

## Chapter one

### Delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage in the home learning environment

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) promotes teaching and learning to 'help children prepare for school' and sets the standards that all providers must meet. The EYFS is mandatory for all Ofsted-registered early years providers, who care for children at all ages from birth up to 31 August following their fifth birthday. As registered person the childminder has overall responsibility for the provision and is legally responsible for complying with the requirements and regulations.

There are two strands to the EYFS that are generally consistent no matter what the type of provision is. The safeguarding and welfare requirements cover:

- child protection
- suitable people
- staff qualifications, training, support and skills
- key person
- staff-child ratios
- health
- managing behaviour

- safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment
- special educational needs
- information and records

The learning and development requirements of the EYFS cover:

- *the areas of learning and development which must shape activities and experiences (educational programmes) for children in all early years settings*
- *the early learning goals that providers must help children work towards (the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of the academic year in which they turn five)*
- *assessment arrangements for measuring progress*

With very little differentiation within the EYFS for the various types of childcare, the emphasis must always be to consider how the provision is organised in line with the requirements. In a home-based setting the opportunities and challenges are probably no more or less than for any other form of childcare. For example, a pre-school that operates in a community centre has to make many compromises in a shared space where other groups and activities may be held. Meanwhile, a day nursery that has set up in a building designed for another use entirely will have to be innovative in their use of the layout available. They may also have to work around existing fixtures and fittings that cannot readily be changed. Even so, despite some of the issues a childminder might have to overcome when their home is also their work place, it could be argued that ‘the

home' is in fact the environment that any early years provision should strive to recreate as being the most emotionally reassuring for learning and development to take place.

With this in mind, one of the biggest operational challenges for the home-based childcarer is that they generally work alone and must take on all of the roles defined within the EYFS. The childminder is manager, key person, lead person for safeguarding, SENCO, curriculum lead, first aider, administrator, finance officer, cook, cleaner, and in cases where they are working with an assistant, employer. With so many balls to juggle, the childminder can potentially miss opportunities to create a uniquely effective learning environment in all the challenges of meeting minimum requirements. Self-evaluation also requires more focus for a lone-worker who does not have colleagues to give the immediate feedback that supports personal reflection.

Before looking at the home learning environment in further detail, it will be helpful to tease out the relevant specifications within the EYFS that make additional reference to childminders, and to consider what the implications are for the learning environment:

**1.10 Each child must be assigned a key person.** (In childminding settings, the key person is the childminder.)

This is probably the most natural role for anyone working in the home-based childcare sector to adopt, since its emphasis is on engaging with and supporting parents to guide a child's development at home. Childminders enjoy a particular advantage when it comes to developing strong

attachment relationships with the children in their care. This is further underpinned by the fact that many parents will choose a specific childminder because they want their child to be cared for by someone who most closely replicates the parenting role. In other words, the parent actually chooses a 'key person' so naturally the foundations on which the parent-childcarer relationship is built are strong from the outset.

The role of the childminder as key person in supporting children's learning and development is expanded further in later chapters and is discussed in greater detail in Alliance publication *Being a Key Person in the Early Years* (2015).

**3.24 Childminders must have completed training which helps them to understand and implement the EYFS before they can register with Ofsted or a childminder agency. Childminders are accountable for the quality of the work of any assistants, and must be satisfied that assistants are competent in the areas of work they undertake.**

There are various ways to access pre-registration training such as the CACHE Level 3 Award in 'Preparing to Work in Home Based Childcare' ([www.pre-school.org.uk/providers/training/childminding](http://www.pre-school.org.uk/providers/training/childminding)). Childminders should define their approach to teaching and learning from the outset by referring to important principles about children's learning and development and must reflect on how these in turn shape their practice and that of any assistant working alongside them. The Alliance believes that the key to good quality teaching and learning in any childcare setting is the implementation of an approach that is based upon values, principles and research evidence. The pedagogical perspective of the Pre-school Learning Alliance underpins the

ideas and methods described in this book which are based upon the Alliance's core beliefs and values as follows:

- Parents are children's first and most enduring educators. This starts from birth and continues throughout their lives. *Parents and wider family* are especially important for babies and very young children.
- Children learn through *play* and *first-hand experiences* that are child-led and that involve *exploration* and *discovery*. Effective provision for learning increases children's *self-esteem* and *confidence* by *building upon what they already know and can do*.
- Children learn as members of *social groups*, such as their family and the early years setting and the *wider community*. Parents and practitioners work together to create change in family and community life which enhances children's futures.

The core beliefs and values of the Alliance mirror the characteristics of effective learning described in the EYFS and are therefore integral to creating a home learning environment that can support effective learning. Childminders should be able to clearly articulate their own core beliefs and values to parents, carers and others (for example Ofsted inspectors or the childminder agency with which they are registered) and to any assistant working with them. Equally important is that their beliefs and values are clearly evident in the activities and learning opportunities they provide for children in their home. Best practice should have a focus on the quality of teaching and learning that is actually happening and how this is supported by the learning environment. It cannot be found in reams of paper-based planning. This is further explained in the Alliance publication *Observation*,

*Assessment & Planning* (2014) which is recommended as an ideal companion to this book.

**3.41 At any one time, childminders may care for a maximum of six children under the age of eight. Of these six children, a maximum of three may be young children, and there should only be one child under the age of one. Any care provided for older children must not adversely affect the care of children receiving early years provision.**

The EYFS gives further detail about ratios for childminders and where exceptions can be made. In a nursery or pre-school, children are generally grouped by age and the adult-child ratios are set accordingly. A childminder, of course, may be caring for children of different ages and has to give additional consideration to how the learning environment is organised and resourced to reflect this. The opportunities for learning offered by the resulting mixed age groups are increasingly valued by early years professionals and are explored further in chapter four.

### **A word about childminder agencies**

Following the introduction of childminder agencies in September 2014, childminders now have the option to join an agency that will register and inspect their childcare provision instead of Ofsted. Ofsted will in turn inspect the agency's services, leadership and management:

*It will be for agencies to determine the shape and content of their quality assurance arrangements. However, for early years childminders, this must include an assessment against delivery of the EYFS learning and development and EYFS welfare requirements, including around*

*safeguarding. It will be for agencies to determine if they want to rate or grade providers who are registered with them and, if so, what scale or system they use.<sup>1</sup>*

Whether registered with a childminder agency or Ofsted, the individual childminder will still be working to the EYFS requirements. While there may be some differences in the overall working arrangements of the two bodies, the fundamental criteria and standards that must be met remain the same.

### **For further reflection**

Do I understand my role as a 'key person' and how this is integral to the delivery of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS?

What do I base my approach to teaching and learning on?

Can I describe my approach to teaching and learning to others, including parents, Ofsted or the childminder agency?

How do I currently assess my effectiveness in delivering the EYFS?

What are the challenges for me personally in meeting the EYFS requirements?

<sup>1</sup>Department for Education. (September, 2014) *Childminder Agencies: A Step-by-Step Guide*. London.

