

PE1430/C



**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL  
EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**Childcare Strategy Team**

**Title: Scottish Parliament Public Petition Response**  
**Date : June 2012**  
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**PERTH AND KINROSS AREA**

Perth and Kinross covers an area of approximately 5,286km square and has a population of approximately 150,000. Overall, the area has experienced one of the highest population growths in Scotland, placing demands on services and infrastructure. Perth and Kinross is a rural authority, comprising of many discrete areas, each with its own distinct challenges (including childcare), centred around Scotland's newest city Perth.

**CHILDMINDING SERVICES IN PERTH AND KINROSS**

- There are currently 220 childminding services in the Perth and Kinross area, providing 1254 registered places.
- 33 services provide more than 6 registered places. There are 8 where 2 childminders work in partnership and 10 employ assistants.
- The charge per hour of those who advertise charges on ChIS, (67 childminders) varies between £2.50 and £6.00, with an overall average of £3.63.
- Perth and Kinross Council actively promote childminding as a career, due to the rurality of area, to provide childcare places in small villages that cannot sustain group childcare, for example private nurseries or out of school care.

**SUPPORT OFFERED TO CHILDCARE SECTOR**

Perth and Kinross Council through the Childcare Strategy Team support childminders in a number of ways. The team is based at the Community Wing, which is a well used resource for the team and childcare professionals, hosting a number of training events and meetings in addition to being the venue for regular service delivery including, playgroup/baby club, childminders support group, and parenting classes.

Support offered includes:

- Award bearing qualifications
- CPD Opportunities
- Childminding Pre Registration Training
- Start-up Grants for childminders

- Sustainability Grants for voluntary sector groups
- Newsletters and information
- One to one support
- Childcare and Family Information Service advertise services

## **SPECIFIC QUESTIONS POSED FROM SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

### **1. What are your views on what the petition seeks?**

The petition raises some very valid points within the paper, where childminders do not operate on the same terms as pre-school nurseries or indeed private nurseries. As indicated above the majority of childminders (85%) within Perth and Kinross are registered for 6 children or less, providing a homely childcare environment for children. In agreement with the petition, these are not in direct competition and provide a different environment and experience to those of nurseries.

The petition is directed at those services with more than 6 places and who employ assistants. It has to be noted that there could be short term variations put in place to accommodate, with siblings for short periods of time, which will not be included in the response.

As an authority, we have already raised the question concerning the number of children childminders can take if they employ an assistant with the Care Inspectorate (we await a response) to ensure a consistent approach. This question was posed by a participant at a recent pre-registration course for childminding run by the Education and Children's Services, Childcare Strategy Team.

It could be perceived that services with more than 6 children running with assistants are set up as nurseries and not providing a homely environment as the definition of childminders states. It could become very difficult for a parent to differentiate between types of childcare. This is where the registration process with the Care Inspectorate becomes crucial. The service must be defined in the aims of the service and childcare to be provided, this would avoid confusion about regulations and requirements between childminding service and nurseries, and in turn the inequalities, such as changing the height of sinks and number of toilets for a nursery environment, Scottish Social Services Council registration which is not applicable for childminders.

However, this applies to all childminders, while the petition is concerned with childminding services with more than 6 children (and up to 12 children in Perth and Kinross) which could be bigger than a small nursery which has to comply with more frequent inspections and registration.

It should also be noted it is our view that clear guidance is required on regulation covering assistants in childminding settings. It should also be ensured that the service is named to reflect the type of service e.g. childminder or nursery.

Prior to any new childminder applying for registration with the Care Inspectorate registration Perth and Kinross Council and the Care Inspectorate encourage potential childminders to attend Pre-registration training, delivered by the Childcare Strategy Team. In the first week time is spent defining the type of service and the impact of running a service from home.

It should be noted that if childminders are guided in the correct direction, they should;

- While going through the registration process check with the local planning department to determine whether planning permission is required,
- submit a form to their local authority environmental health department indicating whether they require to register as a food business (Forms are included in Care Inspectorate application pack).
- Notify their home and car insurance of the nature of their new business, as this may require the policy to be changed. Arrange public liability insurance. The most common insurers used are Morton Mitchell or SCMA, this is paid for as part of the grant offered by Perth and Kinross Council Childcare Strategy Team.

The example of Business rates seems very unfair to private nurseries, it would be interesting to compare a small nursery to a childminding service registered for more than 6, as they could potentially have the same numbers of children attending. Under the current guidance and legislation, individuals could set up a large childminding service instead of a nursery and provide care for the same amount of children.

e.g. In Perth and Kinross we have a large childminding business providing 12 places and a small private nursery business providing 19 places complying to different requirements.

To conclude large childminding service could be referred to as mini-nurseries by those not familiar with terminology and definitions and it could be seen that they operate with different regulations for providing a very similar service, without some of the requirements, as this petition highlights to ensure consistency of approach.

However it should be noted that some of the points raised also relate to all childminders.

**The Committee would be grateful if you could set out how you monitor and apply the regulations and what criteria you set on childminding services in your area, particularly for those in domestic premises.**

As a local council we do not monitor childminding services, we help them to start up and provide training and ongoing telephone, email or other support by agreement.

Childminding services are monitored and regulated by the Care Inspectorate.

Should something come to the attention of the Childcare Strategy Team that raises concerns we seek the advice and clarification from the appropriate regulating bodies, including the Care Inspectorate.

As mentioned earlier, we have and continue to seek guidance and clarification regarding the regulation of childminding assistants.

Figures accurate as at June 2012