



**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith
Minister for Skills**

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The Lord Storey CBE
House of Lords
London
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16 July 2025

Dear Mike,

I am writing to you to follow up on the question you raised during the Oral Statement repeat on 7 July on Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life, about the registration of childminders and the use of provision by disadvantaged families.

Unless they are exempt from registering, childcare providers – including childminders – who care for children under the age of 8, who are not close relatives and are paid to provide care for more than 2 hours a day, must register with Ofsted or a childminder agency.

For childminders registering with Ofsted, there are three registers:

- The Early Years Register is for those caring for children aged from birth to the 31 August after their fifth birthday. Providers on this register must meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework;
- The compulsory part of the Childcare Register is for those caring for children from 1 September after the child's fifth birthday up until their eighth birthday; and
- The voluntary part of the Childcare Register is for those providing care that does not need to be registered (e.g. for children aged eight and over).

As mentioned, as an alternative to registering with Ofsted, childminders can choose to register with a childminder agency which in turn registers with Ofsted on one or more of the above registers.

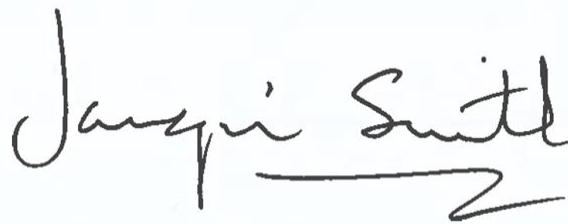
We are always looking to improve systems, and through the department's partnership with Ofsted we have agreed new improvements and efficiencies in the registration and regulation of education across all sectors. Examples include the steps set out in our Best Start in Life strategy on the frequency and quality of Ofsted inspections. I am committed to making these kinds of changes where there is evidence to do so.

Tackling the disadvantage gap is central to the Opportunity Mission and ensuring every child gets the Best Start in Life. While the plans set out in the Best Start in Life strategy will deliver stronger outcomes for all children and families, we have focused efforts in areas where there are higher proportions of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This includes where we're basing the Best Start Family Hubs, where we're focused on attracting and retaining early years teachers and record increases to Early Years Pupil Premium.

We will also work with local authorities to increase take-up of the 15-hours of early education and childcare support for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds, ensuring low-income families, children with SEND and children in care receive the support they are entitled to. We will engage directly with local authorities where take-up is lowest, supporting families through Best Start Family Hubs to take up their funded hours, addressing local variation in performance and tracking data through the new Local Government Outcomes Framework. As part of the Child Poverty strategy, we will also work with the Department of Work and Pensions to make it easier for parents to use Universal Credit Childcare and the funded hours together, helping them to access work.

Thank you again for taking the time to engage on these matters. I hope these further details have been useful and I will place a copy in the House libraries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jacqui Smith'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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