

Croll, Eleanor Child Minding

Auchterarder

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
14 January 2025

Service provided by:
Eleanor Croll

Service provider number:
SP2018990006

Service no:
CS2018368008

About the service

Eleanor Croll provides a childminding service from her detached property in the town of Auchterarder, Perth and Kinross. The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of five children up to 16 years of age.

The service is close to the local primary school, parks and town centre. The children are cared for within the open plan kitchen/diner/living room and have access to the downstairs toilet. Children sleep in an upstairs bedroom and have access to an enclosed garden to the rear of the property.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13 and 14 January 2025. 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 two children using the service and two of their family members
- spoke with the provider
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, calm, and caring interactions from the childminder which helped them to feel valued, respected, and loved.
- Strong relationships with families had been built which created a welcoming and inclusive ethos within the service.
- Children benefitted from a wide range of experiences which captured their interests and supported them to achieve.
- The childminder was skilled in supporting children through effective use of language and questioning strategies.
- Children were supported to be active and enjoy physical play.
- The childminder was confident and well organised and had improved outcomes for children and families since the previous inspection.
- Families were confident that the childminder had the appropriate skills, knowledge, and experience to care for their children and valued the flexible and supportive approach of the childminder.
- The childminder should further develop their approach to self-evaluation to enable them to plan for continuous improvement.

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?	5 - Very 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 had developed positive attachments with the childminder and were settled, comfortable and confident in the childminders home. We observed kind and caring interactions as the childminder sensitively listened to their requests and responded warmly to children with cuddles. This helped children feel safe, secure, and loved. It was evident they were relaxed and happy in the childminders care.

The childminder had established trusting relationships with families and met children's care and support needs through effective information sharing. Personal plans were reviewed regularly with children and parents which meant the childminder was knowledgeable on children's circumstances, likes and preferences. Daily information sheets were sent home of their children's rest times and food intake and a digital platform was used to share photographs of the day's activities. This meant families were regularly updated on their child's wellbeing which contributed to children and families feeling fully supported. Parents we spoke with told us, "We get regular updates and always asked to review our child's information' and 'I really like the daily form that is put our bag, it's informative and helps if I haven't collected (Childs name)."

The childminder offered children home cooked meals that were well balanced and nutritious, some children brought their own meals from home. Children were encouraged to eat at a time and pace that was right for them which coincided with how long they attended the service. The childminder's flexible approach ensured children ate and drank water throughout their time in their home which supported their health and wellbeing. Mealtimes were relaxed, calm and a positive experience for children. They sat together and the childminder provided appropriate levels of support and encouraged children to be independent where possible. Allergies were managed well, and the childminder could confidently discuss how they would respond to a choking episode which contributed to keeping children safe.

The childminder understood their role in keeping children safe from harm. They had undertaken child protection training and could confidently discuss the actions they would take should they have any concerns about a child's welfare.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning.

Children benefitted from a wide range of experiences which captured their interests and supported them to achieve. For example, older children learned to sew, and baked cookies. Literacy and numeracy opportunities were provided through cause-and-effect toys and touch and feel books. Younger children participated in sorting and matching opportunities and sensory activities. A child proudly showed us how they had learned to pull up a zip, they told us, 'Look, like this, I did it.' Throughout the inspection children were engaged in their activities and played contently together or independently.

The childminder was skilled at extending children's play and challenged their thinking through effective questioning and using age and stage appropriate language. Positive and sensitive interactions enabled children to be fully engaged in their play which helped support them to reach their full potential.

The childminder had made good progress with supporting children's progression in their learning and development. Each child had an individual file containing some observations and a developmental tracking sheet. A floor book evidenced children's participation in various activities, and they excitedly showed us photographs of themselves and their friends. We suggested how the childminder could develop this system further to fully support children's learning. Further information can be found under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

Children were supported to be active and enjoy physical play as the childminder regularly visited the local park and shops to buy ingredients for baking activities. The children excitedly showed us a photograph of a Heron they had seen on a nature walk by a burn close to the house. These experiences enabled children to enjoy fresh air and develop positive connections with their local and wider communities.

How good is our setting?

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.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

The childminders home, clean, well-furnished, and provided children with a homely environment in which to play and relax. Children had ample space to play within the kitchen-living room area. Soft furnishings provided children with a comfortable area to relax, and the warm and welcoming environment meant children felt confident, safe, and secure. Parents we spoke with told us, 'Eleanor's feels like a second home' and 'Eleanor provides a safe space for my child.'

To support children's learning and development, the childminder had enhanced their provision of loose parts and natural and sensory materials which supported their natural curiosity and imaginary play. Further information can be found under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

Systems were in place to reduce potential harm to children. The childminder closely supervised the younger children, kept the front door locked and high locks on the garden gate meant children could play safely in the garden. The childminder routinely checked the house before the arrival of the children and the appropriate risk assessments were in place to minimise hazards and remove any risks to children which contributed to their wellbeing and safety.

The childminder recognised the importance of rest and sleep for younger children's overall development. Sleep routines were reflective of children's needs and family preferences. Children slept in a travel cot in an upstairs bedroom. This provided them with a quieter environment and a comfortable surface on which to rest and relax. The childminder regularly checked the children while they slept and used a monitor when downstairs with the other children. This alerted them to when children were unsettled or waking up and required their attention. A thermometer ensured the room remained at an ambient temperature. The childminder could confidently discuss safer sleep practices and had reviewed their policy to align with current guidance. This meant children were kept safe and secure while they slept.

Children were kept safe and protected as the service was well maintained with effective infection prevention and control measures in place. For example, the childminders sensitively reminded the children to wash their hands, before eating and after personal care routines. This helped minimise the potential spread of

infection. Further information can be found under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

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

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 was well organised and demonstrated a commitment to improving outcomes for children and families. Since the previous inspection they had become more familiar with current guidance, accessed training, and sought advice and support. Their level of commitment meant that almost all areas for improvement made at the previous inspection had been met. This meant outcomes for children and families had improved.

The vision, values and aims of the service reflected the ethos and positive interactions we observed throughout the inspection. We asked the childminder when next updating their vision, values and aims to consult with families and children. This will help support them further to ensure their statement of aims and values reflect the current needs and wishes of families attending.

Since the previous inspection, policies, and procedures to support children's care, play and learning had been updated and reviewed. We highlighted to the childminder a few minor changes that needed to be made to reflect current best practice and guidance. Further information can be found under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

We acknowledged the childminder had become more familiar with best practice guidance and had asked families their views on where improvements could be made. However, this system was still in the early stages and the childminder now needed to use the information gathered to reflect on how they were going to develop the service further. An area for improvement in relation to this was made at the previous inspection and will remain within this report. Further information can be found under 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

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.

Children benefitted from the childminders friendly and calm approach. Compassionate and responsive care through warm and fun interactions contributed to children feeling nurtured, and ensured they enjoyed their experiences in the childminders home. Children were loved, and supported by the childminder who knew them well and offered them support in an individualised way. This provided them with care which met their needs in a meaningful way.

Children were kept safe and their wellbeing promoted as the childminder had gained confidence and had a better understanding of their role in supporting children and their families. The childminder was a member of the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and read our updates which provided them with information to help develop the quality of the service. They valued the positive and supportive links with another local childminder which provided opportunities for sharing ideas, developing their knowledge, and reflecting on practice. This contributed to the positive outcomes for children.

The childminder had updated their skills and knowledge in child protection and paediatric first aid and undertaken some self-directed reading and research. We asked the childminder to keep a record of how learning had improved their practice and outcomes. This would help identify any gaps in knowledge and inform future training needs.

Families we spoke with were confident that the childminder had the appropriate skills, knowledge, and experience to care for their children. They valued the flexible and supportive approach of the childminder and held her in high regard. They told us, 'We are so happy we found Eleanor, she is so flexible and works around our lifestyle,' 'It feels like all the children are her grandchildren,' 'Nothing is too much' and 'Eleanor is worth her weight in gold.'

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 children's progression in their learning and development, observations should be regularly recorded, and identify children's progress in their learning. Next steps in children's development should be meaningful, achievable, and monitored to ensure children are supported well to reach their full potential.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

This area for improvement was made on 10 January 2024.

Action taken since then

The childminder had made a good start to taking and recording observations. We found some were of learning and some were descriptions of activities. We discussed how these could be developed further to identify learning and future next steps for children.

A developmental tracking sheet was in place and we asked the childminder to date when milestones had been achieved and use observations to evidence children's progress and achievements. Overall good foundations and progress had been made since the previous inspection.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure and protect the health, wellbeing and safety of children effective infection prevention and control measures should be put in place

To do this the provider should at a minimum ensure:

- a) Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) is worn during intimate care routines
- b) Change mats are used that can be easily cleaned after each use
- c) Handwashing routines reflect best practice and are embedded in practice.

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

This area for improvement was made on 10 January 2024.

Action taken since then

Hand washing routines were observed to be embedded in practice. A child showed us the toilet and the hand washing facilities. There were different colour's of soap that the children could use and a visual prompt was above the sink. During the inspection we observed a child having their nappy changed. The childminder wore the appropriate PPE and had purchased a change mat which was in good repair. The childminders home was well presented, clean and tidy.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To support children's learning and development, the childminder should ensure children have access to open ended resources and toys appropriate for their age and stage of development. These should provide challenge as well as opportunities for children to develop their natural curiosity.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I chose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 6 February 2023.

Action taken since then

The provision of natural and open ended resources had been enhanced since the previous inspection. We observed children engage well with wooden inset puzzles, play with loose scarves and wooden play equipment. A child demonstrated how they used a buckle, zip and button board to support their learning of these life and fine motor skills.

We looked through a floor book and photographs evidenced sensory activities and challenging activities for older children, for example sewing and crochet.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To improve outcomes for children, self-evaluation should be developed. The childminder should become familiar with best practice guidance and use this to support her to reflect and plan for continuous improvement.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 6 February 2024.

Action taken since then

We acknowledged that the childminder had become more familiar with best practice documents, however, this was in the early stages. Families had been given questionnaires to share their views on the service and the responses were all very positive.

We signposted the childminder to the improvement tool box at the end of each quality indicator in our document 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school- aged childcare' and suggested they consider using some of these to gather information, use for reflection and to identify future developments within the service. We asked the childminder when asking children their opinions that this is recorded, for example, within the floor book. The childminder required more time to fully embed their systems of self-evaluation.

This area for improvement has not been met.

Previous area for improvement 5

To ensure children experience a high quality of care and support that promotes their wellbeing, learning and development, the childminder should become familiar with best practice guidance and use this to review and update the service policies. This will contribute to the childminder's professional development and support her to improve outcomes for children.

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

This area for improvement was made on 6 February 2023.

Action taken since then

The childminder had reviewed some guidance and reviewed and updated their policies and procedures. A few required some minor changes to align with current guidance. For example, our details being included within the complaints policy. The childminder should record within the Child protection policy and procedure what they would do in the event of an allegation made against one of their family member's.

Overall the policies and procedures had been enhanced and provided families with current information on what to expect from the service.

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.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very 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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