

# News Release



## **NI Childminders ‘Discriminated’ by the Department Of Education**

NICMA has today announced its disappointment at the Department of Education’s insulting payments for the childminding sector and has warned it will further anger and disappoint many childminders.

NICMA CEO Patricia Lewsley Mooney CBE comments, **“Whilst NICMA welcomes the ‘Childcare Recovery Scheme’, we need to make it clear the sector’s disappointment regarding the amount awarded to childminders. NICMA put a proposal to the Department of Education of £500 per month, per childminder for July and August 2020 equating to £2.6M of a £10.5M pot however, what is offered is less than £750,000, meaning each childminder will see a significant reduction to a mere £150 per month.**

**“Once again, the childminding sector has been discriminated against even after stepping up to the challenge during lockdown when over 50% of childminders continued to work while most of the childcare sector shut down. The payments are an insult to these childminders who put their lives and their family’s lives at risk while caring for key workers children during the recent COVID19 pandemic.**

**“Childminders are self-employed and whilst some could avail of the HMRC Scheme, NICMA’s research showed that on average, these childminders only received 20% of the maximum amount which falls way short of what is needed to keep their business afloat. For those childminders that continued to work, they received a payment from the ‘Childcare Support Scheme’ averaging only £313 per month. For those not working, Universal Credit was not necessarily an option because unfortunately, they were ineligible due to their partner/ husband/ wife’s income was above the threshold.**

**“Compare this with the fact that the day-care sector were able to furlough their staff and had an ‘Approved Home Childcare Scheme’ set up with enhanced payments. They also received help with their overheads, even when they were closed, through the ‘Small Business Support Grant Scheme’ which seen many claim the £10,000 to £25,000 grant.**

**“How can the Department of Education stand by this blatant discrimination?**

**“Despite its importance, at the beginning and through the pandemic, childcare wasn’t even mentioned by the Executive as being key to their 5 step plan until NICMA stepped in and made sure they were included. Childminders continued to deliver tirelessly for Key Workers and now even in recovery as they push towards full capacity, they have the burden of financial debt. The ‘Childcare Recovery Scheme’ is discriminatory against them yet again.**

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**“I am urging Minister Weir and his Department to give these points serious consideration and rethink his offering to an amount which is both fair and reflects what the sector has done during this pandemic. Doing so will go a long way to recognizing the vital contribution that our professional childminders make to the lives of young children, while also helping the economy.”**

NICMA’s purpose is to promote quality home based childcare and learning for the benefit of children, families and communities. If you are a childminder and want to become part of a professional body working to support and develop you in your childcare journey and want to be kept up to date with new financial help, then sign up today by either visiting us at <https://nicma.org/> or call us on 028 9181 1015.

Registered Childminding provides high quality childcare and learning within home-based settings for children aged 0 - 14 years. It is the most popular - and affordable - form of full-time childcare in Northern Ireland accounting for 61% of full-time daycare places and 39% of all childcare places.