

**National Childcare Investment Programme
2006-2010**

**NATIONAL CHILDMINDERS INITIATIVE
CHILDMINDERS DEVELOPMENT GRANTS**

**Funding Details and Guidelines
For City/County Childcare Committees**

May 2008

Transforming Ireland

**Funded by the Irish Government
under the National Development Plan 2007-2013**



What is a Childminders Development Grant (CMDG)?

The purpose of the Childminders Development Grant is to offer an incentive, in the form of a small capital grant, to Childminders to enhance and support their awareness of quality childcare.

The Childminders Development Grant is designed to assist Childminders, already providing a childminding service in their own homes, to enhance safety/quality in the service through the purchase of small capital items, equipment, toys or minor adaptation costs. It may also give financial assistance to new or prospective Childminders with their initial set up costs.

All applicants must be committed to maintaining/improving the quality of their childminding service and will be required to undergo a short quality awareness course (outline attached at appendix 1).

The City/County Childcare Committees (CCCs) will administer the CMDG at a local level. Funding will be made available to each of the CCCs specifically for this purpose – CCCs will be informed by the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) of the funding being made available to them annually for the operation of the CMDG.

Pobal will manage the transfer of funding to the CCCs on behalf of the OMC.

What funding is available under the Childminders Development Grant?

The maximum grant available to a Childminder, who fully meets the criteria of the scheme, is **90%** of total receipted eligible childcare expenditure, subject to a maximum grant of **€1,000**.

Who is eligible to apply for funding?

✓	A Childminder who is: a) Providing an existing childminding service carried out in the Childminder's home OR b) Proposing a new childminding service to be carried out in the Childminder's home
✓	A Childminder who provides/proposes to provide childminding services (not including Childminders own children) for at least : a) 3 children on a part time basis OR b) 1 child on a full time basis and 1 child on a part time basis
✓	A Childminder who has: a) Completed the prescribed Childminding Quality Awareness Programme (QAP) [Note: a Childminder may be exempt from attending the QAP if they have already completed an equivalent Childminding course. This decision may be made at the discretion of the CCC.]
✓	Must provide evidence of appropriate insurance
✓	Required to operate as a Childminder for a minimum of two years following receipt of the grant.

What conditions are associated with the CMDG funding?

- For the purpose of the CMDG, a successful applicant may be approved 1 grant only, subject to the maximum eligible expenditure referred to above.
- Where a Childminder previously received a development grant under the EOCP (during 2004-2007), this will not affect his/her ability to apply under the current NCIP (2008-2010).
- Childminders may re-apply under the NCIP scheme after 2 years, or after a shorter period if their first NCIP grant was for less than the maximum amount.
- The application for CMDG funding should be completed on the standard application form and submitted to the relevant City/County Childcare Committee.
- It is a condition of the CMDG that Childminders participate in the QAP.
- Where a Childminder is subject to the Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 they must notify the HSE about their service.
- For the purposes of the grant, Childminders who are outside the scope of the Childcare (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 will be regarded as having notified their service to their local CCC (Meath) when they have participated in the QAP.
- On the part of the applicant Childminder, no purchases should be made until grant approval notification is received from the CCC and the applicant has completed the required training.
- The Childminder is required to produce itemised original receipts for eligible expenditure.
- All grant approvals will be subject to a letter of agreement signed by the Childminder with the CCC (sample letter of agreement attached at appendix 2).
- If a successful applicant ceases to childmind within two years of receipt of grant aid, the CCC may take the necessary steps to recoup the funding in accordance with the letter of agreement with the Childminder.
- In the event that there is considerable interest in the scheme, priority will be given by the CCC to those Childminders that operate in an area of high unmet childcare demand.
- As an alternative, CCCs may provide a range of pre-paid packs of equipment and/or toys up to a maximum value of €1,000. The 90% ceiling on the amount of expenditure to be refunded will still apply e.g. a pre-paid pack valued at €1,000 will require a €100 contribution by the Childminder.

What can the grant be used for?

The grant can be used for the purchase of small capital items such as items to enhance safety/quality in the service; equipment; toys or minor adaptation costs to improve the quality of service provided. The final decision on eligible capital items will be at the discretion of the CCC. The following list (which is not exhaustive) gives examples of the different types of costs that may be covered by the grant. This list may also be used by the CCCs, where relevant, to compile pre-paid packs.

<p>Safety Costs such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire blanket • Smoke Alarms • Socket covers • Cupboard locks • First Aid Kit • Stair gates • Fireguard 	<p>Equipment or Toys such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor play and safety equipment • Indoor equipment • Appropriate toys for various age groups • Books
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The Role of City/County Childcare Committees (CCCs) in the delivery of the CMDG

The Board of the CCC is responsible for all aspects of the delivery of the CMDG including: decision making; the offer of a letter of agreement; financial transfers; monitoring and reporting of performance and expenditure; training; support and any additional reporting. The Board may choose to appoint one of its Sub-Committees to implement and make recommendations/decisions in relation to the CMDG.

The CCC will implement the financial procedures for providing small grants to third parties as outlined in the summary on file management at appendix 3.

The CCC should prepare a schedule for administering the CMDG – promotion/launch; date(s) for receipt of applications; delivery of the Quality Awareness Programme(s); appraisal of applications; decision making meetings.

The CCC should promote the CMDG at local level. The funding source is exchequer and is linked to the NDP therefore the relevant publicity requirements apply. To assist with the smooth implementation of the CMDG, advertisements etc. should highlight that application forms will be available only from the appropriate CCC (see standard application form – incl. explanatory note – at appendix 4).

The CCC is responsible for decisions on the CMDG, a clear record of decision and rating against the criteria should be kept and is subject to FOI.

Expenditure on the CMDG will be reported on a quarterly basis by the CCC to Pobal as part of the routine financial reporting arrangement. The CMDG will be reviewed and evaluated centrally (by OMC / Pobal) on an ongoing basis and CCCs may be asked to report back on the implementation of the CMDG as required.

The Application Process

- ⇒ A standard application form is supplied to each CCC - the form will be customized by the CCC to include local contact details, logos etc.
- ⇒ Completed applications will be submitted for assessment to the City/County Childcare Committee in the area where the applicant conducts or intends to conduct their childminding service. The CCC should retain a list of all applications received and should issue an acknowledgment letter.
- ⇒ The Board (or relevant Sub-Committee structure) of the CCC will assess all applications against agreed eligibility requirements and the assessment criteria.
- ⇒ The Board's decision making process will be documented and any conflict of interest noted. All documentation (including correspondence, relevant notes on assessment etc.) relating to the applications will be retained by the CCC for their records.
- ⇒ A letter advising the applicant of the Board's decision will issue.
- ⇒ Once the applicant has purchased the goods, the applicant returns the completed expenditure record sheet to the CCC with itemised original receipts for all goods purchased.
- ⇒ The CCC checks the expenditure record sheet against the original itemised receipts and, once satisfied that the expenditure is eligible and in line with the approval, authorises payment to the applicant.
- ⇒ The CCC issues the grant cheque to the applicant with an acknowledgement slip to be returned and filed.
- ⇒ The CCC will put in place a procedure for consideration of appeals by CMDG applicants e.g.
 - ✓ The grounds for an appeal should be submitted to the CCC in writing.
 - ✓ A different member of the CCC, taking into account any new material provided, should reconsider the application.
 - ✓ The Boards decision letter will issue to the applicant.
- ⇒ Records will be maintained on all applications and might include:
 - ✓ Applicant's name, address, amount requested, recommendation made (incl. applications not approved), amount recommended, drawdown dates and drawdown amounts
 - ✓ Details of the impact of each grant awarded
 - ✓ Applicants who have ceased to childmind within two years of receipt of funding.
- ⇒ Each CCC must observe the requirements of the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 and be aware of the obligations of the Freedom of Information Act 1997 and the Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2003.
- ⇒ Funding will normally be drawdown in one lump sum or at the discretion of the CCC.
- ⇒ In cases where the CCCs are providing pre-paid packs for Childminders, the CCC should define and implement an appropriate application process (based on the process outlined above).

Assessment Criteria for grant applicants

These assessment criteria are intended to assist the CCC in their appraisal of the application. The criteria are listed below with a small number of examples under each criterion.

(i) Eligibility

- Fulfilment of Criteria
- ✓ Eligibility of purchases
- ✓ Completion of prescribed training - Childminding “Quality Awareness Programme” (or equivalent training)
- ✓ The commitment of the Childminder to maintain the service for the minimum period of two years
- ✓ Costings/Value for Money

(ii) Impact

- The number of children being cared for
- The operating hours of service (hours, days, weeks)
- The extent to which the project will increase the number of childcare places particularly in areas of high unmet childcare demand

(iii) The quality of the proposal (information to be provided by the applicant):

- The level of previous Childminding/Childcare experience (including training undertaken)