

NCMA gives MPs manifesto

By Catherine Gaunt

Childminders and the babies and children they care for gathered at the House of Commons last week to lobby their MPs and launch the National Childminding Association's election manifesto, *Childcare Choices for Children*.

The manifesto calls on all political parties to ensure parents have access to a choice of quality home-based childcare.

Speakers at the launch, sponsored by Joan Humble, chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Childcare, included Maria Miller, shadow minister for the family, and Baroness Walmsley, Liberal Democrat peer and spokesperson for children, schools and families.

NCMA president Dame Gillian Pugh said that 'every family, in every community', should have access to a childminder.

'We need to address the decline in childminder numbers,' she said. 'It's really important that we reverse this decline to meet the needs of local families.'

The manifesto highlights four key issues for childminders: accessibility, quality, affordability and recognition. It states that parents should have the option to use



Childminders and children on the House of Commons terrace

childminders to provide the fund-free entitlement places.

Dame Gillian welcomed the recognition in the Code of Practice that local authorities should provide access to childminding networks and said more investment in networks was key to continuing professional development for childminders and nannies. Childminders need to have equal access to Government support and funding, she added.

Speaking afterwards about the role childminders would play under a future Tory government, Maria Miller told *Nursery World*, 'Childminders have a critical role to play in childcare and parents need flex-

ible childcare. We've seen thousands of childminders leave the sector because of concerns about the implementation of the EYFS.

'We don't think the EYFS should stand in the way of childminders providing excellent childcare that parents want. We need to look more closely at the EYFS.'

Catherine Farrell, NCMA joint chief executive, said, 'Only with sustained and consistent support, backed by policymakers and Government, will we ensure this cornerstone of the early years workforce continues to be regarded as an essential part of the childcare choices on offer to parents.'