



A Guide for Childminders

on

Caring for Children with Special Needs

Information about Broad Services available to support Childminders
in the delivery of a quality service to Children with special needs

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Transforming Ireland

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Disability Defined:

“disability”, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.

Disability Act 2005

Legal obligations imposed by the Equal Status (2000) Act:

The Act prohibits discrimination in the provision of goods or services on nine grounds, including disability.

The Act requires that steps must be taken to allow for **Reasonable Accommodation of people with disabilities** e.g. a Childminder must make *reasonable changes* in what s/he does and how it is done to facilitate access to the service. Additional support and information is available from the National Disability Authority, (see Useful Contacts).

Quality indicators for Special Needs Childminding Services

The qualities and skills set out below define an ‘Effective Special Needs Assistant,’ published by the Department of Education & Science:

<i>Patience</i>	<i>Flexibility</i>
<i>Care</i>	<i>Versatility</i>
<i>Sense of fairness</i>	<i>Positive attitude</i>
<i>Consistency</i>	<i>Friendly</i>
<i>Sensitivity</i>	<i>Hard to shock</i>
<i>Sense of humour</i>	<i>Enthusiasm</i>

These qualities and skills also define an excellent Childminder who displays respect for children as individuals.

All children have the same needs: to be loved, valued, feel secure and protected, to receive routine physical care and to have enough stimulation to achieve their potential. Children with additional needs may require extra help but it is important to view the child as a person and not just see the impairment.

Guidelines for Caring for Children with Special Needs

When caring for children you are constantly identifying, responding to and satisfying their ordinary, everyday requirements. The term 'special needs' is used by professionals in relation to children whose development is not following the recognised developmental pattern.

All children are on a continuum of development – they start out at the beginning of the same track and move along in a continuous process of development. However, not all children of similar ages are at the same stage of development. Children with special needs are simply at different points in the developmental continuum.

Using the term 'special needs', acknowledges each child's unique strengths, abilities and level of development. It focuses positively on the child's 'need' and enables appropriate levels of care and resources to be provided to support the child.

Children with special needs have the same requirements for love, security and protection as the other children you care for. Some will be easy going whereas others will be stubborn and strong willed. Here are some tips to help you in your Caring role:

- In order to help the child feel safe both physically and emotionally lavish them with plenty of attention and encouragement
- Give them the opportunity to feel like they belong through friendships with other children
- Interpersonal skills/communication: Develop good listening skills. Non-verbal communication speaks volumes so always ensure your communication style is positive and make time to listen
- Self –empowerment: Continually promote independence by encouraging the child to make as many choices as possible.
- Empathy: Step into the child's shoes and imagine how you would like to be approached and helped.
- Patience and sensitivity: Communication may be difficult at times so work at the child's pace and allow additional time for tasks.

- Respect: it is important to acknowledge and support a child's dignity and personal rights.
- Be positive: Praise effort rather than achievement. Encourage the child to live up to their potential
- Provide activities that are appropriate to the child's ability so they have a chance to feel a sense of achievement
- Set guidelines for behaviour and be a good role model
- Work in conjunction with the child's parents to support the child's development.

[Printed by kind permission of Mary Brennan, Psychologist and Tutor at Vision Training, Carlow]

Childminders working in Partnership with Parents:

In the delivery of a quality Childminding service to a child with special needs it is essential that a Childminder is open to:

- working in partnership with parents, who are the experts on their child, and where appropriate, with other professionals;
- receiving advice and facilitating two way communication;
- creating a positive and confidential environment in which parents feel comfortable in sharing information about their child.

The Importance of Early Intervention:

Measures taken to influence the development of the child (birth – 6yrs) with a disability can:

- increase the developmental and educational gains for the child;
- improve the functioning of the family;
- result in the child needing fewer specialist services later in life.

Broad Services Available through the HSE:

The Health Service Executive has responsibility for provision of **Community Care Services** for children with disabilities and include:

Public Health Nurses	Occupational Therapists
Physiotherapists	Speech and Language Therapy
Day Care	Respite Care
Psychological Services	Social Workers
Audiology	Seating Clinic (via Enable Ireland)
	Assistive Technology (via Enable Ireland & Central Remedial Clinic)

For more information contact: HSE, Oak House, Millenium Park, Naas, Co. Kildare, 1850 241850, www.hse.ie or email info@hse.ie

Keeping Safe® – Disability Awareness Training is designed for groups who have completed Keeping Safe Child Protection Awareness Training. In some HSE areas a **Keeping Safe® Integrated Programme** is offered which covers the modules for both programmes. For information contact the Local Information & Advice Officer from your local HSE Office.

What Difference?

The '*What Difference?*' resource book and DVD, launched in 2008, provide early childhood professionals with background information, guidelines and practical suggestions on a range of topics including:

- Inclusion in the Early Years
- Partnership with Parents
- Creating a Rich Learning Environment
- Strategies that Work with Children with Special Needs
- Maximising Children's Participation in the everyday activities of the early years setting

Available from: Limerick City Childcare Committee, The Granary, Michael Street, Limerick. 061 204366/061 407525

Training to deliver a Quality Special Needs Childminding Service:

A good knowledge of child development is necessary for the Childminder offering a special needs service.

It raises awareness of the developmental milestones that all children should attain within a certain time frame and highlights when those milestones are not attained, indicating a requirement for expert assessment.

Contacts for Training :

Special Needs Modules are offered as part of childcare training courses accredited by FETAC at level 5 and offered locally through VECs

Phone FETAC: 01- 8659500

Phone City of Dublin VEC: 01 6680614

For a full list of VECs around the country go to www.ivea.ie

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

Provides training & support to carers of children with communication difficulties. Visit www.pecs.org.uk.

The Institute of Child Education and Psychology

Offers a wide range of courses in association with St. Patrick's Drumcondra for more information go to www.icepe.eu.

The College of Progressive Education

Offers full-time, part-time and distance learning courses in Special Needs training. For more information go to www.progressivecollege.com

Vision Training, Drummond House, Pembroke, Carlow, 059 9142208. www.visiontraining.ie

Useful Contacts:

Parking Card Scheme for Disabled Drivers & Passengers.

Application would be made by the parent of a child with a disability. Valid for 2 years. Cost is €25. Generally not issued to anyone under 5 years of age. For full details please contact either:

Disabled Drivers Association, Parking Card Section, Ballindine, Claremorris, Co. Mayo. [Tel] 094 9364054 | www.ddai.ie **OR**
Irish Wheelchair Association, IWA National Mobility Centre, Ballinagappa Road, Clane, Co. Kildare. [Tel] 045 893094 | www.iwa.ie

Down Syndrome Ireland, Citylink Business Park, Old Naas Road, Freepost, Dublin 12. [Tel] 01 4266500/1890 374 374
www.downsyndrome.ie | info@downsyndrome.ie

Enable Ireland, 32F Rosemount Park Drive, Rosemount Business Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 11
[Tel] 01 872 7155 | www.enableireland.ie

The Irish Society for Autism, Unity Building, 16/17 Lower O'Connell Street, Dublin 1 – [Tel] 01 874 4684
www.iol.ie/~isa1/

Inclusion Ireland (National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability), Unit C2, The Steelworks, Foley Street, Dublin 1 – [Tel] 01 8559891 | www.inclusionireland.ie

National Disability Authority, 25 Clyde Road, Dublin 4
[Tel] 01 6080400 | www.nda.ie

Department of Health & Children, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2 – [Tel] 1890 200311 | www.dohc.ie | info@health.gov.ie

Citizens Information Board, Hume House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
[Tel] 01 6059000 | www.citizensinformationboard.ie | info@ciboard.ie

Disability Appeals Officer, Freepost, 1st Floor, Dolcain House, Monastery Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22 – Callsave 1850 211583 |
[Tel] 01 461 4211 | www.odoa.ie

Equality Authority, 2 Clonmel St., Dublin 2 – Lo-call 1890 245545 | [Tel] 01 4173333 | www.equality.ie

Irish Deaf Kids, Terenure Enterprise Centre, 17 Rathfarnham Road, Terenure, Dublin 6W – [Tel] 01 4903237 | www.irishdeafkids.ie

National Council for Special Education, 1-2 Mill Street, Trim, Co. Meath – [Tel] 046 9486400 | www.ncse.ie | info@ncse.ie

Western Care Association, Head Office, John Moore Road, Castlebar, Co. Mayo [Tel] 094 9029100 | www.westerncare.com

Specialised Services for outings and fun:

National Disabled Angling Facility:

Fishing facility suitable for all the family. Based in Aughrim, Co Wicklow. [Tel] 0402 36552

Sensory Play Room, Toby World, Mileheight, Retail Park, Tralee, Co. Kerry [066] 7192469

Sensory Gardens: Gardens designed with special thought given to those with special needs. Sight, sound, smell & touch are focus point of the gardens

Botanic Gardens, Dublin. Open Mon to Sunday. 01 - 8377596

Abbey Sense Garden, Abbeyleix, Co. Laois - 0502 31325

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