

Childminders Working with Assistants / Apprentices

When deciding whether to employ a childminding assistant or apprentice the decision is very much a personal one. It should be based on your personality, leadership style, the person you are considering working with and the needs of your business.

There are many benefits to working with assistants or apprentices:

- Adult conversation and company.
- Ability to walk away for a short reflective break.
- Able to take a bathroom break.
- Increased variety in individual strengths and interests.
- Increased adults to speak to parents at collection / dropping off times.
- Reduces vulnerability.
- Quality not impacted when completing tasks.
- Clear structure in place.
- Formal supervisions and performance monitoring.

Equally, when you employ an assistant, you are accountable for their practice and take on employer responsibilities; you may not feel comfortable about this. It is more a personality choice than a business model at the outset. The positive relationships you have with the people you work with will be essential to determining the success of your business.

Assistants / Apprentices and the legal requirements

As the main childminder you will have employer's responsibilities in relation to employee rights and sole responsibility for the childminding assistant and apprentice's practice.

A childminding assistant or apprentice will be inspected by Ofsted under the main childminder's registration and will not receive their own inspection.

You cannot work with more than **3** other people at any time or you are no longer a childminder and must register as [Childcare on Domestic Premises](#).

Childminders can use assistants/apprentices to support them in their work. When working with an assistant/assistant, extra children can be contracted as long as appropriate [floor space requirements are met](#). Once you are happy that your assistant has the necessary skills and knowledge to work with you and to comply with current requirements, before they are allowed sole care of children, assistants must have:

- You should risk assess the impact of employing additional staff on your provision.
- A childminding assistant can be left on their own for no more than 2 hours in any one day and must be recorded on a register, providing Ofsted and

parental consent is obtained, and they have a valid Paediatric First Aid Training certificate, which is to be renewed every 3 years.

- A childminding apprentice over 17 years of age can be left on their own for no more than 2 hours in any one day, providing Ofsted and parental consent is obtained, and they have a valid Paediatric First Aid Training course, which is to be renewed every 3 years.
- Neither the assistant nor apprentice can be left alone until an enhanced DBS check has been completed. You will also need to consider whether you require the assistant to join the Update Service and who will fund this.
- You should risk assess the assistant / apprentice being left unsupervised.
- If assistants/apprentices are key person for any children, parents must be given this information and informed about the key person role.
- To work alone with children on the EYFS (Early Years Register) assistants must be 17 or over.
- To work alone with children on the Childcare Register assistants must be 18 or over
- Public & Employers Liability Insurance
- Vehicle class 2 insurance if they intend driving childminded children.
- You will also need to talk about payment, contracts and terms and conditions of employment including procedures for dismissal.
- You are strongly recommended to have clear written policies in place when working with others. This is to support them to understand their responsibilities. You should state “any individual working with children” to avoid having to update all policies if there are any staffing changes.

Childminder with domestic premises only

Taking on an assistant/apprentice; changes and information may affect and impact upon your planning permission and Ofsted.

If you are currently or are considering employing/or working with someone then this changes the use of your home and a [Lawful Development Certificate](#) may be required. You must apply to your local district planning department for this.

Unfortunately, there will be a cost to this (each district is different) we advise that you contact your local department to inform them of your intentions/current situation and they will inform you of what the next steps are.

- As the main childminder, you must tell Ofsted about new people aged 16 or over who live or work in the home you are looking after children in, within 14

days: [report new adults in the home](#) This includes children who turn 16 and childminding assistants SF 3.10 and 3.11 .

- Returned DBS disclosure - you should advise your assistant that if they have any prior convictions these will show up on the DBS check. If they have any health problems Ofsted might delay registration while they investigate further, so your assistant must be honest and up front about anything that might prevent them from registering.
- First aid – paediatric 12 hour childminder-appropriate course ([Annex A of the EYFS requirements](#))
- Confirmation of suitability must be obtained from Ofsted before assistants can care for children and be included in the ratios.
- If assistants leave or adults no longer live with you [Childminders: tell Ofsted about adults leaving the home](#)

Note - if you want to use an assistant to take you over 6 children under 8 you may need planning permission as mentioned above.

Childminder without domestic premises

Assistants/Apprentices cannot work unsupervised until they have received their suitability letter from Ofsted

You and everyone providing childcare on the non-domestic premises will need to have an enhanced DBS check with children's barred lists.

You need to tell Ofsted about anyone who will be providing childcare with you on your premises in your registration application. Ofsted will carry out suitability checks to make sure they are suitable to care for children.

Once you're registered, you must tell Ofsted about any new people providing childcare as part of your registration using the [Report new adults form](#).

You do not need to tell Ofsted about:

- people working on your premises who are not providing childcare (such as cooks or cleaners)
- anyone else providing childcare that is not part of your registration
- visitors or anyone working temporarily on the premises (for example, builders)

Note: These are all checks you should make yourself as a childminder to ensure the safety of the children you are looking after SF 3.3

Recruiting a Childminding Assistant

Most childminders recruit someone they know or people who have been recommended to them. If you were looking to recruit someone that you didn't know then Leicestershire county council have a [Submit a Childcare Vacancy](#) which you can advertise your vacancy for free.

Things to do during the recruitment process

- You should complete a formal interview, with a safeguarding and EYFS focus.
- You could ask about previous experience and give them scenarios to evidence their practice.
- You will need to obtain written references, including one from their most recent employer.
- You need to ensure you formally ask about their suitability to work with children, including Disqualification by Association and verify they are legally entitled to work in the UK.
- There are also many advantages to asking them to attend for a trial period. This trial could be unpaid but is a good indicator of their commitment and gives them a chance for them to decide if they would be happy in the role.
- It is often easier to ask questions during the trial as there are sometimes less nerves involved. This trial could be from 1 to 3 hours.

Things to consider

You will need to consider whether you are looking for someone with early years' experience or someone with initiative who has a strong desire to work with children. You should also consider if you require any specific skills to support your business. For example: specific language skills, driving licence and good mobility. Most importantly you will need to ensure you feel comfortable with whoever you choose.

Requirements

- Clear job description
- Formal induction period, with a clear Induction Checklist to follow
- Time to read all policies and procedures and sign to confirm they have been read and understood
- EY2 and DBS, and consider the benefits of signing up to the online update service
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Contract of employment, allowing for a minimum of 4 weeks' notice period
- Probationary period in their contract of up to 6 months
- Completed 12 hour Paediatric First Aid course if you are intending to leave the assistant on their own for up to 2 hours in a day.

***Leicestershire County Council have a [Recruitment & Retention](#) page where you can find a range of recruitment templates that you can use and tailor for your business.

Paying your assistant

Assistants can be employed or self-employed – it is up to you what arrangement you make with them. If an assistant is employed:

You must register as an employer with HMRC and complete all the required documentation

They must be [paid at least minimum wage](#)

You are responsible for paying tax, national insurance, sick pay, holiday pay etc

Your assistant must be offered statutory rest periods through the day.

If an assistant is self-employed:

- They must be free to work elsewhere, for example as a relief worker for another childminder or as a babysitter
- They must have an 'agreement of work' rather than a contract of employment
- They are responsible for their own tax and national insurance
- An alternative way of working with an assistant is to offer an [apprenticeship](#) ([Funding is available.](#)) An apprentice must have a valid DBS check.
- If you would like to have a chat about any of this further, please don't hesitate to get in touch and we can arrange a suitable time and date.

Recruiting a Childminding Apprentice

If you are considering employing a childminding apprentice there are a number of training organisations and apprenticeship providers who can support you in finding the best candidate. They may advertise your vacancy on their website and will visit your provision to assess its suitability. Apprentices are assessed by their training provider to ensure they are suitable and progressing in their studies; however, you should still conduct a formal interview and trial period to ensure they fit into your childminding provision and that you feel comfortable with the person you will be working with.

Things to consider

- Less experienced staff can sometimes have picked up fewer bad habits and can be easier to coach into the ethos and practice at your provision.
- If the apprentice is over 17 years of age they may be counted in Ofsted ratios.
- You may need to carry out an Ofsted DBS check, as sometimes the training organisation or apprenticeship provider's own check will not carry over to your childminding business.
- You will also need to consider that the apprentice will need 1 day out a week to attend training.
- If the apprentice is over 17 years old and is being counted in ratios this could impact on your child numbers.
- You should also be aware their training day could change and should establish this pattern with their training provider at the outset.

There are several training organisations and apprenticeship providers who can support you in finding the best candidate.

Apprenticeships training and assessment can be funded by The Apprenticeship Levy [[How are apprenticeships funded and what is the apprenticeship levy? – The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2016/04/01/how-are-apprenticeships-funded-and-what-is-the-apprenticeship-levy/)] DfE currently fund 100% of the training costs for small employers (fewer than 50 staff) when they take on apprentices aged under 19. Also, employers do not have to pay [employer national insurance contributions](#) for apprentices aged under 25 when the apprentice earns up to £4,189 / month. There are other incentives if the apprentice has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan or have been in care.

Apprentices are assessed by their training provider to ensure they are suitable and progressing in their studies.

You should conduct a formal interview and trial period to ensure they fit into your childminding provision and that you feel comfortable with the person you will be working with.

Childminding Assistant / Apprentice Key Training and Support Considerations

You should be clear around your organisational structure at the outset as part of the assistant or apprentices induction. They should be clear that you are accountable for their practice and development and what your expectations are. There should be a team ethos.

Support

Regular supervisions are necessary and should be formally recorded. These could take place half termly or termly. You should consider when these will be held and whether they will be paid. You should ask your assistant whether their personal circumstances have changed and any issues which may affect their suitability to work with children. **(Disqualification by association only applies to others living in their household and not the individual themselves applicable for those working from a childminders home.)**

Supervisions provide opportunities to discuss any issues around well-being, child development, child protection concerns and reflective practice. The assistant or apprentice should sign to agree that the supervision record is an accurate reflection of the discussions held.

Training

Childminders are accountable for the quality of the work of any assistants and must be satisfied that assistants are competent to meet their roles and responsibilities.

[\(EYFS requirement 3.30 -3.33\)](#)

Ofsted expect you to make sure your assistant is fully briefed before they work with children. This means you should organise some induction training to cover, as a minimum, Health, and Safety, safeguarding; your daily procedures and routines; their role and responsibilities; your expectations about conduct, appropriate clothing; mobile phone, camera and social networking use; whistle blowing procedures; reading and understanding your policies and procedures etc.

The majority of their training and development will be through role modelling and peer observations. You should identify any developmental needs through observation of practice and create a tailored training and development plan for them over time.

Apprentice

An apprentice will have a structured training plan with their training provider that you should be able to support. You will need to take into account that an apprentice will need a day off a week to attend training and this should be factored in to your ratios if they are over 17 years old and you are including them in numbers.

Assistant

You should have a training plan for your assistant which is reviewed at supervisions to ensure that any mandatory training has not lapsed.

- Paediatric First Aid is required if the assistant is ever left unsupervised with the children.

- Face to face or on-line [Essential Safeguarding](#) E-Learning course should be completed and your Safeguarding Policy shared as part of their induction, in addition to any updates.
- Child protection procedures and responsibilities should be regularly checked through discussions and at supervisions.
- Assistants also require food hygiene training if they will be preparing or handling food – required for staff ([EYFS requirement 3.37](#))

Ongoing training is expected - you are responsible for the day-to-day supervision of your assistant and ensuring they work effectively with the children. ([EYFS requirement 3.33](#))

As the childminder you are responsible for training them and ensuring they have the skills and knowledge needed to work with children.

You should be clear at the outset whether you will pay for training. By paying for staff training you are clear that you value and invest in your staff to enhance the quality of your provision. If you are a limited company training costs can be offset against Corporation Tax. You should have a written contract in place explaining any repayment arrangements for high value training, i.e. Level 2 / 3, if the assistant leaves within a set timeframe.