REGISTERED CHILDMINDERS

A registered childminder is a person who is registered with Ofsted to care for children in the childminder’s home. Childminders are self-employed and provide full or part time care. This might be day care, before/after school, and/or holiday care and overnight care (a childminder must have permission from Ofsted for overnight care). Childminders work across a range of hours and are often willing to take children to pre-school or school and collect them at the end of the day; so they fit-the-bill for parents whose working days call for an early start or late finish. Where parents work shifts childminders are often able to offer the flexibility that supports their childcare requirements. As childminders care for children across various ages they are a viable option for parents who want their children looked after together.

In Southend some childminders belong to a National Childminding Association (NCMA) ‘Children Come First’ Network which means they have been assessed to ensure they are working to NCMA’s quality standards. If your childminder belongs to one of these networks you can be sure that someone who has demonstrated very high standards of care is looking after your child. Some Network Childminders are also assessed by the Local Authority and accredited by NCMA to claim Free Early Years Provision Funding for 3 and 4 year old children and also funding for some 2 year olds.

MARVELLOUS MINDERS

If you feel that your child would benefit from more specialist care then you may want to consider using a registered childminder on the ‘MARVELLOUS MINDERS Scheme’. The scheme is aimed at finding a suitable childminder to provide opportunities for parents and carers to have short breaks, return to work or access training while their child receives high quality care. The scheme is co-ordinated by designated NCMA Development Co-ordinators who will broker a personalised service to support families to link with specialist childminders who can offer care that is tailored to meet their child’s and families specific needs.
All Marvellous Minders registered with Ofsted and are fully qualified. They have gained further specialised knowledge and skills including safeguarding children with disabilities, child development, disability awareness, manual handling, and hold a current paediatric first aid certificate, amongst others.

→ All Marvellous Minders are members of the NCMA Children Come First (CCF) Network Quality Assurance Scheme and are regularly monitored by the NCMA Development Co-ordinators

→ All Marvellous Minders have a commitment to further training to support and extend their knowledge and skills

→ All Marvellous Minders work in partnership with parents/carers/social workers/key persons in the child’s life to fully understand the complex needs of the child in their care.

**Experience includes children with:**
ASD/ADHD
Cerebral palsy
Communication with sign language
Renal failure
Aspergers Syndrome
Downs Syndrome
Smiths-Megenis Syndrome—Global delay

Severe Allergy/dietary problems
Epilepsy

**Other:**
EPI-pen trained
Experienced SENCo at nursery setting
Experience as a Paediatric Nurse
Some are qualified foster carers
House with through-floor lift for wheelchair access

**Comments about Marvellous Minders**
“B is like part of the family with us now, and we miss him when he is not here.” Marvellous Minder

“I can happily go out to work and not worry about my daughter as she is being cared for properly, my Marvellous Minder receives her from the school bus and it is working well.” Parent of 8 year old

For more information contact the Southend Family Information Service
Tel: 01702 392468 Email: fissos@southend.gov.uk
SUCCESSFUL CHILDCARE—CASE STUDIES
MARVELLOUS MINDERS COMMUNITY CHILDMINDER SCHEME

A’s Mum: “My daughter is 8 but has probably got the ability of a 12 month old baby, is yet to be walking, can’t easily communicate, with no speech. I felt far more comfortable with someone that I know had been trained in dealing with disabilities. I needed the full trust of being able to give her to someone who understood children with these needs, so that I’d know that they’d be interacting with her, and that’s what really persuaded me to go the Marvellous Minders route.”

I telephoned the childminder and arranged to go around. I instantly clicked with her and that for me is hugely important. I have to be able to trust them 100% with my beautiful daughter. Having that real trust with her was such a weight off my shoulders, to know I can go to work & at the end of the day my daughter can come here and have her dinner and I’m comfortable in my mind. It’s the knowledge. Anyone can look after a child and say they’re a childminder, but it’s knowing that there’s a bit more background behind it, that there is a bit more depth to what they are doing.

Do use a childminder. Go with your gut feel. Don’t think that because your child is disabled you can’t continue with your career, or you can’t continue with anything. It really is important for you, and I think for us as a family – my husband and I, that we’ve still got a place in society ourselves rather than being shut away. And actually your child will as well. So to be really positive it is essential that you keep strong as a mother, as a father, and use your brain as well. When I was at home for 8 years I got very frustrated, lonely – it can be very lonely being at home on your own and just looking after your child.

GET BACK OUT THERE – IT REALLY IS WORTH IT!”

A’s Marvellous Minder: “A comes after school and in the holidays. She’s fitted in really well, everybody loves her. Parents want someone who can care for their child like they do, who can deal with the disabilities, but then treat that child equally throughout your setting, a home from home. Everyone is learning Makaton here so that we can all communicate with A, and everything we do includes her. Every little step that she takes, every achievement, is huge – it is very very rewarding.”
Choosing childcare and early education is a big step for families. Deciding between the various options that are available can be quite daunting. It's a good idea for parents to visit several different settings in order to make a decision about which would best suit their child.

Where the setting is registered with Ofsted a copy of the latest inspection report can be viewed on www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports.

When you visit try to take notes as you go along, for reference later. You must be your own judge of what is best for you and your child, but the notes below may help guide you on points to look for and what to ask.

- Start looking well in advance to give yourself plenty of time to visit various settings.
- Take your child with you when you make these visits to see their reactions.
- Did you and your child feel welcomed?
- Are the children at the setting calm, safe and happy?
- Make a second visit to those places you particularly like.
- Ask about staff qualifications and experience.
- Are the staff listening to the children and answering them carefully?
- Speak to other parents/carers who use the setting.
- Look to see whether there are plenty of clean toys and other types of play material.
- Look to see whether there is an outside play area which the children can use.
Some questions you may wish to ask staff when visiting:

- What is their previous experience of working with a child who has an additional need or disability?
- Ask to see their Special Educational Needs/Equal Opportunities policy and ask how it is used in practice.
- How will they be able to adapt the EYFS framework for your child’s needs?
- How would they keep you updated on your child’s progress?
- Will you be able to have regular meetings with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator at the setting and or your child’s key person?
- Can your child access all parts of the setting?
- Will staff be willing to attend training on your child’s particular needs?
- How do they manage challenging behaviour? - there should be a written policy in place so ask to see it.
- Can you see their Admissions Policy?
- How can you access free early years provision for your 2/3/4 year-old (if appropriate)?
- What is the ratio between staff and children?
- Is water available whenever the children want a drink?
- What area/rooms will your child be using?
- Do the children play outside regularly?
- What hours each day can your child attend?
- What are your fees and how do you pay?
- Would you have to pay if your child was absent, through sickness or due to family holidays?
- What food is provided for the children?
- Would you be able to bring your own food for your child?
- How can you reserve a place?
PAYING FOR CHILDCARE

A head start for you and your children

Getting help with childcare costs so you can go back to work could be the right choice for your family. Early learning and childcare can give your child a great start in life. It can also give you the chance to go back to work, learn new skills and meet new people.

UNIVERSAL FUNDING FOR 3 AND 4 YEAR OLDS
From the term following their third birthday every child is entitled to 15 hours of Free Early Years Provision per week over 38 weeks. This is equal to 570 hours per year until they start a reception class in school. This provision can be taken in day nurseries, pre-schools/playgroups, school nurseries, some registered childminders and some independent schools.

BY REFERRAL, FUNDING FOR 2 YEAR OLDS
Parents on one of the following benefits may be entitled to funding for their child to attend a selected nursery or childminder for up to 10 hours per week, from the term after their 2nd birthday:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
- Child and Family Tax Credits at the higher rate than the family element
- Disability Tax Credits
- Pension credits

Priority will be given to:

- Children in Need [CIN]
- Exit from the Family Nurse Partnership
- Professional defined referral for families in crisis or children with additional needs, including those with a Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
- Teenage parents who are not accessing Care 2 Learn support
- Looked after children
Parental commitment:
Whilst their child is accessing the free early education and childcare sessions for 2 year olds, parents and carers will be expected to participate in appropriate activities. These will be identified with the support of the referring professional and could include sessions at a local children’s centre or activities provided by other community organisations or local training centres. Commitment to participating in appropriate activities is part of the approval process for accessing free places for 2 year-olds.

Information for parents:
A leaflet that explains the 2 year-old funding programme is available from the Family Information Service.
Tel: 01702 392468  Email: fissos@southend.gov.uk

Who can apply for a place on the 2 year old funding programme?
Applications for funding can only be made by professional practitioners such as:
- Health Visitors
- Family Nurses
- Area SENCo’s and Portage Workers
- Children’s Centre Managers
- Locality Co-ordinators
- Social Workers
- Schools and Early Years Settings – where practitioners are aware of siblings who meet the eligibility criteria
- NCMA Network Childminders – through the Childminding Co-ordinators working with the Local Authority
- JobCentre Plus Outreach Advisers

This is not a universal entitlement, it is accessed by referral only
CHILDCARE ELEMENT OF WORKING TAX CREDITS

Tax credits are payments from the government. If you work, but are on a low income, you may qualify for Working Tax Credit (WTC). If you qualify for WTC and pay for registered childcare you can apply for the Childcare Element of Working Tax Credits. For full details of WTC see the Finance section of this book.

If you qualify, you can claim per week (tax year 11/12 but subject to change):
- 1 child: 70% of a maximum of £175 = £122.50
- 2 or more children: 70% of a maximum of £300 = £210.00

Combined with 10 hours a week of 2 year old funding or 15 hours a week of free early years provision for 3 & 4 year old over 38 weeks, or pro rata up to 48 weeks, this could mean almost no childcare costs.

Childcare costs can be claimed for children up to the age of 15, or 16 if they have a disability. Entitlement stops on 1 September following child’s 15th birthday, or 16th birthday if the child has a disability.

What is registered childcare?
Registered childcare can include the following, but parents must check that settings are registered with Ofsted before making their application:
- Day nurseries
- Registered childminders
- Pre-schools
- Nursery class in school
- Playschemes
- Some Nannies/Au Pairs
- Breakfast or after school or ‘kids’ clubs

To view the Southend Borough Council webpage on this topic and see their video visit www.southend.gov.uk then go to the early years page in Education and Learning.

This information is for guidance only. Further information is available from:
‘Getting your tax credits claim form right’ HMRC publications: http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits/forms-and-leaflets/

Contact Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900 Visit: www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits
CHILDCARE VOUCHERS
Childcare voucher schemes normally work through salary sacrifice, which means parents can opt to receive childcare vouchers instead of part of their salary. Occasionally, employers choose to give childcare vouchers to their staff in addition to their usual pay. In both cases, the vouchers are free of tax and national insurance for parents and employers.

WHAT CAN CHILDCARE VOUCHERS BE USED FOR?
Childcare vouchers can be used to pay for many kinds of childcare, typically including:

- Nurseries, playgroups and pre-school
- Registered childminders
- After-school clubs and breakfast clubs
- Holiday play schemes
- Nannies and au-pairs

DIRECT PAYMENTS FOR DISABLED CHILDREN
Direct payments, which allow parents to arrange care and services themselves instead of receiving them directly from their local council, can be made to parents and carers aged 16 or over. This includes people with parental responsibility for a disabled child.

Following an assessment by the local authority’s Children with Disabilities team, direct payments can be used for a variety of services which offer a child stimulation, new experiences and independence. These include:

- short breaks
- nursery placement providing specialist support for your child
- assistance to attend an activity, for example a youth club
- personal care

Childcare services and holiday time with Direct Payments
As a parent, or someone with parental responsibility, you should be supported to stay in work, or to return to work, if this is what you want to do.

If you have been assessed as needing help from social services, direct payments may help you make sure you have the right type of after-school or holiday provision to meet the particular needs of your child.
USEFUL NUMBERS

Southend-on-Sea Family Information Service 01702 392468
Tax Credit helpline 0845 300 3900
Job Centre Plus 0845 604 3719
Financial Services Authority 0300 500 5000
Money Made Clear helpline 0300 500 5000
Daycare Trust helpline 0845 872 6251
Benefits enquiry line 0800 88 22 00
Citizen’s Advice Bureau/Essex Advice Line 0844 477 0808

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.southend.gov.uk/childcare
www.hmrc.gov.uk/tax-credits
www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
www.daycaretrust.org.uk/parentinformation
www.payingforchildcare.org.uk
www.directgov.uk

The Parents Guide to Money, Financial Services Authority publication:
http://www.moneymadeclear.org.uk/parents/