

Questionnaires for children

How do you ask children for their views about your provision and the service you provide? If you complete the Ofsted SEF you will need to involve them so you can talk about the ways you have changed your provision as a result of their feedback.

Some childminders involve children in group discussions ... others give the older children questionnaires to fill in... all childminders should find ways of finding out how the children view their resources, activities etc.

All the children can tell you what they think about your provision, resources and ways of working etc. You just need to watch them when they come happily and confidently into the house in the morning and go off to play and...

- See how they want to get involved in your planned activities and games;
- Check they how they are feeling by using emotions faces or fans;
- Ask parents what they say about you at home;
- Offer them choices - do you want this or this? Should we play this game or that? Watch how they respond to you and react accordingly. You can use this for even quite small children;
- Observe what resources they are using / not using and respond to their interests;
- Find out what they like doing at home and make sure your resources, equipment and planning reflects their interests... etc.

If you want to hand out written questionnaires for older children you might give them something to fill in such as...

Child's name and age -

Date -

It is very important to me that you are happy here. Please take a few moments to tell me what you like and do not like about your time here so I can improve things for you.

- What are your favourite games at my house?
- What do you like best about being outside?
- What toys do you wish I had?

- What are your favourite foods on the menu?
- What would you like to be different about my house?
- What are your favourite outings? Where would you like to go in the holidays?

If you ask questions and encourage feedback you have to be prepared for the odd negative response! Children are generally very honest and will say what comes out of their head first without an adult 'phrase it carefully' warning attached!

Sometimes, their comments are easy to deal with -

- I want to go to soft play... but you are only here for an hour after school hunny...
- I want more fruit for snack... ok, let's chat to mummy about how much food she wants you to eat...
- I want more crafts... here's the catalogue, let's look through it together...
- I want a dinosaur in the garden... if you can't give me a sensible answer we'll move on!

Sometimes, however, you might find yourself getting a little upset or touchy about their feedback. This is when you need to take a step back and reflect on your practice - and this is exactly what self reflection is about! Think about how you might deal with the following comments -

- I don't like your food
- I only come here because daddy makes me
- I hate it here
- I am being bullied by your son
- I hate the games you plan I want to play on the Wii instead.

Similarly, sometimes things are not going well with a child. They are giving you their feedback by screaming or crying or by reacting inappropriately in situations they usually deal with elsewhere. In situations like this, you might feel it is best to call parents in for a meeting to talk through your concerns. Remember that parents often struggle to hear their child criticised, so you need to phrase things very carefully. I recommend that you have a clause in your Terms and Conditions or Behaviour Management / Settling in Policy in which you reserve the right to terminate a contract if you feel that a child's needs might be better met in a different setting.