



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN



**NATIONAL PARENTS COUNCIL
SUBMISSION**

DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDMINDING REGULATIONS

APRIL 2024

www.npc.ie



National Parents Council (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in early, primary and post-primary education. NPC was established as a charitable organisation in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending primary school and has been extended to cover parents with children in early years in 2017 and in post-primary in 2022. NPC received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

NPC Vision

NPC want to see an Ireland where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

NPC Mission

NPC exists to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education. NPC will work to increase the capacity and capability of the primary education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children.

NPC's Key Activities are:

- Representing the parents' voice in all aspects of their children's education
- Advocacy
- Building participation
- Service delivery



NPC Service Delivery

NPC services are aimed at empowering parents so that they can support their children in all aspects of their education.

Helpline

The NPC helpline is a national confidential service for parents. Their helpline staff listen, give information and support to parents to help them make the best possible decisions for and with their children.

Training and Development

The NPC Training and Development programme is a national programme of training, development and support for parents. The purpose is to empower parents to play an active part in their child's education at every level.

Website

The NPC's website www.npc.ie aims to provide parents with information regarding Early Years, primary, and post primary education. The site also allows parents an opportunity to give NPC their views regarding education issues.





INTRODUCTION

The National Parents Council welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY) in facilitating parents' input regarding the public consultation on the proposed draft regulations and registration processes for childminders in Ireland. In pursuit of this goal, we have crafted a survey to capture the diverse opinions and perspectives of parents.

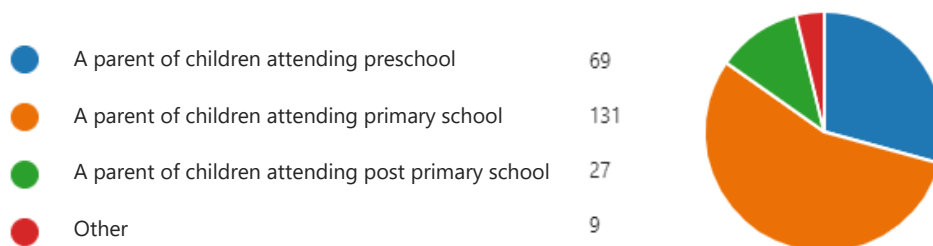
Our survey was open from April 9th until April 17th, 2024 and received a response rate of 169 parents. Parents had the opportunity to share their opinions and views on the type of regulations they want to see for registered childminders in Ireland. The NPC survey was sent to NPC members and those on the NPC contacts database. Links to the surveys were also displayed on our website (www.npc.ie) and on the NPC social media platforms.

Section 1: The respondents

The survey on the new childminding regulations elicited feedback from 169 respondents. However, the total number of responses amounted to 236, as some individuals identified with more than one category.

- 69 respondents are parents of children attending preschool.
- 131 respondents are parents of children attending primary school.
- 27 respondents are parents of children attending primary school
- 9 respondents choose “other”, and these encompass parents of post primary children and parents of children attending a creche (See figure 1).

Are you answering this survey as?



(Figure 1)

The majority (64%) of the respondents either currently use or plan to use childminders for their childcare needs, while 25% of respondents are not planning to use a childminder. Among the 11% of survey participants that identified “other” some of these parents mentioned that had previously used childminders. One parent highlighted a preference for using a childminder in the past yet cited the lack of support from the NCS as a barrier due to prohibitive costs. Similarly, another parent expressed openness to employing a childminder in the future, contingent upon regulatory measures and financial assistance being provided to parents within the sector (See figure 2).

Are you answering this survey as?

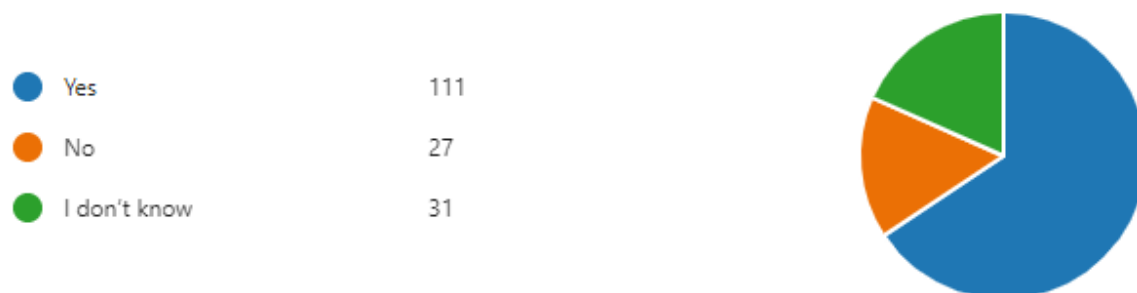


(Figure 2)

Section 2: Garda Vetting

When asked whether additional steps are needed to safeguard children in the childminder's home, responses varied among the 169 parents surveyed. The majority of parents (66%) expressed the belief that additional measures beyond Garda vetting are necessary. On the other hand, 16% of parents indicated that they do not perceive any further steps as essential for safeguarding children in this setting. Additionally, 18% parents indicated uncertainty regarding the need for additional safeguards. (See figure 3).

In addition to Garda vetting, do you believe any other steps are needed to safeguard children in the childminder's home?



(Figure 3)

Further measures to safeguard children in addition to Garda Vetting

Parents were asked to comment or indicate any further measures they felt were needed in addition to garda vetting to safeguard children

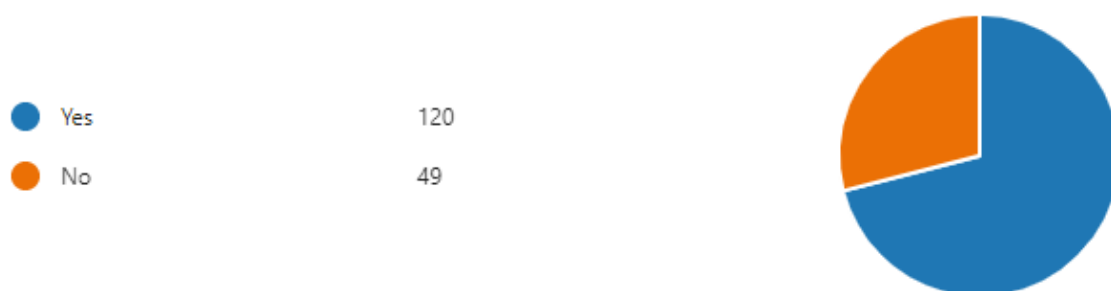
The 103 responses provided by parents outline a comprehensive list of additional steps they believe are necessary to safeguard children beyond Garda vetting. Here's a compilation of their suggestions. Support from regulatory bodies for childminders, including guidance, assistance, and resources. Garda vetting and security checks for all residents of the childminder's home, including children over the age of 18. Verification of character and suitability of childminders through references from previous employers or families. Periodic updates and renewals of vetting and qualifications to ensure ongoing suitability. Regularly conducting risk assessments on the building and grounds to identify and mitigate potential hazards. Routine inspections to ensure ongoing compliance with safety and quality standards. Mandatory training and refresher courses for childminders to stay updated on best practices and regulations.

Section 3: The maximum numbers of children being cared for

When presented with the statement suggesting that a childminder can care for no more than 6 children at any one time. This will include the childminder's own children. Out of the 6 children, only 2 children can be under the age of two, 168 parents provided their perspectives.

A majority of 71% of parents expressed agreement with the proposed number and age limitations for children under the care of a childminder. However, 29% parents disagreed with the proposed restrictions on the number and age of children that a childminder can care for simultaneously (See figure 4).

As a parent, I agree with the number and age of children that a childminder can care for in the above statement.

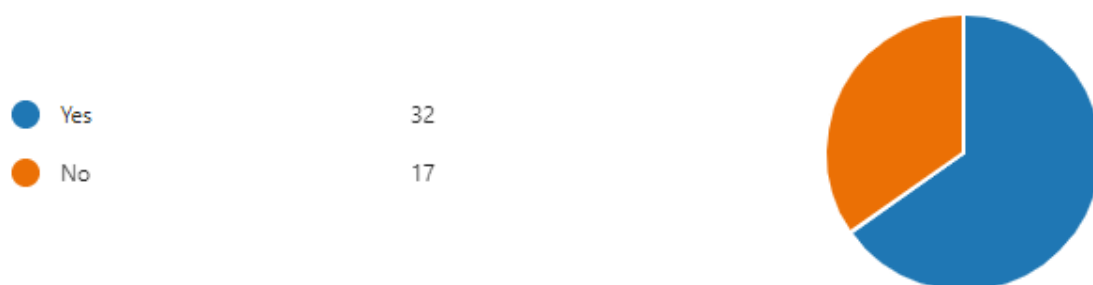


(Figure 4)

Including the childminder's own children

Parents were asked if they think that the maximum number of children that a childminder can care for at one time **should include** the childminder's own children, 49 parents responded. A majority of 65% parents agreed with the idea that the maximum number should indeed encompass the childminder's own children. On the other hand, 25% of parents disagreed with the idea of including the childminder's own children in the maximum count. (See figure 5).

Do you think that the maximum number of children that a childminder can care for at one time should include the childminder's own children.



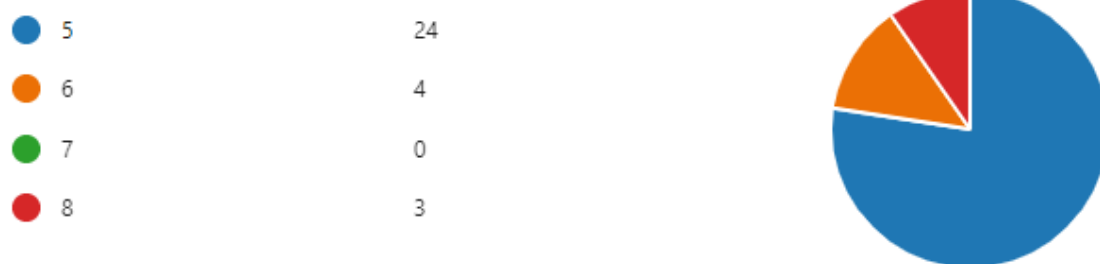
(Figure 5)

Including the childminder's own children and the maximum number of children being cared for

Parents were asked to respond to a statement suggesting that the childminder's own children **should be included** in the count. Additionally, parents were asked to choose a maximum number of children that a childminder can care for. 31 parents responded.

- 77% of parents agreed that the childminder's own children should be counted, and the maximum number of children should be 5.
- 13% of parents agreed with a maximum of 6 children, suggesting less support for this threshold.
- None of the parents agreed with a maximum of 7 children.
- 10% of parents agreed with a maximum of 8 children, indicating limited support for this higher threshold (See figure 6).

The childminder's own children should be counted, and the maximum number of children that a childminder can care for should be



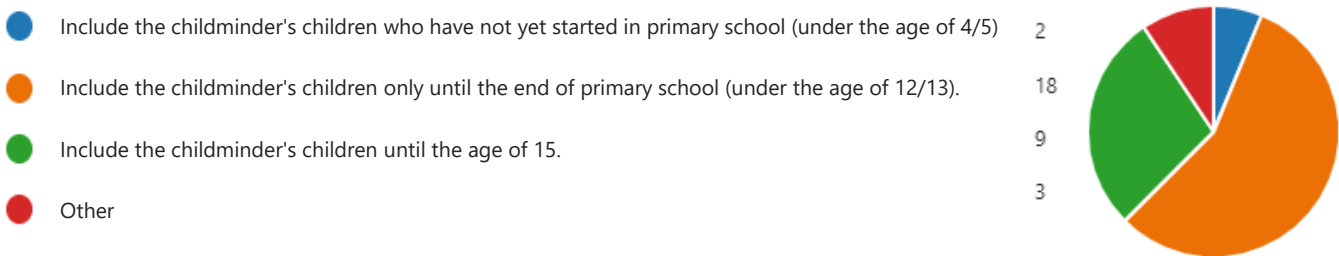
(Figure 6)

Including the childminder's own children and the maximum age being cared for

The 32 responses display a range of perspectives on the **inclusion of childminders' own children** in the overall number of children they care for.

- **Include the childminders' children who have not yet started in primary school (under the age of 4/5).** 2 parents expressed agreement with this option
- **Include the childminders' children only until the end of primary school (under the age of 12/13).** 18 parents supported this option.
- **Include the childminders' children until the age of 15.** Nine parents favoured extending the inclusion of childminders' children until the age of 15.
3 parents provided alternative suggestions. One parent proposed an age limit of 9-10 for childminders' own children. Another parent suggested a maximum of 3-4 children up to the age of 12 years old. Additionally, one parent suggested that childminders should be allowed to care for 1 child under 2 years old. **(See figure 7)**

If the childminder’s own children are included in the maximum number being cared for, what should be the upper age limit for the childminder’s children?



(Figure 7)

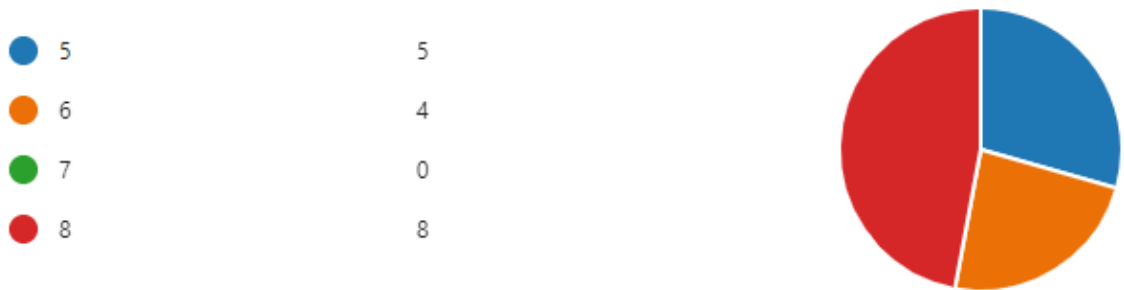
The childminders own children should not be included

17 parents provided their views in response to the statement suggesting that the childminder’s own children **should not** be counted. Additionally, they choose varying maximum numbers of children that a childminder can care for.

and the maximum number of children that a childminder can care should be

- 5 parents agreed that the childminder's own children should not be counted, and the maximum number of children should be 5. This indicates a limited level of support for this specific limitation among the surveyed parents.
- Only 4 parents agreed with a maximum of 6 children, suggesting slightly less support for this threshold.
- None of the parents agreed with a maximum of 7 children, indicating unanimous disagreement with this proposed limitation.
- However, 8 parents agreed with a maximum of 8 children, indicating support for this higher threshold. (See figure 8)

The childminder’s own children should not be counted, and the maximum number of children that a childminder can care should be



(Figure 8)

Age limit on very young children being cared for

In response to the statement indicating that rules and regulations will impose limits on the number of children cared for by a childminder, along with recommendations for limiting very young children under their care, 48 parents provided their views.

Overall, the responses reflect varying levels of agreement with different maximum child limits.

- **One child under the age of one**, 16 parents agreed with this option.
- **Two children under the age of one**, 7 parents supported this option.
- **Two Children under the age of two**: This option received the most agreement, with 18 parents in favour.
- **Other** 7 parents provided an alternative response under "Other," suggesting additional considerations beyond the specified options.

Some respondents suggested flexibility in childminding limits and the caregiver's capability over strict numbers (See figure 9).

The rules and regulations will set a limit on the number of children that may be cared for by the childminder at any one time. In addition to the maximum number of children in the childminder's home the rules recommend a limit on very young children being cared for by the childminder.

Which of the following do you agree with?

With regards to very young children, the childminder can care for



(Figure 9)

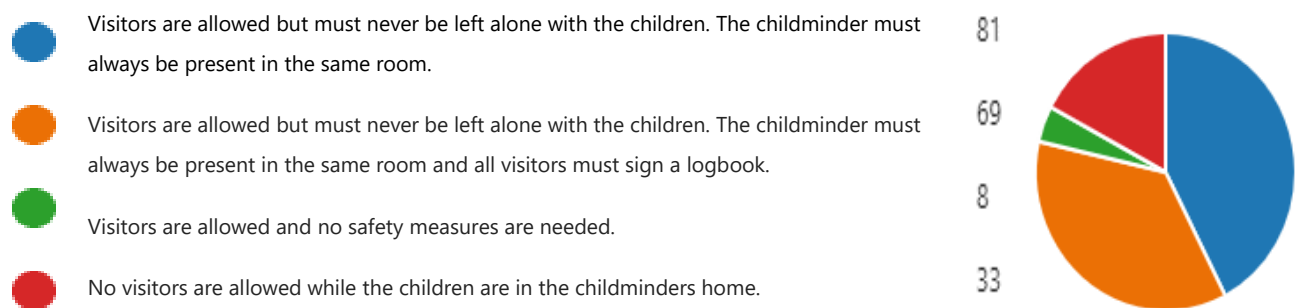
Section 4: Visitors to the childminders home

The survey presented parents with options regarding the presence of visitors in a childminder's home and associated safeguards. 166 parents expressed their views, however, the total number of responses amounted to 191, as some individuals chose more than one category.

- 81 agreed that visitors are allowed but must never be left alone with the children. The childminder must always be present in the same room.
- 69 Parents agreed with the same condition as above, but additionally supported the requirement for all visitors to sign a logbook.
- 8 parents agreed that visitors are allowed without the need for further safeguards.
- 33 parents agreed with the restriction that no visitors are allowed while children are in the childminder's home. (See figure 10)

The childminder works alone and is responsible for the supervision of the children in their care. However, in the case of a medical emergency where a child or the childminder becomes sick or injured, the emergency backup person will need to take over the care of the children.

The rules and regulations will include a section on any potential visitors to the childminder's home. As a parent which of these options would you agree with?



(Figure 10)

Section 5: The Childminding Service Handbook

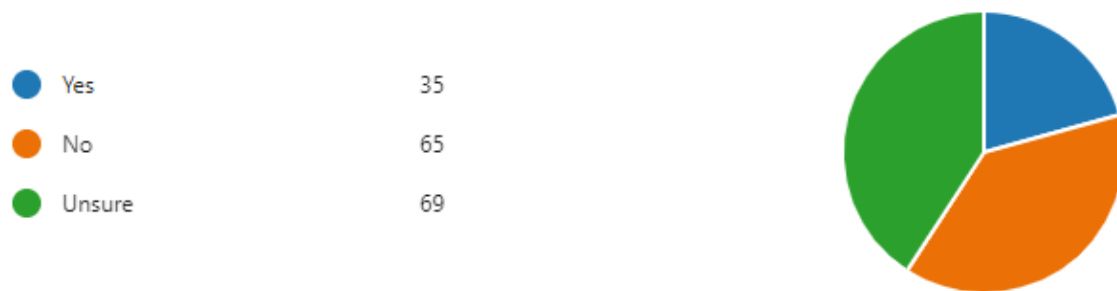
When asked if there are any additional rules or guidelines, they believe should be included in the Childminding Service Handbook, 168 respondents provided their input.

21% of respondents indicated that they believe additional rules or guidelines should be included. This suggests that there are specific aspects or areas of childminding services that these individuals feel could benefit from further clarification or regulation. On the other hand, 38% of respondents expressed that they do not believe any additional rules or guidelines are necessary. This indicates a level of satisfaction or confidence in the existing content of the handbook. Furthermore 41% of respondents were unsure whether additional rules or guidelines should be included. (See figure 11)

Childminders will be required to have a handbook containing all the required rules and practises of the childminder's service. The handbook will include an application form and a consent form that must be completed by the parents. These records will be kept on file by the childminder. This paperwork will be available to parents and reviewed by TUSLA during an inspection.

The handbook will act as a guide for parents, so they are clear about all the rules and the safety guidelines of the childminder's practices.

Are there any additional rules or guidelines you think should be included in the Childminding Service Handbook?



(Figure 11)

At a minimum the handbook will cover the following areas:

A child safety section will include details regarding the child's medical and family information, and details on the people that are allowed to collect the child from the childminder's home.

A health and safety section will include an illness policy. Also, the procedures for fire safety, accidents, and incidents and how they will be recorded by the childminder and reported to the parents.

A child development section will include the use of the tv and internet access.

The service details will include the opening and closing times and any holidays closures. This section will have the contact details of the childminder and the emergency cover person including email and phone numbers. Also, this section will have information on fees and how payments are made by the parents. There will be a policy on how you can report a complaint and how these are dealt with.

Food and drink details will be recorded on any childhood allergies and the food your child likes.

A pet section this will outline details of any pets in the childminder's home.

Missing from the Childminding Service Handbook

Parents were asked to indicate what they believed was missing from the Childminding Service Handbook.

30 Parents believed certain details were missing from the Childminding Service Handbook. Their responses provide valuable insights into areas that parents feel are important but may be lacking in the current handbook.

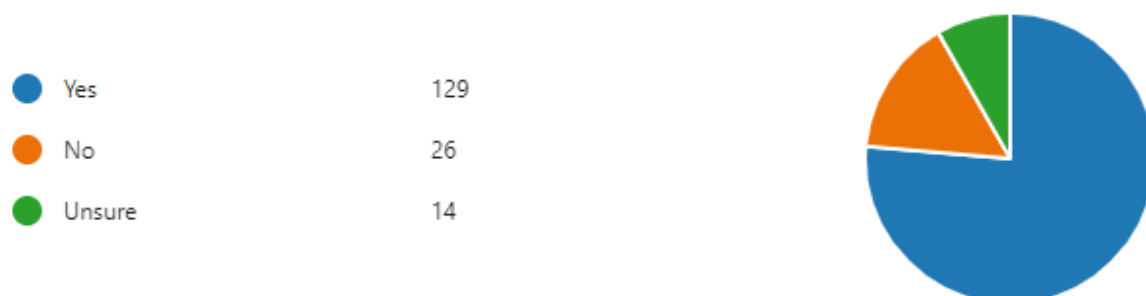
Parents wanted information about the ethos and caring style of the childminder to be included in the handbook. Parents wanted information on annual leave notification protocols, reporting daily information to parents, and incident reporting procedures. They also sought clarity on when and how childminders could be contacted outside of normal hours. Parents emphasized the importance of safety audits and practices, including car safety, gate and door safety, cooking spaces, plug safety, and stairs safety. There was a request for details on planned outings, trips to parks, local attractions, and rules around taking children outside the agreed setting. Concerns were raised about child safety during outings, including car seat use and supervision. Details were requested on how school-aged children would be dropped off and collected, including information regarding other children in the childminder's care who do not attend school. Some parents requested meal plans, notes on children's eating habits, and information on TV/screen time limits. Parents wanted a detailed policy and procedure for nappy changing and toileting to prevent cross-contamination. Some parents requested a commitment to sustainability and access to outdoors for children. Parents emphasized the importance of inclusion and partnership with parents in the childminding process.

Section 6: Training

The survey results reveal a varied range of opinions among parents regarding the adequacy of the training requirements for registered childminders with 168 parents expressing their views on training.

76% of parents expressed satisfaction with the training requirements listed for becoming a registered childminder, which represented most of the responses. While 15% parents indicated dissatisfaction with the planned training requirements. A minority of parents 8% raised concerns or uncertainties with the training requirements for registered childminders. (See figure 12)

I am happy with the training listed above that the childminders must complete before becoming a registered childminder.



(Figure 12)

Part of the registration process will include compulsory training for all childminders. This will support the childminders with the new rules and with completing the paperwork for the registration process. The training will include:

- **Guidance on preparing documents that childminders will need for registration.**
- **Child protection training** will support the childminders to safeguard and protect the children in their care.
- **A first-aid certificate.** This training will give childminders the skills and confidence to handle any emergencies involving children in their care.
- **A quality development programme.** This training will equip childminders to deliver a quality childminding service and to provide the best experiences and outcomes for the children in their care.

Additional Training

Parents were asked to comment or indicate if they felt any additional training should be required for childminders to complete before they became registered childminders.

The 65 parents' comments provide insights into the additional training they feel is necessary for childminders beyond the proposed compulsory training. Here's an overview of their responses.

Suggestions include requiring childminders to undergo continuous training, with records maintained by regulatory bodies to ensure ongoing professional development. Parents emphasize the need for training to support childminders in caring for children with additional needs, ensuring inclusivity and effective support. Other recommendations include education on play, nutrition, food allergies, healthy development, screen time management, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and fire safety. Training on child development was highlighted as crucial for childminders to understand the developmental stages and needs of the children in their care.

Section 7: Additional Comments

Parents were asked to provide any additional comments they had about these draft rules and regulations.

The 52 comments provided by parents offer insights into their perspectives on the draft rules and regulations for childminding.

Many parents advocate for recognising the valuable role of childminders and the need to provide incentives for the registration and the professionalisation of the childmind sector. Several parents cited the regulations as a step towards improving child protection measures and raising the standards within childminding in Ireland.

However, some highlighted the potential consequences of excessive regulation, particularly for childminders who offer shorter, after-school care sessions. They stressed that the administrative burden may outweigh the benefits, leading some childminders to reconsider their profession. Parents stressed the importance of balancing regulatory requirements with the practical realities and individual circumstances of childminders, advocating for a more

organic approach. One parent welcomed the regulations however noted the need for consultation with special needs groups highlighting the importance of considering diverse needs and ensuring equal access to childcare services. Finally, parents highlight the need for periodic reviews of regulations to adapt to changing circumstances and advocate for flexibility in considering individual situations, such as the age of childminders' own children.



CONCLUSION

The National Parents Council welcomes the opportunity provided by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY) to make a submission on the proposed draft regulations and registration processes for childminders in Ireland. We look forward to seeing the outcome of DCEDIY's consultation in this area.



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