

## Frequently Asked Questions - Childminders

### **What is the Bristol Standard to a childminder?**

“The Bristol Standard is a framework prepared to help Early Years settings to develop and improve the quality and effectiveness of their provision.” As a childminder you are an Early Years setting and should always be striving to improve the quality of your practice thus giving the children you look after the best quality care and best start in life.

Doing the Bristol Standard is a structured way of reflecting on the care you give to the children. It asks you to pin point and celebrate the things you do well whilst realising that there is always room for improvement and encourages you to consider what steps, however small, you can take to improve on your previous best.

*“It made me think about the way I do things and how I can improve”.*

### **Why would a childminder need to do the Bristol Standard?**

“What is the point of doing anymore paper work?” Yes, we know that there is an increasing amount of paperwork expected of childminders BUT completing the Bristol Standard can actually **save** you time. You will have all the evidence for your Ofsted self-assessment form. During the process you will also talk and learn about good practice and things like the new Early Years Foundation Stage and have small training slots that will keep you up to date and focused on new developments in childminding. All of these will give you confidence for Ofsted inspections and satisfy the training element of your professional development that Ofsted looks for.

*“It helped me in my preparation for my Ofsted visit and I am sure it helped me get a higher grade.”*

### **Who can do it?**

The Bristol Standard is very relevant to all childminders and is a useful self-evaluation tool that is both beneficial to the children you look after and yourselves.

As the Bristol Standard helps you to become reflective you need to have been childminding for at least 6 months so that you have an established practice to reflect on. It is good, however, to be familiar with the 10 Dimensions and start collecting evidence e.g. photographs, leaflets, information sheets from visits, which will be useful in providing evidence of your good practice. Other than that, anyone who can spare 2 hours a month can do it.

*“It was good to celebrate the things I do well.”*

### **How do I start?**

You can do the Bristol Standard on your own with guidance from your childminding support worker but, childminders being a modest group; find it hard to say what they are good at. Consequently it is far more fun to do it as a small group!

In Bristol, we hold monthly meetings led by a qualified teacher, one of your support workers and a childminder who is experienced in the Bristol Standard process. These are very good meetings where you get together with other childminders and have deep meaningful discussions around one dimension a month. You can then collate your paperwork and evidence at home. This is also a good place to pick up tips and ideas from other childminders.

*“Bristol Standard makes you really think about what you do.”*

### **How long does it take?**

Most people take about a year to complete it. Working on your own you can do it at your own pace but in a group we do one dimension a month with training and discussions to give you the information to complete it ready for the next Dimension the following month.

### **How much writing do I have to do?**

The paperwork you complete need only be one sheet of A4 for each dimension. It can be done on the computer or be hand written.

*“I thought I would never do it and it was an effort but I am so glad I did. It has brought new interest to my childminding and the children are definitely benefiting.”*

### **Do I need a computer?**

It can be hand written or typed just as long as we can read it. The paperwork can be copied from the folder or downloaded using the link on this website. It is best done on the computer because it is easier to alter and keep a record but it is just as acceptable to hand write it and we will photocopy it to keep a record.

### **What support will I get?**

The Bristol Standard folder contains a lot of information and questions to guide you with each Dimension and there is support for you as an individual or in groups. The Childminding Support team are trained to mentor people doing the Bristol Standard. You can choose to join the network group that is running at the time you are ready to join in. We can also support you with photocopying, presentation and in other ways.

*“I received lots of support which was invaluable. I thought I would have to do it on my own, as we are quite isolated as childminders. It was great to share good practice with other childminders.”*

### **What if I fail?**

It is important to know that submissions do not ‘fail’. Remember, it is a journey. When you have finished the Bristol Standard it goes, along with

numerous others, to a validation day. A team of validators will look at your Bristol Standard to see that it meets the three criteria:

1. Have all the 10 dimensions been covered in depth and detail?
2. Is there relevant evidence to support strengths?
3. Are the benefits to children clear and do they relate directly to the targets?

Sometimes the panel may feel that not all dimensions are covered in enough depth, that there is not enough evidence or that the benefits for children are not linked to the targets. In that instance your Bristol Standard will be returned to you with a letter that will be brought to you by your mentor, outlining any dimensions you need to look at again. You DO NOT fail but you may be asked to add more depth to your submission and resubmit for the next validation.

### **People say it takes 3 years**

This is confusion between the 'journey' of three submissions and the first submission. As the Bristol Standard asks you to make a commitment to improving your practice for some time there is a pattern of submissions necessary. You complete a full submission that may take a year to complete. At the end of that you set 3 -4 main priorities from the targets in the dimensions. After a year you do a first interim submission when you briefly report on all the targets you set and go into more detail for the main targets. You then set 3-4 more new targets. At the end of the second year you do a second interim submission reporting on previous targets but you do not set any new ones. At the end of the third year you do a complete submission again. As you become more familiar with the document and the process it becomes easier.

*"It gave me more ideas of what to do with the children."*

### **Will I find it difficult to understand?**

No, the 5<sup>th</sup> edition has been written so that it is accessible to all early years' providers whatever their starting point. There were childminders and support workers involved in the revision of the document. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need any.

*"It is really relevant to childminders especially with their own set of questions."*

### **Do I need to do dimension 7 because I do not have any staff?**

Yes you do have to do this dimension. "The staff" is you. Write about your support mechanisms and the training you have done and plan to do.