

A career in childminding is calling: Growing Partnership Childminders in Moray

There are currently **102** childminders in Moray: **39** of whom are working in partnership with Moray Council to deliver funded Early Learning and Childcare.

The number of childminders in partnership has increased from **19** in 2019 to **39** in 2023, with a waiting list of individuals wishing to come into partnership during 2024.

In 2019, a dedicated Childminder Development Officer role was established within the Early Years Team at Moray Council. The post has been fully funded by the local authority since its inception, ensuring the council's core values and inclusive approach are upheld, while also recognising childminders as integral delivery partners.

The Childminder Development Officer supports the Moray partnership childminder workforce to deliver quality, funded Early Learning and Childcare provision for eligible two-year-olds, and local three and four-year-olds in line with the

National Standard. All registered childminders within Moray benefit, not just those in partnership; with a high-quality offer that includes providing support, guidance and quality improvement training.

Prior to the introduction of this role, the Early Years team had encountered some challenges when attempting to provide equal support to childminders due to limited resources. When the Childminder Development Officer post was introduced, all Early Learning and Childcare providers in Moray were integrated for the first time. Necessary adjustments were made to meet provider need and their unique operating environments, and through this inclusive approach training opportunities, events and specific support were made accessible to all ELC providers, including all childminders regardless of partnership their partnership status.

The partnership in Moray is child-centred and focuses on supporting children and ensuring their well-being. It aims to be inclusive, respectful of each other's values, honest and open. Emphasis was always placed on the importance of adhering to core values, promoting transparency and acknowledging the challenges faced by different providers, including childminders.

The number of childminders in partnership has increased significantly over the past three years; increasing from 33 in 2021 to 36 in 2022 to 39 in 2023. This number is set to increase further in 2024 upon completion of home visits and other pre-partnership requirements.

The Childminder Development Officer has been instrumental in the successful growth across Moray. Their goal is to provide support that enhances the relationship between childminders and Moray Council so that every child and family can flourish. By reaffirming the core values and setting realistic expectations, honest and open relationships have been established with childminders. This meant undertaking a significant amount of work to develop relationships with existing Childminders and, to welcome and introduce potential Childminders through networking activities. With the support of the wider Early Years team, they are also committed to breaking down barriers and strengthening an equitable provider-neutral approach. This created a positive environment to work with childminders so that they are clear on partnership standards, including

the importance of home visits and quality assurance, by engaging with them through various channels such as email, questionnaires, and face to face meetings. Through this engagement, the Childcare Development Officer can address any concerns childminders have about paperwork, quality improvement, or professional development.

Other work to raise the profile and support the development of the existing childminder workforce includes significant investment in training through Moray Council and professional development opportunities with UHI Moray for new and existing childminders, to gain a qualification in childcare at entry level up to BA qualifications. With the mentoring support and relationship working of the Childminder Development Officer, local Childminder's have been successfully appointed role within the community at all levels of childcare due to their qualifications and experience in Early Learning Childcare. These appointments demonstrated the importance of recognising and supporting childminders potential for growth.

As with many roles, active listening has been key. It requires patience, flexibility, and a knowledge of a day in the life of a childminder. It also requires compassion and confidentiality with regards to the information shared by childminders. This means working differently to meet the needs of all childminders across Moray, and identifying approaches that work well:



Face-to-face support



Listening to individual need



Providing tools that support their setting



Recognising and actioning feedback



Utilising personal knowledge and experience



Having a clear understanding of their role



Advocating for and representing childminders at meetings



Fostering a culture of trust and confidence

The establishment of Childminder Development Officer role further reinforced Moray Council's commitment to raising the profile of childminders locally through the delivery of targeted Information Sessions focusing on becoming a registered Childminder within Moray. Moray Council in partnership with UHI Moray supported these sessions by offering training relevant to supporting new Childminders into the profession.

The on-going success of local initiatives is monitored through drop-in sessions, monthly childminder meetings and questionnaires that are issued to both partnership and non-partnership childminders. This is done consistently as initiatives are implemented, with feedback scrutinised, and used to address barriers and improve communication. It is also used to identify specific training needs which are delivered in the evening or one-one, depending on the subject or needs.

Feedback gathered from engagement allowed the Childminder Development Officer to address challenges experience by childminders as they were being integrated into the ELC delivery model. Despite childminders being a key part of this, it was sometimes difficult to make the links between

their service and what is expected of them in relation to the National Standard and the Care Inspectorate.

Some childminders reported the use of some terminologies meant expectations were not relatable or easily understood. The Childminder Development officer worked with childminders and the wider Early Years team to review and clarify commonly confused terminologies so that all childminders were clear of expectations placed upon their individual service.

Childminders are also included in workforce planning exercises and were included in discussion about possible future expansions. This ensured the impact of childminder availability on was considered in terms of workforce planning and future delivery.

When asked what advice they would give to others, the Childminder Development Officer emphasised six simple thoughts:

Listen to what is being asked of you

Treat people fairly - challenge is not personal!

Be honest, open and approachable

Do not promise something that can't be delivered

You do not know what a childminder is dealing with on a day-to-day basis... be ready to support and listen as this may be the only opportunity you have to build that relationship and their confidence in you

Be yourself!

In 2024, the CDO was invited to attend the 'Scotland's Finest Woods Awards' with Newcroft Childcare, the first Childminder in Scotland to win this award. This further demonstrates the meaningful relationship the CDO has with Childminders across Moray.

