

*Issued on behalf of Cow & Gate*

16<sup>th</sup> September 2009

**COW & GATE SEARCHES FOR NICMA'S  
ANNIVERSARY-YEAR CHILDMINDER**



Cow & Gate has started the search for a very special Childminder of the Year in this the Northern Ireland Childminding Association's (NICMA) 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

In its anniversary year NICMA is highlighting the huge impact that childminders have had over the years on the lives of children in Northern Ireland. By running the Childminder of the Year Awards Cow & Gate help to highlight that impact and the professionalism and high standards of the best childminders.

NICMA promotes quality home-based childcare and learning for the benefit of children, families and communities and Cow & Gate supports them in their work.

Natasha Quinn of Cow & Gate launched this year's award along with members of NICMA staff and a gathering of some of Northern Ireland's professional childminders and their charges.

At the launch Natasha invited parents all over Northern Ireland to nominate their registered childminder (who must be a member of NICMA) for the award which carries a first prize of £500 along with the Childminder of the Year trophy and title. As well as the main prize, there will be five runners-up prizes of £50 each along with a trophy, and the nominator of the winner will receive a £100 thank-you from Cow & Gate.

"Childminding as a profession has often been undervalued", said Natasha. "Cow & Gate aims to rectify that through the Childminder of the Year Award, which draws attention to and acknowledges the sterling work of NICMA-registered professionals and rewards the best of them.

"Working parents whose children are cared for by professional childminders know their worth to the family, to which they quickly become an important extension. They give their charges loving care, encourage the child's self-esteem, look after their health and safety, stimulate them and enter into a flexible partnership with the family. Cow & Gate is delighted to be associated with them through this award", she added.

Bridget Nodder, Director of NICMA said, “Now that we are 25 we look back over the years of the Cow & Gate Childminder of the Year Award and sincerely thank Cow & Gate for their unstinting support.

“Registered childminding is by far the most popular - and affordable - form of full-time childcare, accounting for 63% of full-time daycare places and 37% of all childcare places.

“NICMA has come a long way since 1984 when the Association was formed by a small group of childminders who recognised the need for support and professional development. Looking back over the years it is clear that childminding really has touched the lives of many thousands of families who, without the benefit of a reliable childminder, certainly would not have been able to manage their work and family responsibilities.

“In this our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year we especially encourage parents everywhere to nominate their NICMA-registered childminder for this Award.”

Nomination forms are available from NICMA, tel 02891 811015 or from Duffy Rafferty Communications, tel 028 9073 0880 or by emailing [naomi@duffyrafferty.com](mailto:naomi@duffyrafferty.com). The closing date for receipt of the completed forms is Friday October 16<sup>th</sup> 2009 and the finals of the award will take place in November.

Last year's winner of the Cow & Gate Childminder of the Year Award was Sharon Mornin from Ballymoney. This year it could be your childminder who picks up the winner's trophy and cheque for £500.



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**MEDIA ENQUIRIES: For further information please contact Kay Tombe, Duffy Rafferty Communications, tel 028 90 730880, email [kay@duffyrafferty.com](mailto:kay@duffyrafferty.com)**