

Alldridge, Louise Child Minding

Kilmarnock

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
2 July 2025

Service provided by:
Louise Alldridge

Service provider number:
SP2008970681

Service no:
CS2008180512

About the service

Louise Alldridge is registered to provide a service to a maximum of six children under the age of 16, of whom a maximum of six will be under 12, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of the children in the childminder's family. Any other conditions unique to the service include that Darren Alldridge will act as a childminder assistant. The childminder assistant will not be left in sole charge of the children. No overnight service will be provided.

At the time of our inspection, 10 children were registered with the service; two children under 12 and two children aged 2 to 3 attended on the inspection day.

The service is situated in a quiet residential area of Stewarton, East Ayrshire. The children have access to the playroom, kitchen, downstairs toilet and enclosed rear garden. The childminder's home is near local amenities, including schools, nurseries and parks.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 30 June 2025 between 11:45 and 14:15. 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 four children using the service
- received four completed Microsoft Forms questionnaires
- spoke to the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced nurturing care and support, which made them feel safe and loved.
- Children were at the heart of the service and cared for by a childminder who knew them very well and was responsive to their individual needs and interests.
- The childminder worked in partnership with families, which ensured parents felt included in the service.
- A warm and inviting setting had been developed where children accessed and enjoyed a range of quality indoor and outdoor experiences.
- The childminder made good use of the local area, which helped children become familiar with and included in their community.
- Risk assessments and policies should be reviewed and updated regularly when there are changes in the service and should align with guidance and legislation.
- The childminder should continue to embed their approach to self-evaluation processes and develop a plan for service improvements.
- The childminder and assistant should continue with their plans to enhance their professional development and stay up to date with current best practices, including reflecting on and evaluating the impact of training learned and outcomes for children.

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?	5 - Very 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?

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 1.1: Nurturing care and support

The childminder was warm, caring, and nurturing in their approach, providing cuddles and reassurance to children as they played and when they became upset. As a result, children were safe and secure, and they had built strong attachments with the childminder.

Positive relationships were established between the childminder, children and their families. A parent shared, "I speak to the childminder regularly at every drop off and collection, and I text them regularly as well". Another commented, "I always feel welcome in the childminder's home". The childminder communicated with parents using the Daily Connect app, and families were invited into the service at drop off and collection times, which enabled them to share valuable and sensitive information and fostered a family-centred culture and strengthened connections.

Personal care plans were established for all children in the service. For younger children, these plans included support strategies and targets that were agreed upon by both the childminder and the child's parents to meet their developing needs. One parent shared, "We communicate well and discuss plans on how to best meet our child's needs". Another parent said, "We talk to the childminder whenever necessary about what we would like to focus on regarding our child's learning and development. The childminder is very knowledgeable about how to help our child reach the next milestones". When the plans were being formally reviewed and updated, they should be signed by both the childminder and the parent. This approach would further ensure that support strategies were consistently applied and that children's health and wellbeing needs were met.

The childminder was registered as a food business and provided most meals and snacks, with options for children to bring food from home which were noted in their personal plans. Parents praised the high-quality homemade food, noting the availability of a fruit bowl and the quality of varied meals. Children sat at the dining table, where the childminder supervised them, which helped children develop relationships, engage in conversation, and gain self-help skills in a safe environment. The childminder collected information on children's allergies and food preferences in their personal plans and shared an allergy policy with parents. This communication ensured children's safety and kept information current.

No children at the service required medication. The childminder had paperwork for safe administration, and we directed them to the 'Management of Medication in Daycare and Childminding Services' guidance to update their policy. Available here: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/6086/Management-of-Medication-in-Daycare-of-Children-and-Childminding-Services_Dec-2024.pdf. This document should further support the childminder in maintaining the safety, health, and wellbeing of children.

The childminder's home was equipped with comfortable sofas where children could relax. During our inspection, we did not observe sleep routines. However, the childminder provided information about the policies in place and the sleep products used. The sleep routines were personalised and catered to the individual needs of children and the preferences of their families. Parents commented on the inviting relaxation spaces and appreciated the childminder's attention to the children's naptime needs. We signposted the childminder to safe sleep guidance and spoke about the importance of obtaining informed consent from parents, as this would help establish safe sleep practices. Information can be found here: <https://lullabytrust.org.uk/resource/safe-sleep-awareness-for-early-years-settings/>.

The childminder ensured the safety of children in their care by having a child protection policy and completing advanced training in this area. These processes ensured that the childminder had the relevant skills and knowledge to protect and safeguard children and created a nurturing environment where children's welfare was prioritised.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

The layout of the playroom allowed children to move freely between indoor and outdoor spaces, supporting their right to play. A parent commented, "My child enjoys outdoor activities in the childminder's garden, which offers a variety of toys and crafts for colder days". Another said, "The childminder regularly takes the children to parks and has a garden that accommodates various sports and activities, including a pool for the summer months". These fun experiences and opportunities contributed to children's overall development and wellbeing.

During the inspection, children spent most of their time outdoors, as they engaged in sports and explored how objects moved while playing with a model aeroplane and car transporter. The older children supported the younger children, acting as positive role models. These activities promoted positive relationships and contributed to children's physical and emotional wellbeing.

Indoors, play materials were accessible, and children made informed choices. For example, children played imaginatively with the assortment of plastic dinosaurs, drew pictures on the large chalkboard, and watched children's programmes on television. The childminder shared how children enjoyed both playing with their peers and on their own. These play opportunities supported children's interests and provided opportunities for them to revisit and build upon their learning.

Children's play was linked to the curriculum and shared with parents using detailed observations. This approach involved parents in their child's learning, provided a framework for both support and challenge, and enabled children to thrive and reach their full potential. The childminder used development rainbows with 'I can' statements to assess progress and maintained an online learning journal, a shared platform with the local nursery. This partnership ensured that tailored support was provided for each child's individual needs, and their development was nurtured and celebrated.

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

Children attended a setting that was welcoming, homely, and comfortably furnished. They had plenty of indoor and outdoor space to support their play, exploration, and rest. A parent shared, "The childminder's setting feels like a second home for them. They are completely comfortable there, can engage with other children, and experience activities they wouldn't have at home". As a result, children were supported in an environment where they felt safe, settled, and secure.

Toys and resources supported child-initiated play, including sports games and small-world toys. Other activities such as crafts, building blocks, sorting toys and books, fostered children's imagination, early literacy, and numeracy skills. Play experiences and activities were tailored to the children's interests, allowing them to make meaningful choices.

Children enjoyed playing at the park and shared how the childminder had helped them learn to ride bikes. Parents commented, "The childminder takes them to the park, and if the weather is good, they sometimes take them to the beach or parks that are a bit further afield", and "The childminder has a great range of toys available in their home and takes our child out on plenty of fun and engaging excursions". Another child shared, "It's so fun. There's a pool, and I like the childminder because they are kind". The experiences offered at the service enhanced children's creativity, exploration, physical development, and knowledge of their community.

Boundary fencing and gates kept children safe. A register recorded the accurate number of children attending. The process could be enhanced by including the times children attend to track their attendance patterns more effectively.

Infection prevention and control procedures included maintaining an appropriate room temperature and ensuring proper ventilation to keep children comfortable and healthy. Additionally, suitable facilities for effective handwashing were provided and should always be used rather than using wipes. We identified some concerns about the risk of cross-contamination in the kitchen due to cluttered work surfaces, which made it difficult to maintain cleanliness. The childminder has since shared the improvements made following the inspection and agreed to keep this area clean and well-organised. This approach should reduce the potential risk of spreading infections.

Risk assessments were completed for the setting and outings. The childminder could involve children in the planning process to help them manage their own risks. Daily checks were carried out before playtime in the garden. During the inspection, rainwater had gathered on the cover of the unused pool, posing a potential risk, which was promptly drained by the childminder. Following the inspection visit, the risk assessment for the garden was updated to include daily draining of the pool cover. The childminder also discussed investing in a dome cover for long-term use, which would further support children's 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

The childminder was welcoming and actively engaged in the inspection process. They responded positively to our suggestions for development and were open in their conversations. This positive response demonstrated that the service had a strong capacity for ongoing improvement, which contributed to positive outcomes for children.

The childminder created a clear vision statement for their service, which was shared with families before their children enrolled. This information helped families choose a service that aligned with their needs and supported the service's aims, which focused on caring for children in a clean and friendly environment where they learned through play and had fun.

The childminder genuinely valued the views of children and their families, understanding their input as key to building positive relationships. They actively gathered feedback through informal and formal communication, including daily chats, the Daily Connect app, and questionnaires. A parent shared, "The childminder asks me questions, and I feel I can speak to them about my children and their needs with no fear of judgment". Another said, "The childminder always listens to my views". These communication methods ensured that children were well cared for and that their families were at the heart of the improvements made.

The childminder used the Care Inspectorate quality framework indicators to evaluate and improve aspects of the service. To strengthen the process, they should include clear actions and timeframes, as well as the impact of the changes made for children. This adjustment would enable them to measure positive outcomes and ensure that children continued to be supported in reaching their full potential.

We reminded the childminder to begin familiarising themselves with the new 'shared framework', which would be launched soon. Available here: <https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/quality-improvement-framework-for-early-learning-and-childcare-sectors>.

The childminder had developed a range of policies and procedures, which were shared with parents to ensure they knew what to expect from the service provided and were reviewed regularly. We discussed linking the policies to guidance and legislation to support best practice. This approach would further ensure high-quality play, learning, and effective care.

The childminder had valid insurance for their service, contributing to a safe environment for children.

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 4.3: Staff deployment

The childminder's husband was a named assistant. They did not work regularly in the service, as they had alternative employment. They helped only when needed, such as in situations where two adults were required, for example, when children used the outdoor pool, which ensured their safety.

The childminder outlined the full remit of the assistant role and responsibilities within the service's policies and procedures and shared this information with families when their children enrolled in the service. This communication ensured parents were fully informed about the support structure and safety measures in place for their children within the service.

We did not speak directly to the childminder's assistant; instead, we requested that they complete the Care Inspectorate's Microsoft form questionnaire, which we promptly received during the inspection. The assistant shared that they were not left to care for the children solely. Should there be a need for the assistant to cover for short periods, such as in an emergency or for planned appointments and school drop offs and pickups, the childminder ensured that parents were informed beforehand and obtained their permission. The assistant followed the childminder's advice, expertise and directions and saw their role as one of support.

The childminder was dedicated to continuous professional development and had completed several training courses to enhance their knowledge and skills, including child development and self-evaluation, through their membership with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and webinars delivered by the Care Inspectorate. We discussed how the childminder should regularly reflect on how training impacted their practice and outcomes for children. This commitment would further ensure children were cared for by a trained, competent, and skilled childminder.

Training records for both the childminder and assistant showed that they had undertaken up-to-date first aid training, demonstrating their commitment to children's safety, as both were equipped to deal with emergencies effectively. The assistant should access training in child protection, which would contribute to their personal development, the health and safety of children, and the overall service provision.

We discussed the importance of updating and recording evaluations after training sessions. These evaluations should include a detailed reflection on what they learned. By reflecting on their learning experiences, the childminder and the assistant can revisit how these opportunities have developed their practices and improved future outcomes for children.

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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very 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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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