

Low Town Childminding Child Minding

Stirling

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
16 August 2024

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2012983423

Service no:
CS2012307580

About the service

Lynne McCulloch provides a childminding service from her property in a rural area of Stirling. The childminder is registered to provide care to a maximum of 6 children at any one time, up to 16 years of age.

The service is close to local amenities including green spaces, a farm, shops and the local school and nursery. Children are cared for on the ground floor of the family home and have access to the living room, a small additional play area, toilet and a large garden to the rear the property. Children were not using the garden at the time of the inspection as it was being renovated.

About the inspection

This was an announced (short notice) inspection, which took place on 15 August 2024 between 09:50 and 13:10. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- Spoke with one child using the service and two family's on the telephone.
- Spoke with the provider.
- Observed practice and daily life.
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

The childminder was a reflective professional and had improved outcomes since the previous inspection.

The childminders warm, friendly and caring manner helped the child feel valued, respected, loved, and safe.

Effective information sharing with families contributed positively to the childminder meeting children's individual needs very well.

The child was enabled to lead their own play and learning and was fully engaged in fun and interesting experiences that captured their interests. They benefitted from a well-resourced play area that offered high-quality resources to support them to be creative and curious.

Partnership working with families was very well established which supported children to flourish and thrive.

Children experienced a home from home environment that was clean, welcoming and furnished to a high standard which supported children to feel relaxed, safe and secure.

The child was supported to think for themselves as the childminder used highly effective use of language and questioning strategies.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

The childminder was warm, caring, and compassionate. Throughout our visit, we observed the childminder effortlessly and naturally respond to the needs of the child in their care. Sensitive and thoughtful in their approach they used kind words, smiles and love when interacting with the child which contributed to them feeling nurtured, safe, and secure.

Effective information sharing through positive relationships with families and personal planning meant the childminder knew the child very well and was supported to meet their needs. They confidently told us of the child's character, likes and dislikes and the childminder took care and attention to what the child was saying. We asked the childminder to review personal plans regularly with families, to ensure they were confident information such as emergency contacts and mobile numbers were up to date. Families should sign and date any changes to personal plans.

The child experienced unhurried, sociable, and relaxed high-quality mealtimes. Families supplied children's main meals, which contained healthy food options, which were plated for the child, so they could choose what they ate. The childminder provided snacks which were healthy and nutritious. At snack time, the child proudly showed us a cucumber, they told us they had planted the seeds and helped care for and grow the cucumber. The childminder praised the child's efforts as they confidently sliced through the cucumber with support. The child told us, 'This is juicy'.

The child's rights were supported as personal care routines were carried out in a calm and sensitive manner. We highlighted to the childminder washing the child's hands following intimate care routines, would contribute to minimising the risk of infection further.

Children were kept safe from harm as the childminder was aware of her responsibility to safeguard children. The childminder had completed appropriate child protection training and had a good understanding of the process, should any wellbeing concerns arise. We suggested that they review their policy and highlight actions they would take, should an allegation be made concerning a member of their family living in the home (see area for improvement 2 in quality indicator 3.1).

Children attending the service at the time of our inspection did not require any medication, we found the childminder knew their responsibility regarding the safe administration of medication. This meant that if children did require medication, we were satisfied this would be administered safely.

1.3. Play and learning

The childminder saw the child in her care as an individual with unique strengths and interests. They provided experiences that were responsive to their current interests which captured their imagination and curiosities.

The child's early literacy, language and numeracy skills were very well supported through interesting and fun resources. We saw the child excitedly ask the childminder to play a wooden magnetic fishing game. The childminder and child laughed as they picked up the different coloured fish. The childminder skilfully used effective questioning to encourage the child to think for themselves and support their colour and number recognition skills.

The child was achieving as observations of their experiences captured their progress and achievements. The childminder was knowledgeable about each child's capabilities and how they could support them to succeed. For example, we observed the child playing contently in the living room, using tongs to colour match small dinosaurs into coloured bowls. This activity was provided to support the development of their fine motor skills as recorded in their personal plan. Identified next steps in play and learning were age and stage appropriate and measurable which supported children to progress well. Families told us they felt well informed about their child's development. As a result, children were achieving, happy and confident.

The childminder could confidently discuss the benefits of outdoor play. At the time of the inspection, the childminder was renovating their large garden and told us children did not currently access this space as they did not feel it was safe. However, children were given other opportunities to engage with their natural environment and wider communities. They regularly visited a nearby park, local farm, and safari park. The childminder and child socialised with other local childminders and children at a soft play venue. These activities provided children with positive health and wellbeing experiences and enhanced their connections to their local and wider communities.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

2.2. Children experience high quality facilities

The childminders home was clean, tidy, welcoming, and furnished to a high standard which provided children with a homely environment. The child confidently moved between the dedicated play area and living room, which was thoughtfully laid out. This told us the child felt secure in the childminders home and provided them with a stimulating and comfortable space in which to play and learn.

The child benefitted from a wealth of resources that were neatly presented in the play area which provided them with choice and opportunities to be creative, imaginative, and problem solve. A very good provision of natural, real-life experiences and open-ended resources enabled the child to explore, be curious and promoted a sense of wonder in their play. For example, the child showed great interest in a jar of large buttons the childminder had covered with different textures and materials which supported their sensory development.

The childminder routinely checked the house before the arrival of the children and some risk assessments were in place to minimise potential hazards and meet children's needs. We highlighted to the childminder some areas of practice required to be risk assessed. For example, arrangements for children that require a sleep and travelling in the car. The childminder was aware further work was required to ensure children's safety at all times while attending the service (see area for improvement 1). More information can be found in section 'What the service has done to meet requirements we made at or since the last inspection'.

Children were kept safe as the childminder had developed a good understanding of our SIMOA (safety, inspect, monitor, observe, act) keeping children safe campaign and how this supported them to ensure children were accounted for at all times. Preventative measures had been enhanced since the previous inspection. For example, an extra gate had been added to the outdoor area to prevent children leaving the garden unaccompanied by an adult. Pictures of SIMOA the elephant had been added to doors leading from the home to outside which supported children to stop and think about going outside without an adult.

Children experienced a safe environment as appropriate infection prevention and control procedures were in place. For example, the childminder gently reminded the child to wash their hands, before eating. Household cleaning that could be managed without impacting on time with the child was routinely undertaken. Additionally, a contracted cleaner attended on a day there were no children attending the service. These approaches ensured the environment was clean, tidy, and helped minimise the spread of infection.

The childminder was a member of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) which meant they were knowledgeable on keeping children's information confidential and stored it securely.

Areas for improvement

1. To keep children safe and healthy the provider should ensure risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current guidance and best practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.19).

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

3.1. Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The childminder confidently spoke to us of their love of the children they cared for and how their approach to childminding ensured children and family's needs and wishes were met. It was evident the children were cared for in a respectful and nurturing environment. Families told us, 'Lynne is brilliant, so motherly, loving and caring', 'A home from home, my child jumps into her arms, and 'Lynne really listens to children, she has a way of talking to them which makes them feel it's all about them, we're so glad we have her in our lives'.

Parents we spoke with were happy with their daily conversations and the informal approach to feedback. However, we suggested ways in which a more formal approach could be undertaken to gathering views of both children and families and how these could be used to improve the service. This would contribute to everyone being involved in the development of the service, and their opinions and views helping to inform and influence positive change (see area for improvement 1).

The childminder demonstrated a reflective approach to running their service. An improvement plan was in place which assisted them with priorities and timescales. We suggested ways in which progress with priorities could be clearly recorded and monitored further.

The childminder was conscientious and committed, had improved since the previous inspection, and could confidently discuss future improvements. To support them with continuous improvement we signposted resources available on the Care Inspectorate Hub. For example, the bitesize sessions on quality improvement, Your Childminding Journey and A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding, and school-aged childcare. We asked the childminder to consider these documents and the areas for improvement identified within this report to assist them on their improvement journey.

The childminder was aware some policies and procedures needed to be reviewed to align with current guidance, and we found policies and procedures available were limited. We advised the childminder to continue to develop a range of policies and procedures to fully underpin the service they were providing (see area for improvement 2). Further information can be found under 'What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection'.

Areas for improvement

1. To support continuous improvement of the service, the provider should develop systems to gather the views of children and their families to self-evaluate their service and use this information to inform service improvements.

This is to ensure the quality of care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am actively encouraged to be involved in improving the service I use, in spirit of genuine partnership'. (HSCS 4.7)

2. To support children and families in what to expect from the service and to inform and improve practice the provider should review and update their policies and procedures in line with relevant best practice documents.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice'. (HSCS 4.11)

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

4.1. Staff skills, knowledge and values.

The childminder confidently discussed how their practice and improvement planning was underpinned by the United Nations Conventions on the rights of the Child (UNCRC), and the Health and Social Care Standards: My support, my life. We observed a close bond between the childminder and child who experienced high quality nurturing interactions which enabled them to feel that they belonged, loved and safe.

The childminder kept her professional knowledge to date through emails and updates from the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA), and the Care Inspectorate. Additionally, they had formed positive working relationships with other local childminders. The childminder told us, how they valued their support which enabled reflective practice and was helpful for sharing ideas and participating in professional discussions.

The childminder had formed positive relationships and strong attachments with children's families. Parents we spoke with told us, 'We are so happy Lynne is looking after our child' and 'We have used different childcare over the years, and when you see something special you want to keep it'.

The childminder was knowledgeable on how children develop and learn. They had undertaken a professional qualification and continually reflected on their practice. They were committed to learning and sought out development opportunities through self-directed reading and research. For example, they read articles on children's behaviours and watched webinars on child development. The childminder explained how a reflective practice course had benefitted them with the self-evaluation of the service, and they now needed to find the time to put it into practice. This demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and to providing high quality experiences for children and families. We highlighted that the childminder might find keeping a learning log helpful, to clearly record their reflections and support them to identify where future training may be needed.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 6 November 2023, the provider must ensure they keep children safe and healthy by ensuring in the event of a serious incident, relevant action is taken within an appropriate timescale.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

a) Ensure relevant policies and procedures are clearly documented to support action to be taken in the event of a serious incident. This is to include the implementation of a lost child procedure.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed. (HSCS 4.23)

This requirement was made on 20 July 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

The childminder had undertaken a lot of reflection and research on serious incident's and the process they are required to follow in such an event. We discussed preventative measures that had been put in place since the previous inspection and reviewed policies and procedures aligned with serious incidents including a lost child policy. These documented with timescales actions the provider would take in sequential order should this occur. The provider had undertaken a course delivered from The Scottish Childminding Association to support them with future reflective processes.

Met - within timescales**Requirement 2**

By 6 November 2023, the provider must ensure they keep children safe and healthy by ensuring risk assessments are effective and working as planned.

To do this, the provider must, at a minimum:

- a) Ensure risk assessments include effective monitoring and suitability of entrance and exit areas.
- b) Ensure risk assessments include effective monitoring and safety of the hot tub when minded children are present.
- c) Ensure risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current guidance and best practice.
- d) Ensure risk assessments meet the current needs of the children in their care.
- e) Ensure risk assessments are effectively implemented.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My environment is secure and safe'. (HSCS 5.19)

This requirement was made on 20 July 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

To met this requirement the provider had added a gate with a lock on the opposite side from their garden to a shared area, as a preventative measure on children leaving the garden without adult supervision. The provider was knowledgeable on our SIMOA campaign and had added pictures of SIMOA the elephant, to exit door from the property to the garden to raise awareness of safety with children. Risk assessments had been reviewed however, some still contained limited information on how the provider would keep children safe. We found some areas of service provision required a risk assessment. Therefore we have reinstated parts of this requirement as an area for improvement under Quality indicator 2.2.

At the time of the inspection, children were not using the garden for outdoor play as the provider was renovating parts of it and felt it unsafe for children to play in, therefore they did not play near the hot tub. We observed a new template the provider was going to use, to risk assess all areas of service provision that required risk to be reduced, we agreed that this template would further support them in keeping children safe.

Met - within timescales

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good

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