

Macdonald, Linda Child Minding

Crieff

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 November 2024

Service provided by:
Macdonald Linda

Service provider number:
SP2003905338

Service no:
CS2003009931

About the service

Linda MacDonald provides a childminding service from a semi-detached property in a residential area of Crieff. The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children up to the age of 16.

The service is close to local schools, park, amenities and local bus route. The children are cared for in the kitchen/diner, lounge area and downstairs bathroom. Children also have access to an enclosed rear garden.

About the inspection

This was a short announced inspection which took place on 21 and 22 November, between the times of 12:30 and 15:00. 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:

- observed the young child attending
- received 2 completed questionnaires from parent or carers
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

Children benefitted from responsive and nurturing relationships, which contributed to children remaining happy and relaxed.

Children were cared for in a welcoming and homely environment.

Frequent use of the wider and local community and green spaces promoted children's identity and supported children's physical and social wellbeing.

Basic quality assurance processes were beginning to promote continuous improvement.

The childminder used a wealth of experience to support children's needs. They attended core training to develop their practice.

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

Children were nurtured through daily experiences. The childminder was caring and respectful to children. The childminder was mindful to give them time to process information, which supported them to make their own decisions and share age-appropriate responsibilities. All parents told us that they strongly agreed that they had a strong connection with their childminder. This resulted in children being content and thriving within a safe and caring environment.

All children had personal plans that reflected key information about their care needs, likes and dislikes. Parents completed these when their children first joined the setting. All parents told us that they felt the childminder communicated well. This enabled them to regularly discuss their child's needs and to share any necessary changes to their children's care and support. For example, one parent told us that, "We always talk about my child's development and keep each other updated regarding new habits". This information was not always formally recorded within children's personal plans, resulting in some information being out of date and inaccurate. We signposted the childminder to the 'Guide for providers on personal planning, Early Learning and Childcare' guidance to support effective personal planning.

Children were fully supported to have periods of rest and sleep, as and when needed. The childminder was attuned to children's cues and was responsive to their needs. This impacted positively on children's health and wellbeing.

Mealtimes were a nurturing, relaxed experience. The childminder was mindful of children's needs and supported them to eat at a time that was right for them. This supported healthy eating habits and respected children's choice. The childminder sat and chatted with children as they ate, providing a positive social mealtime. Children were supported to take part in baking and cooking activities. This promoted independence and supported the development of lifelong skills.

Children were kept safe because the childminder had a very good understanding around safeguarding children. Appropriate procedures were in place and they understood the importance of safe storage and administration of medication. Whilst no children required medication to be routinely administered, an appropriate policy and recording system was in place if needed.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun playing through a good balance of planned and spontaneous play and learning experiences. The childminder took time to arrange toys which followed children's interests and development needs. They enjoyed playing with a guitar and exploring the outdoor environment. The childminder used their knowledge of children's development to introduce engaging activities for children. This supported children to experience good quality play and learning.

The childminder used skilled interactions to challenge and motivate children. The childminder was responsive to their cues and recognised when it was best to intervene or when to provide support that enable them to achieve on their own. This enabled children to build confidence and resilience.

Children were supported to reach their potential. The childminder discussed children's play and learning with their parents, sharing ideas and achievements. Children's progress was captured informally, through conversations with parents and text messages. We found that this supported collaboration between children, parents and the childminder to ensure children thrived.

Children's needs and interests influenced their play and learning experiences. One parent told us, "[The childminder] has listened to our child's needs and tried different things [to support them]". This supported achievement and enabled children to reach their full potential.

Children had the opportunity to visit various places in the community, including play parks and various playgroups. This helped to extend their play and learning opportunities and to socialise with other children. Parents expressed that they were very happy with the experiences their children received. One parent told us a positive aspect of their child's experiences was, "the opportunity to play and engage with other children. [My child] has developed a strong relationship with the childminder and looks forward to going".

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 high quality facilities

The childminder's home was clean, cosy and welcoming, which provided a homely environment for the children. There was good natural light, with ample space for children to move around, play and learn in. Children had access to a living area that included comfortable chairs to sit and relax together. This demonstrated to children that they were valued and promoted an inclusive ethos within the service.

Setting's indoor and outdoor environments were developmentally appropriate spaces. Parents were happy with the service. One commented that their child enjoyed, "Playing with the other kids, the cat and going to different groups and community activities". This enabled children to receive positive outcomes.

The property was well maintained indoors and outdoors. A new fence had been installed to ensure the property was fully enclosed and secure. This offered children a safe space to play and enjoy fresh air. Children also benefitted from visits within their local community, for example, libraries and playgroups. This broadened children's experiences and enabled them to build on their social skills.

The childminder carried out regular risk assessments and visual checks to identify and minimise hazards within the environment. The childminder used their very good knowledge of the children to adapt the space depending on their individual needs, age and stage of development. This supported children to explore their abilities in a safe, well-maintained environment.

Infection control measures met current best practice. The childminder used personal protective equipment when required. Children were encouraged to wash their hands at key times of the day, reducing the risk of spread of infection. Some spaces that children accessed were cluttered, potentially reducing the effectiveness of cleaning carried out. The childminder agreed to consider where spaces could be better organised.

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

The childminder provided a service that met the needs of individual children and families they cared for. Holidays and planned time away were well considered and families were supported with patterns of care they required. There was an emergency procedure in place with another childminder. This ensured that children and families were provided with consistent care and kept safe in the event of an emergency. One parent told us the childminder, "is really reliable and flexible, we trust them and are really thankful for the attention and care [the childminder] gives to our child".

Aims and values were in place and reviewed regularly with older children and parents. Regular check ins with parents provided opportunities for them to share their views and opinions. For example, one parent told us, "[The childminder] is always really welcoming and open to discuss new ideas". This allowed children and parents to influence the care they experienced and feel valued.

Families were meaningfully involved and influenced change within the setting. Their needs and wishes were highly valued as part of decision making. Parents told us, "We can always ask for what we need". The childminder would often adapt their service to accommodate these needs, for example, extending operating hours to support working families or dropping children at home to save parents and children walking in poor weather conditions. This promoted positive partnership working with families to ensure that the service was right for them and their child.

The childminder was informally self-evaluating the service at a basic level. This enabled them to identify progress and recognise strengths and areas for improvement. For example, when attending groups, these were evaluated to ensure they were developmentally appropriate for children. Children's views were taken into account and changes were made when necessary. This demonstrated a commitment to continually improving practice and valuing feedback from those using the service. The childminder did not use quality audit tools or keep a reflective diary. This would enable them to focus on goals and provide more opportunities to identify strengths and areas for improvement. We signposted them to 'A Guide to Self-Evaluation' to support the further development of their reflective practices. **(See Area for improvement 1)**

The childminder regularly engaged in professional discussions with other childminders. This allowed them to reflect on their practice and share improvement ideas. Through these discussions the childminder identified further training they had planned to complete. This ensured outcomes for children were continually considered to support them to meet their full potential.

Areas for improvement

1. To support improvement to the service and ensure good outcomes for children, the childminder should ensure formal quality assurance systems, including the use of quality audit tools, are put into practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

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: Skills, knowledge and values

Children's wellbeing was supported through the childminder's kind and nurturing approach. This ensured that children and families felt safe, valued and respected. The childminder had a clear understanding of how children learn and develop. They were kind and patient when interacting with children. Parents strongly agreed that they felt they had a strong connection with the childminder. They told us, "I couldn't fault my childminder, we are really happy and so is our child". This positively impacted children's overall wellbeing and helped them to feel loved, valued and secure.

The childminder had a wealth of knowledge and experience of caring for children. They kept their practice up to date through emails and updates from the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and the Care Inspectorate. They had positive links with other childminders and this encouraged the sharing of good practice and ideas. This also provided the childminder with a good network of support, which further enhanced good quality practice and experiences for children.

Children were at the heart of the service. Parents told us they were always welcomed into the childminder's home to discuss their child's care, play and learning. The childminder carefully considered their needs, likes and interests to support improvement within the service. We shared the benefits of keeping a reflective diary to enable them to focus on goals and provided more opportunities to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Overall, the childminder had a positive, enabling attitude that effectively used changing needs and feedback to improve the care children experienced.

The childminder showed some reflective practice that positively impacted children. They understood the importance of reflecting on their own professional development to ensure they provided a good standard of care, play and learning. A record of training and a clear action plan were not in place. This reduced opportunities to effectively reflect on learning and measure the impact on children's care, play and learning.

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

To support improvement to the service and ensure good outcomes for children, the childminder should ensure quality assurance systems, including the use of quality audit tools and self-evaluation, are fully embedded into practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 12 June 2023.

Action taken since then

The childminder was able to discuss how they self-evaluated the service. This enabled them to identify training needs, children's progress and recognise strengths and areas for improvement. We found that children's views were taken into account and changes were made when necessary. This demonstrated a commitment to continually improving practice and valuing feedback from those using the service. The childminder did not use quality audit tools or keep a reflective diary. This would enable them to focus on goals and provide more opportunities to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

This area for improvement has not been met.

A area for improvement remains in place within 'Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well' of this report.

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	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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