

**Childminders and children's centre practitioners thought together about what makes a really good childminding group and what contribution children's centre staff and childminders should make – that is, what an ideal childminding group would look like. Here are their conclusions.**

### **The effective childminding group:**

- Is primarily focused on the experience of children, and primarily exists for children.
- Offers children quality adult-child interaction with a lot of 'sustained shared thinking'.
- Is a space to develop childminding practice
- Encourages childminders to express what they would like to gain from the group
- Encourages childminders to be proactively involved so that, for example, childminders are willing and enabled to lead a story or singing
- Provides an opportunity for childminders to observe and record children's learning and share learning stories
- Plans together for the group
- Has the consistent support of an Early Years Practitioner or Lead Teacher in order to develop a positive relationship with childminders, providing a springboard for professional growth.
- Enables childminders to draw on the expertise of other children's centre staff.
- Engenders a culture of mutual professional respect between childminders and children's centre staff

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- Discusses ground rules, so that childminders are aware of the expectations of the children's centre and contribute to establishing those ground rules
- Has agreed policies covering: confidentiality, the use of mobile phones, taking photographs, hot drinks, leaving the room, looking after children's centre resources and the use of crèches
- Revisits ground rules from time to time to reflect on 'best practice' and revitalise the group
- Has the active involvement of both childminders and staff in the organisation of the group, for example taking turns to wash up
- Is conscious of maintaining a healthy balance of adult to adult chat and adult to child interaction
- Welcomes new members and allows new childminders to integrate with existing members



You can contact the Childminding Support Team or Family Information Service to identify your local children's centre and to request a list of children's centre, childminding groups in Bristol.  
Tel 0845 129 7217

# **Childminding Groups in Children's Centres**

A leaflet for childminders



**Many children's centres run groups specifically for childminders and their children. Here are some of the benefits to children and to childminders of attending a childminding group within a children's centre.**

**The benefits to minded children are:**

- An opportunity to socialize with a number of children and develop friendships
- Scope to play in more spacious surroundings than at home
- Exposure to 'free- flow' between stimulating indoor and outdoor environments, allowing children to choose their preferred learning environment
- Access to a range of natural and open-ended resources and a variety of messy play, arousing their curiosity and imagination
- Through shared stories and circle games, their attention and listening skills can develop



- Sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others can be encouraged at group through lots of opportunity to play co-operatively and share toys
- The childminding group provides a secure base from which a child can explore a new environment independently: the secure base of familiarity with the other, trusted adults in the group.
- 'Next steps' for a child's learning can be discussed and planned, based on the knowledge of the individual child's stage of development
- Through the familiarity with the setting, a child is helped to make connections in learning, preparing for transition to the children's centre or another setting when moving on from his or her childminder
- Development of communication skills through a range quality interactions with adults and children

**The benefits to you, the childminder, are:**

- Opportunity to network with other childminders about practice issues in a mutually supportive environment, and to hear about what is current in the childminding world.
- Support and advice from the Early Years Practitioner or Lead Teacher who runs the group, helping you with the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage

- Access to other professional support, such as the children's centre Speech and Language Therapist, helping early identification of issues around communication
- Advice around solving challenging professional situations, helping you build the confidence to deal with these situations
- Craft and recipe ideas for you to use back in the home setting
- Books or story sacks to borrow , giving your minded children a greater exposure to a range of stories
- The occasion to observe colleagues at work and to reflect on the kind of positive interaction skills which help children to manage their own feelings and behaviour
- Possible invitation to take part in a children's centre session with minded children
- Suggestions for planning for a specific child, including how you might differentiate an activity for that particular child's stage of development
- Ideas to create play provocations and to create a stimulating learning environment at home
- A point of contact with the wider community of early years professionals, increasing opportunity to evolve your practice and support your continuing professional development