



CHILDMINDING IRELAND
Supporting Ireland's Childminders; Minding Ireland's Children

Dear Minister Foley,

7 May 2026

We are writing to advise you that Childminding Ireland cannot support the review as it is currently framed, nor can we support the current direction of the new childminding system.

We are profoundly disappointed following our reading of the final draft - "Reviewing the Initial Implementation of the Childminding-Specific Regulations".

Having engaged constructively throughout this process, including detailed submissions and proposed amendments to the draft review document, we are deeply concerned that the core warnings consistently raised by Childminding Ireland and by childminders themselves have not been meaningfully reflected in the proposed review framework.

At this stage, we are forced to conclude that our warnings have largely fallen on deaf ears.

The current review is not fit for purpose.

It is not designed to examine the central question now facing the childminding sector:

"Can this new system actually work for childminding in practice", and "can it sustain childminding capacity into the future?"

Instead, the review remains narrowly focused on registration uptake, implementation supports and administrative barriers, while wider system issues are either excluded or pushed into separate consultations and parallel workstreams.

As we have repeatedly outlined, childminders do not experience regulation, funding systems, workforce policy and operational realities as separate policy discussions. They experience them as one combined practical reality which ultimately leads to one question:

"Can I continue doing this?"

The proposed review does not meaningfully examine:

- the suitability of the National Childcare Scheme for childminding,
- the inclusion of childminding within centre-based workforce planning assumptions,
- the cumulative administrative burden being placed on childminders,
- financial sustainability,
- or the interaction between regulation and the practical realities of childminding.

No single process is currently examining how these issues interact together in practice. As a result, the review risks measuring participation within the system without properly examining whether the system itself is workable for childminding.

We are also deeply concerned that childminding continues to be interpreted through fundamentally centre-based assumptions.

Self-employed childminders are not employees within a centrally managed workforce model. They are independent small businesses operating from their own family homes, making decisions based on family circumstances, flexibility, sustainability and personal capacity.

Similarly, the National Childcare Scheme was not designed for childminding. Subsidies for parents are of little value if the childminding places themselves disappear.

The contradiction between the stated goals of the Department's Shaping the Future: Early Years Action Plan and the current direction of policy is becoming increasingly stark.

Shaping the Future sets out clear Government objectives around affordability, accessibility, parental choice and the sustainable expansion of childcare capacity. It speaks about supporting families, strengthening the childcare sector, and ensuring that future reforms are informed by consultation, research and long-term sustainability.

Yet the new childminding system risks achieving the opposite outcome for Ireland's largest existing source of flexible childcare.

Childminding already provides thousands of flexible local childcare places in communities across Ireland at no capital cost to the State. Many parents actively choose childminding because it best suits their children's needs, particularly for babies, siblings, rural families and atypical working hours.

The system currently being implemented is leading growing numbers of childminders to conclude that they no longer see a future for themselves within the sector. If that trajectory continues, childminding capacity will not gradually decline, it will be systematically reduced as a direct consequence of the new system itself.

Yet at the same time that the State, is investing heavily in expanding centre-based childcare infrastructure, it is implementing a childminding system that risks driving significant numbers of existing childminders out of the sector.

If that happens, the State will be spending public money trying to replace childcare capacity that already exists and that many families specifically prefer.

Before the new Regulations were introduced and the three-year transition period began in September 2024, there were approximately 70 Tusla registered childminders nationally, that figure has only increased to 166 (as of Feb 26), against an estimated minimum of 13,000 childminders nationally. The registration figures alone should now raise serious alarm.

These figures do not reflect a sector steadily transitioning into regulation. They reflect near-total non-participation in the new system to date.

We are also deeply concerned by the continued narrowing of childminder representation within the process itself. It is difficult to reconcile the stated commitment to childminder engagement with the removal of the national representative voice for childminders from full participation at such a critical stage of reform.

Childminders are not resisting change. They are asking for a system that reflects how childminding actually works.

Without meaningful change of direction, we fear that the coming years will see the quiet loss of thousands of childminders from the sector, with devastating consequences for families, communities and childcare capacity across Ireland.

The State is at risk of unintentionally collapsing a major part of Irelands childcare system.

As always, we will work constructively with you and your Department, to try to resolve these issues. We continue to believe this situation is retrievable. However, that requires a genuine willingness to pause, listen, and examine the system as a whole rather than continuing to treat childminding as though it can simply be absorbed into existing centre-based policy frameworks.

Yours sincerely



Bernadette Orbinski Burke

Chief Executive

