



What to look for when meeting a prospective childminder for the first time:

- **The childminder** Is she friendly and approachable? How many children are in her care? Does she divide her time equally between them?
- **Other parents** Talk to other parents who entrust their children to her care. Are they satisfied with the level of service she provides?
- **Safety** Stairs, fires, electrical appliances, open windows and easily opened doors that lead onto the street can be hazardous.
- **Cleanliness** Make sure you see the rooms to be used by the children. Beware of over-tidy areas, as a child must be given the freedom to play without worrying about knocking over an ornament.
- **Play area** How many rooms are solely for the children's use. Are they a reasonable size or small and cramped?
- **Garden** Is there a suitable play area for the summer? Check that the fence and gate are secure and that strangers can't gain access to the area in other ways. Watch out for poisonous plants and remember that even small, ornamental ponds can be dangerous.
- **Stimulating activities** Are the children encouraged to paint and draw? What other activities are on offer?
- **Toys and books** What types are available and are there enough toys to be shared by all the children? Are they in good condition?
- **Pets** Are they allowed to wander freely and without supervision? Could they pose a threat? Is your child allergic to pet hair?