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Childminders put Quality First

NICMA rolls out new quality assurance scheme for childminders

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Contact: Liz Fawcett, Liz Fawcett Consulting Tel: 028 9020 0811 or 0771 943 5662

Parents seeking quality childcare in Northern Ireland are to be assisted by an exciting new accreditation scheme for childminders here.

More than 70 childminders have already received the **Quality First** award which covers all aspects of childminding - from promoting children's learning and development to providing good nutrition.

The scheme's being rolled out across Northern Ireland by the childminders' organisation, NICMA.

NICMA's Director, Bridget Nodder, says Quality First will help to reassure and inform the many parents who want quality childcare for their children:

"Because childminders provide such excellent value for money, people can sometimes assume that they must compromise on quality.

"That's far from the truth – but we recognise that this mistaken perception does exist.

"Now parents will know that those childminders with Quality First accreditation meet the highest standards of care."

One childminder who has just received her Quality First accreditation is Sharon Shiel who looks after a total of six children - all attending part-time - at her home in Whitehead, Co. Antrim.¹

Sharon says the Quality First training programme has enabled her to develop her own childminding skills:

“Quality First has helped me in planning a really wide and varied range of activities for the children.

“While I’ve always tried to offer the best possible care for the children I look after, Quality First has certainly motivated me to continually reflect on what I provide.”

Bridget Nodder says the level of care provided by Sharon is an excellent example of the standard offered by many childminders.

“We were particularly impressed with the special relationship which Sharon forms with the children - she treats every child as an individual with their own needs and preferences.

“Those very special interpersonal skills are evident in so many childminders, and we’re confident we’ll be awarding the Quality First accreditation to many more of our members over the coming months.”

Parents who would like further information on childminders with the Quality First accreditation should call NICMA on (028) 9181 1015.

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Editor’s notes:

1. NICMA – the Childminding Association is a charity, and is the sole organisation representing childminders in Northern Ireland. 74% of registered childminders here are members. For more details about NICMA, please go to: www.nicma.org
2. **For further details and to arrange interviews, recording or filming, please contact Liz Fawcett, Liz Fawcett Consulting. Tel: 028 9020 0811 Mobile: 0771 943 5662 Sharon Shiel is happy to be interviewed and to be filmed/photographed with the children she looks after. Written permission for filming and photography has been obtained from parents of the children concerned.**