

# FACTFILE: GCSE HOME ECONOMICS: Child Development



## Family Support Agencies

### Learning Outcomes:

Students should be able to:

- Explain how the following agencies support families:
  - Parenting NI;
  - The Northern Ireland Childminding Association;
  - Early Years –The Organisation for Young Children.

### Parenting NI



Parenting NI is an organisation that supports parents within Northern Ireland.

Their vision is to “provide support and resources to help parents provide a happy and safe environment in which children and young people can achieve their potential”

Parenting NI may be recommended to parents via their GP, schools, social workers or they may contact the organisation themselves for support.

Parenting NI supports parents in a number of ways:

- Free confidential helpline;
- Parents counselling services;
- Parenting Programmes.

### Confidential parents helpline

Parenting NI provides a free confidential helpline that parents can ring to speak to a team of experienced counsellors and trained professionals. They provide advice on a range of issues affecting children and families. Parents can seek advice on issues including feeding routines, potty training, behaviour management, bullying and divorce. Parents can also contact Parenting NI through their live web chat if they prefer not to speak to professionals over the phone.

### Parents counselling services

Parenting NI provides one to one counselling for parents. They can provide up to 5 counselling sessions in which they will aim to support parents. Counsellors and parents can discuss their emotions, coping mechanisms and possible measures they can take to resolve any issues they are facing.

### Provide resources

Parenting NI publish factsheets for parents on a range of topics such as potty training, bed wetting, praise and encouragement and reading with a child. These are all accessible via their website.

### Parenting education programmes

Parenting NI run a range of parenting programmes and workshops for parents. These programmes aim to support parents on specific issues which may be affecting their child and family. They also give parents the opportunity to meet other parents who are experiencing similar issues.

Parenting NI offers the following programmes.

- **Understanding your child's behaviour**  
**Aim:** To gain a better understanding of what influences children's behaviour.
- **Parenting children's challenging behaviours**  
**Aim:** To help parents understand and manage their children's challenging behaviours.
- **Fathers in families**  
**Aim:** To promote positive parenting skills to fathers.

### Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA)



NICMA is an organisation that aims to help parents find a registered childminder that will be able to meet the needs of the family and who the child will be happy with.

Parents can be confident in the care that is provided by childminders advertised by NICMA as they regularly provide training on health and safety and safeguarding children. This will ensure that the childminder they choose holds up to date qualifications and is insured to look after a child.

NICMA have a free phone helpline that parents can ring for information and advice on any queries they have in relation to childminding services.

NICMA can provide parents with information on:

- Paying for childcare;
- Employment contracts;
- Child tax credits;
- How to choose a childminder;
- Childminders that are currently available;
- Childminders that can meet the specific needs of the child, e.g. a child in a wheelchair.

#### Paying for childcare

Childcare can be a big expense for a family. NICMA supports parents by informing them of how much they can expect to pay for childcare as well as alternative methods of payment for their childcare. Childminders are self-employed therefore they can set their own fees. NICMA provide parents with an estimate however this can differ depending on the

location. NICMA also informs parents about other fees they may not have thought about, e.g. holiday pay or sick pay. This information will allow parents to make a decision about whether childminding is a cost effective method of childcare for their family. NICMA provides parents with information about using childcare vouchers and child tax credits to pay for a registered childminding service.



#### Choosing a childminder

NICMA has produced a publication guiding parents about choosing the right childminder for them. Finding a childminder that may be right for a child or family can be a difficult decision therefore NICMA provide a vacancy service via telephone or online where parents can find out which registered childminders in their area have a vacancy.

Parents can then meet with the childminder to see if the environment and childminder is suitable to meet their needs.

Parents may wish to discuss with the childminder about their training, their working hours, how many other children they may look after and behaviour management before they decide if they are right for them.

#### Employment contracts

It is vital that there is a contract of employment established between the childminder and parents. This contract will set out guidelines which will protect both parties and aim to prevent disagreement. NICMA have produced a model written contract that parents and childminders can use. This can ensure no vital aspect is overlooked.

Parents and the childminder can negotiate the terms of contract based upon what is right for both parties before it is signed. Both parties will retain a copy of this contract in case they need to refer to it at a later stage if an arrangement was to break down.

This employment contract will set out:

- Fees;
- When payments will be made;
- Method of payment;
- Extra costs, e.g. outings, food;
- Working hours;
- Holidays;
- Behaviour management;
- Complaints procedure;
- Notice of termination.

### Early Years – The Organisation for Young People



Early Years is an organisation that works to “promote and develop high quality, evidenced informed early childhood services for young children, their families and communities”

Early Years believes that parents have a vital role as the first educators for their child therefore they provide support and training for parents to help them.

Early Years can provide information on positive parenting, childcare opportunities available, what type of childcare is suitable for them and early educational opportunities.

Early Years has a website from which parents can easily access information. Parents can become a member of Early Years which means that they will have access to a range of resources and also will be able to attend events for example workshops or talks held by experts on childhood.

Early Years provides parents with information on key areas of positive parenting. These areas include:

- Getting ready for school;
- Learning through play;
- Maths through play;
- Care in the sun;
- How to make food fun.

Early Years provides training for parents and all individuals responsible for the care of young children. Training will be based on best practice and research evidence on the needs of a young child. Early Years are involved in a number of projects and services which support and educate parents.

- Sure Start.
- Eager and Able to Learn Programme.
- The Family Health Initiative.
- Media Initiative for Children (MIFC).

### Eager and Able to Learn Programme

This programme aims to work alongside parents to improve a child’s eagerness and ability to learn. The focus is put on physical play as this can help all aspects of a child’s development – physical, intellectual, social and emotional.

### The Family Health Initiative

The Family Health Initiative runs programmes to educate parents on how they can improve their family health by making changes to their diet and lifestyle.

The programme aims to help parents:

- Understand the importance of a balanced diet and make healthier food choices;
- Understand the importance of exercise and increase physical activity levels;
- Understand the physical and emotional consequences connected to obesity;
- Build the skills and confidence of parents to model healthy lifestyle choices for their child, and enable their child to lead healthy lives combining a balanced diet, physical exercise, rest and play in a sociable family atmosphere.

### Media Initiative for Children (MIFC)

This programme promotes positive attitudes towards diversity in young children and their parents.

MIFC aims to make children aware of cultural, social and physical diversity in society. MIFC wants to educate children to respect and include those in society who may be different to them and how it may feel to be excluded or bullied due to cultural, physical or social differences.

Early Years runs workshops for parents alongside producing finger puppets, story books and DVDs which parents can use at home to discuss topics such as sectarianism or ethnic minorities with their children.

### Additional Information

[www.parentingni.org](http://www.parentingni.org)  
[www.nicma.org](http://www.nicma.org)  
[www.early-years.org](http://www.early-years.org)

#### Bibliography

Parenting NI.. What We Do. Available:  
<http://www.parentingni.org/about-us/what-we-do/>

Parenting NI.  
Parenting Programmes. Available:  
<http://www.parentingni.org/professionals/parenting-programmes/>

Early Years.  
Available:  
<http://www.early-years.org/about-us/>

Early Years. *The Family Health Initiative*  
Available:  
<http://www.early-years.org/health/index.php>

### Learning Activities

#### Activity 1

Get students to carry out a vacancy search on [www.nicma.org](http://www.nicma.org) to find a childminder in their local area.

You may wish to give your students different criteria based on: The age of the child they care for, their business hours, pick up points, payment types, facilities offered or the training they have. Students must justify their choice.



## Revision Questions

1. Explain how Parenting NI may support a family.

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2. Explain how The Northern Ireland Childminding Association may support a family.

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3. Explain how Early Years may support a family.

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