

Inquiry into School Sun Protection Policy

Evidence from NCMA Cymru



Children and Young People Committee inquiry:

Sun protection for children and young people in school or childcare

NCMA Cymru response:

- NCMA Cymru welcomes any developments that will help improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. NCMA Cymru works with members to ensure they are providing the highest standards of care and learning for children.
- NCMA issues advice via its website on sun safety and provides guidelines and sample policies for registered childminders:
http://www.ncma.org.uk/childminders/your_business/policies_and_procedures/sun_safety.aspx
- Registered childminders in Wales are professional childcare providers, committed to ensuring the health and safety of children in their care. The National Minimum Standards for Regulated childcare, which childminders and day care providers are required to comply with, contain provisions directly related to ensuring safety is promoted and '*hazards inside and outside the premises are kept to a minimum*'. However neither these standards, nor the 2010 Childminding and Day care regulations, currently make any particular reference to sun safety and in that regard, current guidelines could be strengthened. Registered childminders are aware of the importance of sun safety and referencing the issue in Regulations or Standards will only strengthen awareness in this area.
- In September 2010, NCMA Cymru submitted a response to Welsh Government regarding the content of the draft National Minimum Standards for childcare providers. In that response, NCMA Cymru stated the following: '*...A related issue around safety, concerns the application of creams eg. Sun protection. Minimum standards should include some reference to childminders and parents agreeing procedures relating to the application of sunscreen. There is an important child protection element to this issue*'. This recommendation was not reflected in the final National Minimum Standards for childcare providers, which was disappointing.

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- NCMA Cymru does believe that a common sense approach must also be reflected in any guidelines. Parents and childcare providers should work together to ensure children are protected from the harmful effects of the sun whilst also ensuring children are exposed to the health and wellbeing benefits of playing outdoors and being exposed to sunlight, for example, vitamin D production.
- Registered childminders are required to comply with health and safety regulations and must be trained to ensure they understand health and safety requirements for the environment in which they work.
- National Minimum Standard 24.4 states that the registered person is responsible for ensuring that '*Children can play safely outside, through a combination of supervision and protection from hazards*'.
- NCMA Cymru believes that the option of amending the National Minimum Standards to acknowledge the need for sun safety should be explored and we would be happy to work with Welsh Government and CSSIW to agree appropriate wording for this provision. We believe registered childminders could meet any additional requirement by adding to existing policies and procedures and without the need for a significant additional workload. NCMA Cymru believes that the majority, if not all registered childminders, would already have procedures in place to deal with sun safety and would certainly all be aware of the dangers of excessive sun exposure.
- By becoming registered, childminders are already demonstrating their desire to provide a high standard of care and the majority, if not all childminders, will always take account of sun safety in their everyday outdoor activities. However, if sun safety were mentioned specifically in the National Minimum Standards it may help reinforce the messages of charities and public health bodies seeking to prevent skin cancer and associated problems due to sun exposure.
- The application of sunscreen to children clearly is an important issue in terms of protecting the wellbeing of the child, and it is vital that parents and registered childminders agree a procedure for this. Registered childminders will often spend time in the outdoors and children should be protected from the sun with appropriate cream or clothing. There are many important issues associated with this, such as who is responsible for providing sunscreen and who pays for it. In addition, the issue is further complicated by the fact that registered childminders have the freedom to take children outside if weather is good, even if a scheduled outing has not been arranged.
- NCMA Cymru would advise that parents have responsibility for either applying sunscreen prior to a child being placed with a childminder or providing sunscreen for the child in their own bag. Suncream should be a minimum of spf 15 in line with Cancer Research UK and Sunsmart though NCMA Cymru believes that the possibility of raising this minimum level for children to spf 30 should be examined. Registered childminders should ensure that their policies and procedures reflect the

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need for sun safety and that parents are asked to provide consent that registered childminders may apply sunscreen. Parents should also provide headwear / appropriate clothing for sunny weather.

- It is vital that public health messages and guidance are promoted to parents through awareness-raising campaigns. It is also important that parents and professionals are aware of their responsibilities when it comes to sun safety and this will hopefully create consistent practices across Wales.
- NCMA Cymru welcomes and supports schemes designed to improve sun safety and awareness. One example is the Caerphilly Sun Protection Guidelines for early years and childcare settings (2008) which provided resources, sample policies and guidelines for childcare providers and parents on sun safety.

NCMA Cymru background

NCMA Cymru (National Childminding Association) is a charity and professional organisation. Since 1977 we have worked with registered childminders and nannies as well as other individuals and organisations, such as local and national government, to ensure families in every community in England and Wales have access to high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support. NCMA represents 1,900 members in Wales and 38,000 across Wales and England.