

Sutherland, Nicky Child Minding

Orkney

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
3 March 2025

Service provided by:
Nicky Sutherland

Service provider number:
SP2009975070

Service no:
CS2009231082

About the service

Nicky Sutherland provides a childminding service from their own property situated in Stromness, Orkney. Children have access to the kitchen/dining area, living room, playroom with sleep area, and bathroom. There is ample parking for parents and a large fenced garden for the children to play.

The childminder may care for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age, of whom no more than six are under 12 years, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school, and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household. The part of the premises not to be used is the first floor of the house. Overnight service will not be provided. Minded children cannot be cared for by persons other than those named on the certificate.

About the inspection

This was a short notice inspection which took place on 3 March 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 children and observed their experiences
- Spoke with the childminder
- Observed practice
- Received two online questionnaires from parents and carers
- Reviewed documents.

This inspection was part of a pilot to test the 'Quality improvement framework for early learning and childcare sectors' developed jointly with Education Scotland. Because this inspection was part of a pilot, no new evaluations (grades) have been awarded.

Key messages

- The childminders home was welcoming and met children's needs.
- Children were able to direct and influence their play and learning experiences.
- The childminders practice was built on nurturing relationships.
- The childminder placed children and families at the heart of all decision making processes.
- Safeguarding and child protection procedures had the potential to compromise children's safety and wellbeing.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces

The childminders home was welcoming and met children's needs. The childminder ensured children in their care had ownership of the spaces available to them. As a result, the physical environment supported children to feel safe, secure and loved.

Children were confident moving around the childminder's home and made good use of the spaces available to them. They were able to direct and influence their play and experiences in a way they wanted to. This was well supported by the childminder who actively engaged with them and upheld their rights to play. This enabled them to be independent and make choices. They were provided with uninterrupted time to become absorbed in their play, this contributed to the fun they had while playing in the childminders home. As a result they were progressing well in their learning and development.

There were a range of toys which were developmentally appropriate and supported children's interests and learning. For example, children were supported to develop numeracy and fine motor skills through a range of different resources and experiences. However there was scope to support children's developing natural curiosities by introducing more loose parts and open ended items to the resources available.

The childminder provided regular opportunities for children to spend time outdoors. For example, they frequently visited the local playpark. This impacted positively on their health and wellbeing and allowed them to explore and learn about the wider world. Children also had access to the childminder's enclosed back garden which provided areas to climb and run, contributing to the development of gross motor skills. Additionally, children's imaginative play was encouraged. They had full ownership of a wooden shelter in the garden, which older children helped to paint and decorate.

Children's safety was promoted when they played outdoors in the childminder's garden. The garden was secure, with a clear perimeter fence. Additionally, the childminder created clear boundaries for children when they played outside. When in the garden the childminder was aware of where they needed to position themselves to ensure they had good vision of all children playing. This contributed to children being safe as they played outdoors.

The childminder implemented infection, prevention and control routines to minimise the potential spread of infection. Children were encouraged to wash hands frequently and at appropriate times. Established routines meant children were supported to be healthy.

Children's privacy and dignity preferences were fully respected when they required personal care. However the childminder placed a changing mat on their knee to change children's nappies. This increased the likelihood of children falling when receiving personal care. The childminder agreed to review this area of practice to ensure children's safety.

Efficient and effective recording keeping systems were in place. Information was stored confidentially in an organised manner. This meant that children and families could be confident that their personal information was secure.

Children are supported to achieve

Nurturing care and support

The childminders practice was built on nurturing relationships. This impacted positively on children's development. They experienced warm, caring, and nurturing interactions from the childminder who was very responsive to their emotional and wellbeing needs. Comfort and cuddles were offered when needed, which gave them reassurance. The childminder was skilled at adapting communication strategies, responding to children's verbal and nonverbal communication, enabling them to express their wishes. This supported children to feel safe, secure and loved during their time with the childminder. This was highlighted as a strength by a parent who told us about the positive relationships developed between the childminder, children and their families. One parent told us:

"I have a close relationship with Nicky. She keeps us well informed and I am confident my child is in a nurturing and safe environment."

Very good transition arrangements were in place to support new children to settle successfully in the service. This was done in collaboration with parents which minimised disruptions to children's care. As a result they were supported to transition at a pace that was right for them, promoting secure attachments.

Children received individualised care and support that met their holistic wellbeing needs. The childminder placed children and families at the heart of all decision-making processes, ensuring continuity in care. This was very well supported through the use of effective personal planning information. Plans developed in consultation with parents and carers identified individual strengths, needs and interests. Achievable goals were set and the childminder regularly reviewed these with parents. This meant that the childminder continued to meet the changing needs of children in their care. The childminder also made very good use of monthly updates to illustrate and track children's progression and shared these with parents. One parent told us:

"Nicky ensures that I am involved in developing and reviewing my child's plan. She encourages my involvement in my child's care through listening to their needs and likes. "

The childminder warmly welcomed families into their home to share their child's experiences. They also took the time to get to know extended family members. As well as offering informal feedback at drop off and pick up times each day, the childminder made use of messaging services to keep in very regular contact with families. This was particularly important as some parents worked away and could not always be at pick up and drop off. This contributed to the development of effective communication and strong relationships with families.

Mealtimes were a very sociable and relaxed experience for children. The childminder shared mealtimes with the children, recognising the importance of talking together and promoting manners and healthy eating habits. This contributed to the development of early language skills.

Safeguarding and Child protection

The childminders vision and ethos strongly promoted children's rights and equality. All children experienced positive and trusting relationships based on respect. The childminder promoted opportunities for children to give their views. This supported children to feel included and listened to.

The childminder knew children and families well. Positive and supportive relationships with families resulted in high levels of trust and effective communication. This meant the needs and concerns of children and families were dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Safeguarding policies and procedures had been developed. However they had not been well understood by the childminder. For example, the childminder was not clear in their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. Additionally the childminder told us that assistants had not undertaken any professional development or learning in relation to child protection and safeguarding. This had potential to compromise children's safety and impact negatively on the quality of outcomes for children and their families. **See area for improvement 1.**

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children are safeguarded and protected from harm, the provider should, at a minimum:

- a) Ensure the childminder and assistants have the required skills and knowledge in relation to recognising and responding to child protection concerns.
- b) Ensure the childminder and assistants are competent and knowledgeable about national, local, and the service's own child protection procedures and 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying, and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities' (HSCS 3.20).

Complaints

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

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