

# Coull, Flora Child Minding

Peebles

**Type of inspection:**  
Announced (short notice)

**Completed on:**  
28 August 2024

**Service provided by:**

**Service provider number:**  
SP2010976989

**Service no:**  
CS2010237191

## About the service

Flora Coull is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 6 children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's family.

The childminder had submitted a variation to remove this time limited condition of registration.

The service is close to local primary schools, parks and other amenities. The children are cared for in the living room, kitchen, hall and toilet. The shared garden is accessed through a communal stairwell.

## About the inspection

This was a short notice announced inspection which took place on Wednesday 28 August 2024 between 10:30 and 12:20. 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 three children using the service
- received on line questionnaires from four families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children experienced nurturing, caring interactions.
- The childminder knew children's routines, needs and interests well.
- Incorporating more natural resources and loose parts play would further enhance children's experiences.
- The childminder had created a relaxed, homely and welcoming atmosphere.
- Parents and children thought highly of the childminder.

## 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?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - 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.

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

The childminder demonstrated a warm and caring approach towards children, fostering an environment where they felt comfortable, relaxed, and loved. Their nurturing approach was evident as the childminder offered cuddles, encouragement, and reassurance. The childminder's responsiveness and sensitivity to each child's individual needs were valued by both parents and children. One child expressed, 'I feel close to her and can talk to her about anything, to have a laugh or a cry if I need to,' while another shared, 'I love Flora because she cares for us and she makes me feel safe.' Parents echoed these sentiments, with one stating, 'My child absolutely adores Flora, as do I,' and another noting, 'Flora is like a third parent to our kids with the love and care she provides. We feel incredibly fortunate to have her as our childminder, and our children absolutely love her.' This confirmed the childminder's dedication to creating a loving and supportive environment that has left a lasting, positive impact on both the children and their families.

Families were kept informed about their child's care, play and learning through regular discussions and technology, which parents appreciated, noting the 'open' and 'humorous' communication. However, whilst parents were complimentary of the engagement, only one parent felt welcomed into the childminder's home on a regular basis to discuss their child's needs. The childminder suggested that drop-off and pick-up at the door helped children settle better. The childminder was receptive to our suggestion to refer to the Care Inspectorate's practice note 'Me, My Family, and the Childcare Setting (2024)' to help them understand how to further support attachment security, and routinely involve parents more effectively.

Because the childminder knew children's routines, needs and interests well, they spoke with affection and confidence about each child and how they supported and met their needs. This was echoed by a parent who told us, 'From conversations it is clear that she knows my child as well as I do which is such a great thing when leaving your child with someone'. Personal plan folders included important family information, wellbeing needs assessments and questionnaires for older children. These were completed with families, as confirmed by all parents who said they felt fully involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan. The childminder was aware that some personal plans needed to be updated and was appreciative of our conversation about how families could become even more involved whilst ensuring paperwork was not too demanding. This would help the childminder ensure that personal plans were meaningful working documents that inform children's care, play and learning.

Children enjoyed eating together in a relaxed, unhurried atmosphere, fostering a caring and positive social experience. While parents provided their child's lunch, the childminder supplemented it with healthy snacks throughout the day. A child shared, 'The food is yummy'. To ensure children remained hydrated, fresh water was always available. The childminder would soon begin preparing meals for the children, a change that had been communicated to parents via chats and online posts, along with a sample menu of food choices. To ensure a healthy and balanced diet, the childminder intended to follow best practice guidelines, such as those in the 'Food Matters (Care Inspectorate 2018)' documentation. This approach would support the children's overall wellbeing and help instil good eating habits, making mealtime an even more enjoyable and beneficial part of their day.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

During the inspection, it was evident that the children we met felt comfortable and engaged, happily playing with their chosen toys. With knowledge of each child, the childminder regularly updated the experiences and spaces based on their interests. This was confirmed by a parent who told us, 'Flora asks the kids for suggestions and ideas of things they want to do or places they'd like to go. Activities are always appropriate for the youngest child'. This supported children to feel valued as they saw their interests reflected in the experiences that were provided.

The childminder provided a balance of both planned and spontaneous activities, such as, painting, baking and sensory experiences. A parent summed up this empowering approach by telling us, 'She totally has the kids' interests at heart and cares for them so well'. This approach helped engage children's imagination and enrich their play and learning.

Following children's ideas, the childminder and children had grown tomatoes, chillies, peppers, and strawberries, along with various plants and flowers to attract bees and butterflies. This hands on experience taught children valuable gardening skills, strengthened their connection to nature, and deepened their understanding of the importance of caring for the world around them.

The childminder's practice of collecting natural materials from the woods for children to use fostered creativity and imagination. Expanding on this approach by incorporating more natural resources and loose parts play into the setting would further enhance children's opportunities for imaginative play and problem-solving, enriching their learning experiences.

The childminder provided opportunities for children to enjoy the natural outdoor environment through walks to parks, and other places of interest within the local community and further afield. This supported children's overall development, as confirmed by parents who told us, 'Sometimes when my kids are the only kids she has, she goes for more adventurous activities like paddle boarding in the shallows at a local loch' and 'My kids are involved in cultural visits, outdoor activities like walks, eating out to encourage good behaviour in a social setting, baking and crafts. As they have got older, they also learn about being safe around the younger children in Flora's setting'. Such opportunities enhanced children's play and learning through strong connections to their own and wider community.

### 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.

### Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience quality facilities

The homely environment sent a strong message that it was a place where children would be loved and could have fun. This didn't go unnoticed when asked about the most positive aspects of their child's experiences in the childminding service, a parent noted, 'The loving, caring environment Flora provides - it's a home from home'. This further demonstrated the childminder's ability to create warm and nurturing spaces for children.

Children benefited from being able to move safely and freely between the living room and play area in the hall, which encouraged independent play and choice of resources. The living room dining table supported a

range of activities and meals, while the cosy couches provided a comfortable space for relaxation and reading, contributing to an engaging environment.

The shared rear garden offered children opportunities for physical outdoor play, planting, growing, and sand play. Combined with regular outings, these experiences promoted physical development, creativity, and a connection with nature, enhancing children's overall wellbeing. Outdoor play was part of the daily routine regardless of the weather, as confirmed by a parent who noted, 'Flora has an outdoor space at home but also takes the children to the park or on walks around our local countryside spaces. A bit of wind or rain is no barrier to a day of play outside!'

Overall, the setting and equipment were safe, secure, and well-maintained. We discussed areas where infection prevention and control practices could be strengthened, such as the introduction of a changing mat and the creation of a designated cooking area, especially with the childminder planning to prepare meals. The childminder was very receptive to these suggestions and promptly purchased a changing mat on the day of the inspection. Additionally, the childminder planned to contact the Food Standards Agency to ensure that their training and knowledge were current. These measures would further promote children's overall well-being, health, and safety.

## How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

### Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Before starting in the setting, the childminder provided families with verbal and written information within a handbook about their family, home and childminding service, including copies of policies. This practice was important as it ensured transparency, helped parents understand the environment their child would be in, and set clear expectations from the start. As a result, parents were well informed and could be confident about the care their children would receive, fostering trust and open communication from the beginning.

Parents provided highly positive feedback to us about the childminder describing them as 'an open communicator', 'just brilliant', 'caring deeply about their work', 'trustworthy', 'reliable' and 'loving'. One parent told us, 'My kids absolutely love her. They often call her "Mum" and call me "Flora"'. When asked what could be improved, parents had no suggestions with all strongly agreeing that they had a strong connection with the childminder. They told us their opinion was asked for and were confident in stating their views about the service should the need arise. This positive feedback reflected a high level of satisfaction and trust, contributing to a supportive and confident partnership between children, families and the childminder.

The childminder used a closed and private online platform page to update parents on their children's experiences, share photos of outings, and communicate policies, events, and news. This approach helped parents stay informed and reassured about the quality of care, experiences, interactions and spaces their child was engaged in within the setting and beyond.

Gathering feedback through settling-in and leaving questionnaires helped the childminder continuously improve the service provided. This approach allowed for insights into the parents' and children's experiences, helping to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement, ensuring the service provided met the needs and expectations of families.

The childminder had recently carried out self-evaluation of their service meaning they assessed the quality of care and planned for improvements. The writing of an improvement plan gave information on how the childminder planned to improve the service. Improvements included making the toy cupboard more organised for children to self select from, complete child protection training when the current one lapsed and to make a planning book for children to engage more in the planning of experiences on offer. This coupled with the suggestions we made on inspection would help develop the setting further.

## How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

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

### Quality indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

With a positive attitude toward developing their skills and improving outcomes for children, the childminder demonstrated a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Completion of core training, including child protection, first aid and food hygiene contributed to the safety and wellbeing of children. This commitment to continuous learning helped enhance the childminder's knowledge, resulting in improved outcomes for children.

Meeting other childminders and being a member of the Scottish Childminding Association supported the childminder to keep up to date with new developments and explore topical issues. This showed a dedicated approach with a commitment to ensuring positive outcomes for children and their families. We signposted the childminder to the Care Inspectorate bitesize videos and best practice documents on the Hub. This would support the childminder to further update their knowledge of current best practice.

Parents and children thought highly of the childminder who was clearly loved by children and their family. A parent commented, 'I chatted to my children once about stopping using Flora as they get older and they all got quite upset at the thought of not going!' The childminder was warmly invited to special occasions, including a child's birthday celebration, where, at the child's request the childminder prepared the child's favourite meal and joined them and their family to all eat together. Additionally, they devoted their own time to support children in activities outside of regular care, highlighting a commitment and personal involvement in families lives'. This was summed up by a parent who told us, 'Flora is more than my childminder. She has become a great friend and confidant. I can talk to her and ask her about anything. She has given me great parenting advice when I've turned to her for help'. This approach and feedback reflected the childminder's values of dedication, care, and a genuine desire to positively impact on the children's lives'.

## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

### Areas for improvement

#### Previous area for improvement 1

Children's personal plans should be reviewed to include observations and next steps in each child's health, wellbeing, learning and development.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 3 - Health and wellbeing, Standard 4 - Engaging with children.

**This area for improvement was made on 15 September 2016.**

#### Action taken since then

The childminder had set up a system for personal plan reviews which included next steps in children's overall development. This coupled with daily diaries of children's routine and experiences helped keep parents updated on their child's development. The childminder was aware that some children's personal plans were due to be updated.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

#### Previous area for improvement 2

The childminder should review and update the self-assessment to reflect the good work she does.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 13 - Improving the service.

**This area for improvement was made on 15 September 2016.**

#### Action taken since then

Whilst this no longer is a requirement from the Care Inspectorate, the childminder had evaluated their setting and developed an improvement plan.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

#### Previous area for improvement 3

The childminder should arrange to do training on elementary food hygiene and infection control.

National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 3 - Health and wellbeing, Standard 13 - Improving the service.

**This area for improvement was made on 15 September 2016.**

#### Action taken since then

Following the previous inspection, the childminder had completed this training.

**This area for improvement has been met.**



## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://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	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	4 - Good

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