



News Release

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Childminders play key role in promoting positive mental health among children

The role childminders can play in promoting good physical and mental health among children is the focus of the Northern Ireland Childminding Association's (NICMA) annual conference.

The conference, entitled *Mind and body*, is supported by the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland (HPA) and will be officially opened by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, Patricia Lewsley.

Bridget Nodder, Director of NICMA, said: "NICMA are delighted to be working in partnership with the Health Promotion Agency to enhance childminders' skills in promoting good physical and mental health among the children they care for. Currently over 17,000 children of both pre-school and school age are cared for by childminders at any one time and the support they give to developing well rounded individuals can not be underestimated."

The *Promoting Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan 2003-2008* highlights the need for programmes which promote the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in a range of settings.

Dr Brian Gaffney, Chief Executive of the HPA, said: "We know that good mental health is associated with having a positive self-image, maintaining healthy relationships with peers and family, and developing the capacity to protect and improve mental and emotional health by increasing resilience. This needs to start at an early age and all those who care for children have an

important role to play, including parents, families, schools and the wider community.”

Keynote speaker Dr Tony Humphreys, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, said: “How young people view themselves strongly influences how they are in this world. Parents, childminders and teachers act as the mirror for young people and their response to them will determine the image young people form of themselves. Each child needs to be affirmed for their individuality, uniqueness, vast potential and giftedness by the significant adults in their lives.”

As well as having a focus on children’s mental health, the conference will provide the opportunity for childminders to attend workshops on nutrition for the early years, physical activity and providing a healthy and safe environment for children.

ENDS

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