

Case Study: Expanding a childminding business to offer wraparound care

Introduction

With the national expansion of wraparound care creating growing demand for before and after school care services, it is an exciting opportunity and key way for childminders to sustain and develop their businesses. The national programme aims to help working parents better balance their careers and childcare responsibilities, while creating significant opportunities for childcare providers. As more families look to use this childcare support, childminders are uniquely positioned to offer flexible wraparound care solutions that families need.

Childcare Works met with Lyndsey Handy, a childminder who provides wraparound care alongside her early years' service. This is what she told us about expanding her childminding business, her successes, and the rewarding nature of childminding as a career.

Lyndsey operates a childminding service from her home. She has recently expanded her business to create more wraparound places. Before expanding, Lynsey cared for a total of 28 children with the support of two childminder assistants. Since expanding, this has increased to 37 children and she is now looking into more wraparound place creation. Lyndsey works at a 1:8 ratio for her wraparound setting, and cares for mixed ages of under and over 8s. This care is available five days a week, from 7am to 6pm (or 6:30pm with pre-arrangement).

Why expand to offer wraparound care?

Lyndsey decided to offer wraparound care due to the significant demand for her services. Despite the local school providing a school-run breakfast club and using a private provider for before and after school childcare, Lyndsey still receives childcare enquiries. While there are benefits to wraparound care being offered in schools, some parents prefer a home-based environment. This motivated Lyndsey to offer wraparound care that would meet the needs of these parents and offer more choice locally.

Lyndsey also recognised that offering flexibility to parents and different types of care would help her create a more sustainable business model, and help her to follow trends in local childcare demand.

How to expand to offer wraparound care

Lyndsey expanded into wraparound care by securing both the capital grant and additional funding for the wraparound programme from her local authority. The capital grant funding enabled Lyndsey to renovate a shed in the garden into an activity room that can be used all year round - increasing the available floor space for children. This physical expansion of space allows for a variety of activities, including movie watching, colouring, and crafting. The additional programme funding enabled Lyndsey to support with staff costs.

Lyndsey notes it is important to understand what can be funded by the local authority as part of the wraparound expansion. Not everything can be funded by the local authority, and mistakes on an application may lead to it being rejected. She feels it is important to think about what can be funded – staff costs, for example – and how this saving can be used to offset other costs elsewhere. Telford and Wrekin local authority deliver childminder meetings, to help with applications and making these decisions. Lyndsey also maintains a positive relationship with the local authority with regular communication, which supported the expansion and integration of her services.

What successes has Lyndsey seen?

In order to expand, Lyndsey has created different activity areas – including expanding her provision via the activity room in her garden. Lyndsey has found that diverse activity areas contribute to a calmer environment, even during busier times. This environment is particularly beneficial for children who struggle in traditional school settings, offering them a safe and comfortable space to unwind after a long day.

The implementation of an oversupply model and upfront funding from the local authority has contributed to the success of Lyndsey's wraparound expansion. The funding provided for the activity room and staff wages has ensured that Lyndsey can open new spaces without the risk of a shortfall in staffing costs. This financial support has alleviated the pressure of relying solely on parental payments. This has given Lyndsey the confidence to pay her staff weekly, knowing she has a financial safety net. This

strategic financial backing has been instrumental in fostering a stable and thriving business environment for Lyndsey.

Lyndsey's childminding business has also positively impacted her own children who 'are happier because they've got more friends here' and feel like 'every day is a play date'. Her service has become so popular at one school that half of a particular class attends her wraparound care, with some children asking to join even though their parents do not require the service.

Childminding as a career

Lyndsey highlighted that becoming a childminder has provided her with greater agency and flexibility when working with children. She likes that she can easily adapt to create the most stimulating environments for children. Additionally, she enjoys the freedom to devise her own curriculum, tailored to the specific needs of the children she works with.

Lyndsey's Top Tips for promoting your wraparound service

1. Establish strong relationships with local schools:
 - Create working relationships with your local school, or multiple schools if your services cover more than one.
 - Request to be included in school newsletters to announce available spaces.
 - Ask schools to mention your wraparound care services during their open days for reception classes.
2. Be seen:
 - Wear a branded clothing (Lyndsey wears a hoodie) during school runs to increase visibility. Many parents may not be aware of your services and rely on grandparents or friends until they discover your offer.
3. Promote Tax-Free Childcare:
 - Inform parents about the benefits of Tax-Free Childcare by including details on your invoices each month, highlighting the potential savings if they utilise the scheme. Understanding they can receive financial assistance towards fees often encourages parents to request additional days of care.

Next steps

- Local authorities offer a range of support including training and development opportunities, support with Ofsted registration, advice on business planning, sustainability, marketing and promotion, and accessing funding. They may also provide opportunities for networking and building community. Get in touch with your local authority to find out what is available in your area and make the most of this central hub of support.
- Attracting and retaining customers is an exciting challenge when starting your childminding business. For helpful tips and guidance, [watch this supportive video on the HUB.](#)
- Having courageous conversations with parents and staff can significantly enhance your relationships. For support on how to have these discussions openly and constructively, watch [the video on the HUB.](#)
- Developing fair and transparent charging structures, as well as monitoring and reviewing these practices, can be daunting. Find the support you need [here on the HUB](#) to expand your childminding journey with confidence.
- If you are looking to expand by employing a staff member, [watch this video on the HUB](#) for actionable strategies to attract and retain high-quality staff.