



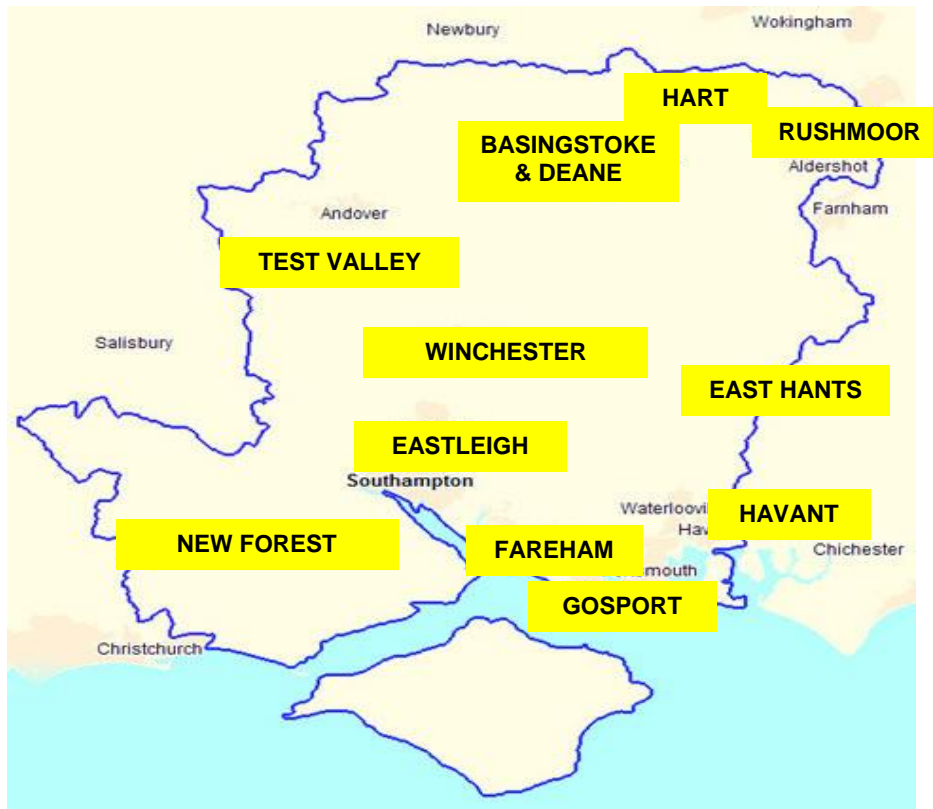
NCMA Children come *first* Hampshire Cluster Network

AIMS and POLICIES

NCMA Children Come *First*

Hampshire Cluster Network

In August 2003, the Hampshire Networks were formed into one cluster Network incorporating all the Network areas under the management of Hampshire Project Managers. Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinators retain the day-to-day responsibility for the areas they cover. All Hampshire childminders can access the Network in one of the eleven City, District or Borough Councils within Hampshire. These are:



Fareham's Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator is:

Mandy Knights

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**Funded by Hampshire County Council
and the Early Years Education and Childcare Unit**

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What is a childminding network?

Children come first is a nationally recognised quality assurance scheme for childminding networks. It was developed by NCMA in partnership with the Department for Education and Employment (now the Department for Education and Skills) and Ofsted

A Children Come first childminding network is made up of a group of registered childminders managed by a network coordinator. The network offers a unique quality assured care and education service.

A network can be a one-stop shop offering childcare and education places for children of all ages, including full day care and out of school places, as well as early years education and community childminding places.

Purpose and Aims

Purpose

The NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network will provide a high quality care, education and community childminding service for children 0-19 and their families, in partnership with the Hampshire Early Education and Childcare Unit (EECU) to ensure that childminding is on a level playing field with other forms of childcare.

Aims

- To ensure that childminders are recruited and offered training based on meeting the standards set out in the NCMA Quality Standards and additional requirements set out by Hampshire local authority.
- To provide quality childminding services to vulnerable families and children and commitment to the development of the SPACE community childminding scheme, working in partnership with Children's Service agencies.
- To develop a professional childminding workforce where experienced qualified network childminders provide mentoring services to those less skilled.
- To keep up to date with current Government legislation and initiatives and ensure professional childminding is treated on a par with other early years provision.
- To prepare childminders to offer early education places and claim early education grant. All childminders providing this service will be supported in observation, assessment and planning in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage. The service will be developed in accordance with the standards specified in the 'Sure Start Code of Practice on the Provision of Free Nursery Education places', and with regard to current government targets, legal obligations and following any guidance from the relevant registration authorities.
- To enable childminders to have access to Early Years Advisory Teachers, Inclusion officers, and other childcare professionals to best support children's development.

NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network (1)

Recruitment Policy

The Hampshire Cluster Network welcomes applications from all Registered Childminders who are willing to undertake the assessment process documented in section eight and nine of the Children Come First Criteria.

The Hampshire Cluster Network recognises and welcomes all current legislation and existing codes of practice in relation to inclusion.

Childminders' practice will be assessed against the criteria in the NCMA Quality Childminding Charter and local authority guidelines.

Childminders will receive copies of the assessment, specifying any adjustments to childminding practice or environment to meet the required standards. A time will be negotiated and recorded for any necessary changes to be implemented.

Childminders who wish to claim Nursery Education Grant (NEG) for parents of 2, 3 and 4 year olds will be further assessed using the Children Come *First* accreditation process.

Applications may be held on a waiting list depending on the capacity of the coordinator to undertake the assessment.

There is an appeals process for unsuccessful network applications

NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network (2)

Recruitment Appeals Procedure

If, following an assessment decision made by the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator, a childminder is not invited to join the Network, the Childminder can appeal against the decision.

Appeals should be made in writing in the first instance to the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator, setting out the grounds on which the appeal is made. Appeals must be lodged within two weeks of receiving a written copy of the assessment from the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator.

On receipt of the appeal, the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator will immediately send a copy of the appeal to the Project Manager who will inform the Area Operations Manager. The Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator will meet with the childminder to discuss issues raised. Everything possible will be done to resolve the matter at this stage.

If no agreement is met at this stage, the appeal should be referred to the Project Manager.

If no agreement is met at this stage, the appeal should be referred to the Area Operations Manager who will call a meeting to discuss and resolve the appeal with the Project Manager.

If agreement cannot be reached, the final decision will rest with representatives from the Early Education and Childcare Unit in full consultation with the Project Manager.

Written records of all meetings and conversations will be kept and treated confidentially. Childminders will be notified in writing of the final outcome within an agreed time frame.

NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network (3)

Membership of the Network

Conditions of Membership

Childminders are signed up to the Network once the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator is satisfied that they meet the NCMA Quality Standards and Hampshire local authority additional standards.

If childminders do not meet the above at that time, membership may be denied.

It is a mandatory condition of membership that all childminders work within the ethos of the Network. This is set out in the Network's Aims and Policies, the Contract of Membership, and Code of Practice which all childminders will be expected to sign, upon entry to the Network.

Childminders can make an appeal at any stage, following the Appeal of Network Membership procedure.

NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network (4)

Appeal of Network Membership

Appeals should be made to the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator in writing.

If a Childminder does not wish to discuss issues with the Co-ordinator, the appeal should be sent to the Project Manager.

If the Childminder disagrees with the appeal decision, they should notify the Co-ordinator in writing within seven days. A further discussion should take place between the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator and Childminder. If the Childminder does not accept the decision, a written report signed by both parties should be sent to the Project Manager.

The Project Manager will review the evidence and seek agreement to the decision or put in place an additional plan in writing with the Childminder and the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator. At this review stage a meeting may take place to ascertain facts.

If agreement cannot be reached, the appeal should be forwarded to the Hampshire Area Operations Manager, who will investigate and communicate any actions or decisions in writing.

If agreement cannot be reached, the final decision will rest with representatives from the Early Education and Childcare Unit, in full consultation with Area Operations Manager

Written records of all meetings and conversations will be kept and treated confidentially. Childminders will be notified in writing of the final outcome within an agreed time frame.

NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network (5)

Network Childminder Complaints Policy

If a childminder's practice gives cause for concern either to the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator, other childminders on the Network, a parent or other parties, the following process will be followed:

The Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator, in liaison with the Project Manager, will contact the complainant

The Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator will visit the Childminder to explain the concerns, to listen to the childminder's explanation and to discuss the way forward.

If the practice issue is related to registration requirements, the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator will inform the registration authority. If it is a child protection issue, the Co-ordinator has a duty to inform Children's Services. (Please note at this point the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator, in liaison with the Project Manager, will take the decision to suspend Network membership until further investigation has been carried out).

The Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator will draw up a plan with the childminder clearly stating agreed actions and time scales, including advice, support and training opportunities.

A copy of the plan will be sent to the childminder and the Project Manager.

The Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator will monitor and record progress during the agreed timescale.

If no improvement is made, the membership of the Network Childminder will be revoked. The Project Manager will notify the following people of this decision.

- Childminder
- Parents
- NCMA Project Manager
- NCMA Area Operations Manager
- Registration and Inspection Authority (OFSTED)
- Early Education & Childcare Unit

NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network (6)

Inclusion Policy and Anti-bias practice

Inclusion Policy

In line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (Statutory Framework), NCMA staff will ensure that all services provided are delivered in a fair and consistent way and inclusion is reflected in every Hampshire Cluster Network policy.

The Hampshire Cluster Network welcomes all childminders, families and children. We will do our utmost in partnership with childminders, parents and children to ensure that all children have access to the widest range of opportunities and experiences. Hampshire Cluster Network SEN policy takes account of the Hampshire County Council 'Early Years SEN Strategic Plan', the DCFS 'Special Educational Needs Code of Practice' and recognises the definition of Special Educational Needs as given in the Education Act 1996.

We seek to meet the individual needs of each child, to build on their talents, interests and abilities and to extend their experience appropriately.

Hampshire Cluster Network childminders will:

- Provide positive non stereotyped images
- Provide an enabling environment that reflects diversity within the community
- Challenge discriminatory practice, negative remarks and prejudiced attitudes.
- Ensure that communication skills match the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Have access to support from the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) for children and families for whom English is a second language
- Have access to a SENCO (Childminding Development and Network Coordinator) for additional support
- Take into account any specific learning requirements
- Ensure the physical environment is as far as possible accessible for all children
- Seek the advice of the Childminding Development and Network Coordinator with regard to ensuring sufficient resources and support are available to all the children they care for

- Work with the Area Inclusion Officer and the Childminding Development and Network coordinator to ensure that early identification, assessment and intervention take place for children with specific educational requirements.
- Undertake training to develop the skills and expertise to provide quality care to children with additional needs.

Childminders claiming Nursery Education Grant (NEG) will also:

- Have regard to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) *'Special Educational Needs Code of Practice'*

All children:

- Will be valued, regardless of their abilities and behaviours
- Will have access to a broad range of activities which are appropriate to their individual requirements.

Childminders claiming Nursery Education Grant (NEG) are required to:

-  Have regard to the DFCS *'Special Educational Needs Code of Practice'*

NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network (7)

Confidentiality Policy

The Hampshire Cluster Network is committed to ensuring that confidentiality is maintained and respected at all levels. This is important in establishing trust between parents, families, carers, childminders and children. It also demonstrates a professional approach towards childminding and all involved in the service.

NCMA staff and Network childminders must remember that families have a right to privacy and should be clear about what information can be shared and what must be kept confidential.

All information will be kept confidential and information will not be shared without the permission of the childminder or family. Written information will be held securely and not disclosed to a third party.

However, in line with the Children Act 1989 (and amendments 1989) and Local Safeguarding Board procedures, every adult has a duty to report all concerns regarding the welfare of any child, to Children's Services. Children's safety and welfare is paramount. NCMA staff will inform Ofsted of any breach to the National Standards for Childminding and Children's Services if it is thought that a child is at risk or there are any concerns for their safety.

NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network (8)

Community Childminding Policy

In partnership with Hampshire Children's Services Department the NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network will provide, wherever possible, community childminding placements for a child/family in need, for whatever reason.

Children's Services will not approach childminders within NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network directly in the first instance, but will contact the Project Manager who will in turn pass the information to the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator to contact the Network childminders in the appropriate area.

NCMA have in place a community childminding contract that must be used at all times and is signed by all relevant parties. In addition, community childminders should have a policy in place to share with parents and agencies.

Network Childminders who wish to be recognised as community childminders must use the appropriate paperwork supplied by the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator. Childminders must also commit to on-going community training provided by the Hampshire Cluster Network.

NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network (9)

CCF Network Complaints Policy

The Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that Network childminders and parents using the Network's services are given a copy of the Network's complaints policy.

The Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that Network childminders have a copy of the Network's own appeals policy, so they can appeal against a decision, for example, not to grant Network membership.

If a CCF childminder has a complaint against a Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator, they should contact the Project Manager who will investigate the matter.

If parents or others want to complain about a Network childminder they should contact the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator and use the Network Complaints Policy. Initial contact can be made in any way, including by phone, but formal complaints should be put in writing.

Complaints from childminders, Networks Assessors, Local Authorities or anyone else receiving services from NCMA in connection with the administration of the NCMA Children Come First scheme will be dealt with using the NCMA's general complaints procedure.

NCMA Hampshire Cluster Network (10)

Code of Practice

All Childminders who accept membership to the Network will consistently work to the standards set out in the NCMA Quality Standards in addition to the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Network Childminders will abide by the Network policies and statements on:

- Recruitment¹
- Recruitment appeals procedure²
- Membership of Network³
- Appeal of Network membership⁴
- Inclusion and anti bias practice (including equal opportunities and Special Educational Needs (SEN) / Inclusion)⁶
- Confidentiality⁷
- Community childminding⁸

All Network childminders will work towards becoming accredited to claim Nursery Education Grant (NEG) or a Community Childminding service.

Childminders who are offering Early Education places for two, three and four year olds are committed to delivering a quality Early Years Foundation stage based learning environment. Well planned experiences based on children's interests will be developed in accordance with the standards specified in the 'Code of Practice on the Provision of Free Nursery Education places', following any guidance from the relevant registration authorities and with regard to current government targets and legal obligations.

Childminders delivering a Community Childminding service will ensure that they have a Community Childminding policy in place, discuss this with the parents of the children they care for and make sure that the needs of all parties are taken into account.

Network childminders will be expected to promote the Network in a positive way to parents, childcare colleagues and the community at all times. This will include participating in Network activities, attending Professional Support Sessions and Network training.

In line with the Statutory Framework for the EYFS, Network childminders will ensure that all services provided are fully inclusive and will seek to provide genuine equality

of opportunity in all aspects of their practice for children and their families, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

Each child will be given the opportunity to develop and learn according to their individual interests and ability level in a stimulating, safe and secure home based setting, where learning will be both enjoyable and challenging.

All Network Childminders will develop positive working partnerships with parents and families, based on open and regular communication. This should include the setting's prospectus detailing the ethos, working practices and policies.

Each Childminder will produce a written behaviour management policy with a positive framework of clear boundaries and limits for the behaviour of children. Any concerns or behavioural issues should be discussed in partnership with parents.

All Network childminders will respect the need for confidentiality when dealing with information about the children, families and agencies they work with.

Network childminders have a duty to report all concerns regarding the welfare of any child to Children's Services, in line with the Children Act 1989 and Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures and ensure that they comply with child protection procedures at all times. Childminders providing Community Childminding services will be given additional support by their Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator.

If a Childminder is informed that a complaint has been made against them they must inform the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator. Details of the complaint and outcome will be recorded on the individual's personal file. In all circumstances the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator will inform the Project Manager about the complaint.

NCMA Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinators will maintain strict confidentiality with regard to all members of the Networks and the children they care for. However the Co-ordinators have a duty to report any concerns regarding the welfare of any child in line with the Children Act 1989 and the local Safeguarding Children's Board.

All records held by Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinators will be kept in a lockable cabinet. Whilst travelling confidential papers will be kept in a locked case with the Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinator and never left unattended.

Childminding Development and Network Co-ordinators will follow the Hampshire Cluster Childminding Network complaints policy when dealing with complaints about a childminder's quality of care, a breach of the Statutory Framework for the EYFS.

Every effort will be made to agree mutually convenient times and dates for pre-arranged appointments and visits. Childminders are requested to endeavour to keep to these times wherever possible

NCMA Children Come First Quality Standards

Childminders who wish to join an NCMA Children Come First childminding network must first demonstrate that they meet the following Quality Standards.

1. Taking the professional approach

NCMA Children Come First network childminders:

- are registered and comply with the requirements of their registration.
- have suitable insurance cover.
- undertake relevant training.
- keep up to date with childminding regulations and legislation.
- are committed to continuing professional development.
- are willing to be assessed by an NCMA Children Come First assessor.

2. Managing children's behaviour

NCMA Children Come First network childminders:

- never slap, smack, shake, bite, frighten or humiliate a child.
- take a positive approach to managing children's behaviour.
- set clear boundaries for children's behaviour and share these with parents.
- give praise and encouragement when children live up to expectations.
- respond to unwanted behaviour appropriately, according to the child's age and level of understanding.

3. Promoting equality of opportunity

NCMA Children Come First network childminders:

- treat each child as an individual and with equal concern.
- give every child equal chances to learn and develop.
- take into account each child's age and stage of development, gender, ethnicity, home language and any disability.
- encourage children to develop a sense of their own identity and culture.
- help children to learn about cultures different from their own, and to develop positive attitudes towards people who are different from themselves.

4. Respecting confidentiality

NCMA Children Come First network childminders:

- do not share information about children and families without the permission of the family.

- only break this rule in the interest of protecting a child, when they seek advice from appropriate professionals.

5. Promoting children's learning and development

NCMA Children Come First network childminders:

- provide play activities and learning experiences suitable for each child's age and stage of development.
- support and stimulate children's social, physical, intellectual, communication and emotional development (SPICE).
- build learning into everyday activities.
- support and complement what children learn at home, school and pre-school.
- keep parents informed about their child's progress.
- keep written records of children's progress and share them with parents.
- involve parents in their children's care and learning.

6. Working in partnership with parents

NCMA Children Come First network childminders:

- know that parents are the most important people in a child's life.
- recognise that parents know their own child best.
- exchange information about each child with his or her parents.
- show respect for each family's beliefs, traditions and wishes for the care of their children.
- arrange back-up cover for emergencies.
- review contracts with parents at least once a year.
- understand children's need for ongoing care with the same carer.

7. Keeping children safe

NCMA Children Come First network childminders:

- pay careful attention to safety and hygiene.
- ensure a smoke-free environment while they are childminding.
- make detailed plans of what to do in an emergency.
- are aware of signs and symptoms of possible abuse and know what to do if they suspect a child is being abused.
- ensure their work practices help to prevent accidents and promote good health.

8. Providing good nutrition

NCMA Children Come First network childminders:

- discuss children's dietary needs with parents.
- provide children with a healthy, balanced diet.

9. Having good business practice

NCMA Children Come First network childminders:

- keep organised records of children's attendance, personal details and development.
- keep accurate written records of accidents and incidents in an accident book.
- keep detailed financial records.

10. Seeking support

NCMA Children Come First network childminders:

- seek advice from other professionals when necessary.
- take advantage of the opportunities for mutual support provided by NCMA and local childminding groups.
- take advantage of network membership to give and receive professional support.

Accredited childminders

Network childminders who wish to offer early years education must demonstrate that they meet the following additional standards:

1. Taking the professional approach:

NCMA Children Come First childminders:

- are willing to be inspected by an Ofsted Inspector (England) or ESTYN Inspector (Wales).
- have or are working towards an appropriate level 3 childcare and education qualification.

3. Promoting equality of opportunity

NCMA Children Come First childminders:

- have regard to the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs and to any additional statutory or local guidance.
- promote inclusive education.
- meet children's individual learning needs.

5. Promoting children's learning and development

NCMA Children Come First childminders:

- assess children's development through observation of and interaction with the child and through discussion with families.
- plan activities and experiences to suit each child's stage of development, building on their achievements and interests and setting individual goals.
- produce written records of children's progress and curriculum plans which can be shared with parents.
- evaluate planning and children's progress, to inform future plans.
- ensure that activities and experiences provided enable children to make expected progress according to foundation stage guidance (England).
- ensure that activities and experiences provided enable children to make expected progress towards Desirable Learning Outcomes (Wales).

10. Seeking support

NCMA Children Come First childminders:

- liaise with early years teachers or other professionals as required by the local authority.