to a qualifying sentence, or where the person is or has been the subject of an order mentioned in the Disqualification for Caring for Children Regulations 1991, in determining the suitability of the registered person the early years child care inspector will have regard to all circumstances of the offence or order. Factors will include the date of offence or order, the type of offence or order, the degree of culpability of the person and the person's activity and involvement with children since the offence or order.

- 1.3** The childminder notifies the regulatory body about the intention to employ any assistant to look after children.*

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Qualifications

- 1.4** The childminder has completed a local authority approved childminder's pre-registration course within 6 months of commencing childminding.
- 1.5** The childminder has completed a first aid course which includes training in first aid for infants and young children, and which is consistent with any guidance issued to local authorities by the Secretary of State. The training should be completed within 6 months of commencing childminding. A current first aid certificate is maintained.

In addition:

- trainee assistants under 17 years of age are supervised at all times and are not counted in adult:child ratios;
- childminders and assistants are suitable, both mentally and physically, to care for children;
- childminders and assistants have the appropriate experience, skills and ability to look after children.

Other persons in the household

- 1.6** The childminder complies with any condition of registration that includes a requirement to ensure that persons over the age of 16 years living or regularly present in the household when children are being minded undergo checks including a criminal records check.

Standard 2

Organisation

The registered person meets required adult:child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

Supporting criteria

- 2.1** The childminder is accountable for, and supervises the work of, any assistant. The childminder is satisfied that they are competent in the areas of work undertaken and keeps a record of any assistant's details, including information about recruitment, training and any qualifications.

Childminder:child ratios

- 2.2** The maximum numbers of children for whom a childminder may care are as follows:
- 6 children under 8 years of age;
 - Of these 6, no more than 3 children may be under 5 years of age;
 - And of these 3, normally no more than 1 child may be under 1. However, a childminder may be registered to care for 2 children under 1 where they can demonstrate that they can meet and reconcile the varying needs of all the children being cared for.
 - Exceptions to these ratios can be made for siblings and to provide continuity of care in certain circumstances approved by Ofsted.
 - Any care provided for children aged 8–14 is not allowed to adversely affect the care provided for children under 8.
- 2.3** Where a childminder employs an assistant or works with another childminder, the same adult:child ratios apply for any additional children. The space available for children on the premises may also affect the numbers for which the provision can be registered.
- 2.4** Children aged four attending ten early education sessions a week may be classed as children over five years for the purposes of the adult:child ratio.
- 2.5** The ratios include the childminder's own children and any others for whom s/he is responsible and who are on the premises.
- 2.6** Students on training placements are not included in the adult:child ratio.

Standard 3

Care, learning and play

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

Supporting criteria

- 3.1** The childminder encourages children to be confident, independent and to develop their self-esteem.
- 3.2** The childminder selects resources and provides activities, play opportunities and first-hand experiences, which allow children to build on their natural curiosity as learners, develop their language and mathematical thinking, use their imagination and develop social relationships.
- 3.3** The childminder listens to and values what children say, talks with them about what they are doing and has high expectations of what they can achieve.
- 3.4** The childminder organises resources so that they are readily accessible to children and supports children's play and learning.
- 3.5** The childminder encourages children to use their imagination and to ask questions.
- 3.6** The childminder helps children to learn about what is right and wrong.
- 3.7** Accredited childminders who are part of an approved childminders network help children to work towards the Early Learning Goals as described in the joint DfES/Qualifications and Curriculum Authority publication 'Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage'.

Standard 4

Physical environment

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

Supporting criteria

- 4.1 The premises are made welcoming and friendly to children and parents. They are self contained and maintained in a suitable state of cleanliness, repair and decoration.
- 4.2 There is access to a telephone on the premises.

Indoors

- 4.3 The following space standards represent minimum space per child:

Age	Sq. Mtrs
under 2 years	3.5
2 years	2.5
3–7 years	2.3

- 4.4 Arrangements are made to provide quiet space for rest.
- 4.5 Rooms are maintained at an adequate temperature.
- 4.6 There are suitable washing and toilet facilities.
- 4.7 The premises are well lit and adequately ventilated.

Outdoor play

- 4.8 There is access to outdoor play. If this is not available on the premises then arrangements are made for regular excursions to a local park or playground.
- 4.9 Outdoor play spaces which are part of the premises are safe, secure and well maintained.

Kitchen

- 4.10** There is provision for the hygienic storage, preparation, cooking and serving of food.

Standard 5

Equipment

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

Supporting criteria

- 5.1** The childminder has sufficient, suitable toys and play materials available for indoor and outdoor play to enable children to develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills. These are appropriate for the developmental needs of the children.
- 5.2** The childminder ensures sufficient equipment is available for the needs of children attending, e.g. high chairs, buggies, safety gates, car seats, travel cots.
- 5.3** Toys and equipment on the premises, including equipment for outdoor play are in good repair and conform to BS EN safety standards or the Toys (Safety) Regulations (1995) where applicable. Where public playgrounds are used, the childminder ensures that the children do not use faulty equipment.
- 5.4** Appropriate furniture or equipment is provided for children to sleep or rest in.

Standard 6

Safety

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

Supporting criteria

- 6.1** The childminder takes reasonable steps to ensure that hazards to children on the premises, both inside and outside, are minimised.

Security

- 6.2** The premises, including any outside play area, are secure and children are not able to leave them unsupervised.
- 6.3** Children are under the direct supervision of the childminder or assistant at all times. Supervision should be sufficient to ensure that children are safe at all times.

Outside area

- 6.4** The childminder ensures that children can play safely outside.
- 6.5** Ponds, drains, pools and any natural water are made safe or are inaccessible to children. Outdoor water activities are closely supervised at all times.
- 6.6** Greenhouses, garages and sheds are only accessible to children if they are safe.
- 6.7** The childminder does not usually keep hazardous indoor and outdoor plants on the premises. However, if these are present, they are made inaccessible to children.

Kitchen

- 6.8** When children have access to the kitchen, the childminder ensures that they are not exposed to hazards.

Gas/electricity

- 6.9** Electric sockets in areas accessible to children are fitted with socket covers.
- 6.10** Gas, Electrical and other appliances and fittings conform to safety requirements and do not pose a hazard to children.

Fire safety

- 6.11** A fire blanket, which conforms to BS EN safety standards, is provided in the kitchen.
- 6.12** Smoke alarms, which conform to BS EN safety standards, are provided at every level of the house and are maintained in working condition.
- 6.13** The childminder has devised and practised an emergency escape plan.
- 6.14** If a local fire safety officer has visited, the childminder complies with, and keeps records of, any recommendations he has made.

Outings and transport

- 6.15** Proper arrangements are made so that children are escorted safely to local parks, playgrounds or the equivalent on a regular basis.
- 6.16** The childminder ensures the safe control of children whilst out walking.
- 6.17** Any vehicle used to transport children is properly maintained, conforms to legal requirements and drivers have a valid licence and appropriate insurance. Parents give written permission for their child to be transported in a vehicle. All children are restrained in an appropriate car seat or seat belt. Children are not left unattended on outings or in a vehicle.

Insurance

- 6.18** The childminder carries public liability insurance.

Standard 7

Health

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

Supporting criteria

Hygiene

- 7.1** The premises and equipment are clean.
- 7.2** The childminder and any assistant implement good hygiene practices in order to prevent the spread of infection.
- 7.3** Each child has their own bed linen, flannel and hairbrush if they are used (these can be provided by parents or childminders).
- 7.4** Children are encouraged to learn about personal hygiene through the daily routine.

Animals

- 7.5** The childminder ensures that any animals on the premises are safe to be in the proximity of children and do not pose a health risk.

Sandpits

- 7.6** Sandpits are protected from contamination and the sand is clean.

Food handling

- 7.7** The childminder ensures that food is hygienically stored, prepared, cooked and served.

Medicine

- 7.8** The childminder does not administer any medicine or other treatment to children unless the parent has discussed its use and given prior

written permission.* This forms part of the contract with parents. If medicine is to be given, the childminder ensures that:

- medicines are stored in their original containers, clearly labelled and inaccessible to children;
- medicines are not usually administered unless they have been prescribed for that child by a doctor;
- a childminder caring for a child with a specific condition on a long term basis makes sure that they have a thorough understanding of the medical condition and the medication (if any) that they are required to administer;
- written records are kept of medicines administered to children and the parent signs the record book to acknowledge the entry;*
- if the administration of any prescribed medication requires technical/medical knowledge then individual training is provided for the childminder from a qualified health professional. Training is specific to the individual child concerned.

First aid

- 7.9** There is a first aid box, the contents of which will be determined in the first aid training course, and are checked frequently and replaced as necessary. This is kept in an accessible place out of the reach of children.
- 7.10** Written parental permission is requested, at the time of the placement, to the seeking of any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment in the future.
- 7.11** A record is maintained, signed by the parent, of any accidents.*

Sick children

- 7.12** The childminder has a policy about the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious which is discussed with parents. This includes a procedure for contacting parents or another adult designated by the parent if a child becomes ill whilst in the childminder's care.

Smoking

- 7.13** The childminder and others in the childminder's home do not smoke in the presence of children at any time.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Standard 8

Food and drink

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

Supporting criteria

- 8.1** An agreement is made with parents as to which meals and snacks are to be provided by the childminder and the kinds of food to be provided.
- 8.2** Fresh drinking water is available to children at all times.
- 8.3** The childminder requests information from parents about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies the child may have. Where these exist, the childminder makes a record and takes heed of the information provided.

Standard 9

Equal opportunities

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

Supporting criteria

- 9.1** All children and adults for whom the childminder is providing a service are treated with equal concern and the childminder has regard to relevant anti-discriminatory good practice. S/he ensures that all children have equal access to the appropriate range of activities and facilities available.
- 9.2** The childminder liaises with parents to ensure that children's records contain information which enables appropriate care to be given.

Standard 10

Special needs (including special educational needs and disabilities)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

Supporting criteria

- 10.1** If a childminder identifies a child in their care as possibly having special needs, or a disability, s/he undertakes to discuss their observations with the parent and is proactive in ensuring that they will be welcomed appropriately. In addition, accredited childminders who are part of an approved network of providers of nursery education have regard to the Code of Practice (2001) for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.
- 10.2** Children with special needs are provided with relevant activities and play opportunities that promote their welfare and development.
- 10.3** The childminder consults with parents about the need for any special services and equipment for the children in their care.
- 10.4** The childminder ensures the privacy of children with special needs when intimate care is being provided.

Standard 11

Behaviour

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

Supporting criteria

- 11.1** The childminder agrees the methods s/he will use to manage children's behaviour with parents before the placement commences.
- 11.2** The childminder encourages good behaviour.
- 11.3** The childminder has consistent expectations about acceptable behaviour.
- 11.4** Children are not shaken.
- 11.5** Physical punishments, or the threat of them, are not used.*
- 11.6** The childminder does not use any form of physical intervention, e.g. holding, unless it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children or an adult or serious damage to property. Any incident is recorded and the parent informed of the incident on the day.
- 11.7** The childminder's handling of behaviour is developmentally appropriate, respecting individual children's level of understanding and maturity.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

Standard 12

Working in partnership with parents and carers

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

Supporting criteria

- 12.1** The childminder has a written agreement with parents which sets out the expectations of both parties as to the care of the child, activities provided and business arrangements.
- 12.2** The childminder seeks parents' views about their child's preferences and aptitudes and any other information which is required in order to provide good quality care for the child and takes heed of the information provided.
- 12.3** Parents are fully informed about the childminder's routines and child care practices. They have opportunities to exchange information about their child on a daily basis. Prompt action is taken on any concerns raised and a record of complaints is maintained.
- 12.4** Records of parents' and/or emergency contact details, G.P. contact details and appropriate signed consent forms are kept.
- 12.5** The childminder is aware of the need to maintain privacy and confidentiality.
- 12.6** Children are only released from the care of the childminder to individuals named by the parent.
- 12.7** If a child is identified as a child in need (section 17 of the Children Act 1989) the childminder, normally with parents' permission, gives appropriate information to referring agencies.

Standard 13

Child protection

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

Supporting criteria

- 13.1** The protection of the child is the childminder's first priority.
- 13.2** The childminder is able to recognise possible signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect, is aware of the Government booklet 'What To Do If You Are Worried About A Child Is Being Abused – Summary' (or any national guidance booklet which replaces this publication) and knows whom to contact in social services or the police if concerned about a child. This includes allegations of abuse which is alleged to have taken place while the child is in the care of the childminder.
- 13.3** Any concerns are recorded and reported to social services or the police in accordance with local Area Child Protection Committee** procedures, and to Ofsted without delay.*
- 13.4** The childminder ensures that any concerns are kept confidential following the guidelines in 'What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused – Summary'.

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

** The Area Child Protection Committee in each local authority area brings together representatives from the main agencies responsible for helping to protect children from abuse and neglect

Standard 14

Documentation

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, and to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.

Supporting criteria

14.1 Records relating to individual children are retained for a reasonable period of time after the children have left the provision. * *

14.2 The records are always available for inspection by the early years child care inspector. *

Notification of changes

14.3 The early years child care inspector is informed of the following at the earliest opportunity:

- any changes in the persons over the age of 16 working or living in the household; *
- any significant changes to the premises; *
- any allegations of abuse while the child is in the care of the childminder; *
- any other significant events. *

* This is a mandatory requirement in regulations

* * Certain records are required to be kept as set out in regulations

Annex A

Babies/children under 2

These are additional criteria to be met by childminders who wish to care for babies.

- A.1** The childminder is able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the needs of babies and toddlers.

Safety

- A.2** Sleeping babies are frequently checked.
- A.3** Toys and equipment are appropriate for the child's age and care is taken that babies and toddlers do not have access to toys or other articles which may cause them harm.

Food and drink

- A.4** Feeding and nappy changing takes place in accordance with the child's individual needs and not as part of the childminder's routine.
- A.5** Babies are normally held whilst bottle feeding.
- A.6** There is adequate provision for the sterilisation of feeding bottles and utensils and the preparation of baby food.

Care, learning and play

- A.7** The childminder spends time interacting with the child at frequent intervals throughout the day.
- A.8** Children's individual sleeping routines are respected.

Annex B

Overnight care

These are additional criteria to be met by childminders who wish to care for children overnight. (N.B. If a child is cared for a continuous period of 28 days or more, s/he is regarded as a foster child and the carer must notify the local Social Services Department)

Organisation

- B.1** The staff:child ratios for the childminding registration are maintained overnight. The child is within hearing of the childminder (which may be via a listening device) and has easy access to them during the night.

Physical environment

- B.2** Children staying overnight each have a suitable bed or cot and clean bedding, and there is adequate heating in the premises.
- B.3** Children have access to adequate toilet and washing facilities. The privacy of children is respected and no adult other than the registered childminder has access to the child during bath-time or when children are undressing.

Safety

- B.4** The sleeping areas do not have any health or safety hazards.
- B.5** Appropriate security arrangements are in place in order to protect the premises from unauthorised entry. No-one over the age of 16 who has not been police checked stays on the premises overnight when a minded child is present.

Health

- B.6** There is a good general level of hygiene, decoration and cleanliness in all sleeping areas.

Food and drink

- B.7** Suitable meals/feeds/drinks are provided. Requirements are discussed with parents in advance.

Working with parents

- B.8** Parents are shown and consulted with about all the arrangements that will be made and are in place for their child to be looked after overnight. There is an exchange of information about the routines at home and in the provision and, wherever possible, the parents routine is accommodated.
- B.9** The childminder requests information from parents on the child's sleeping habits and any problems which may arise during the night, i.e. bedwetting, nightmares etc. and seek to ensure a consistent and sensitive approach.

Documentation

- B.10** No child is received into the provision without emergency contact numbers being provided. If the parents are unavailable to be contacted, another named person is available to collect the child if necessary and confirmation of their agreement to do so is obtained. These details are included in the contract with parents.

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