

Karen Reed Childminding Child Minding

Elgin

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 July 2025

Service provided by:
Karen Reed

Service provider number:
SP2023000077

Service no:
CS2023000117

About the service

Mrs Reed is registered to provide a childminding service to five children at any one time, up to 16 years of age, 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 service is situated in a residential area of a town. Children are cared for in a dedicated play room and the lounge. The bedroom is used for children needing to sleep. There is a small secure garden to the front of the property and a small paved area to the rear of the building, both are accessed from the main stairs leading to the flat.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 10 July 2025 between 10:45 and 13:45. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. There were four children present.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- received three questionnaires from families
- spoke with the childminder and their assistant
- observed practice and daily experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- The nurturing and caring approach of the childminder and their assistant (husband) had enabled children to form positive relationships.
- The childminder had got to know families and children well so that they were able to be responsive to their individual needs.
- The childminder and assistant interacted well with the children that helped to support quality play and enabled children to have fun in their learning.
- The recent addition of a dedicated playroom had provided additional space for floor play and enabled children to make wider choices in their play.
- The childminder had actively sought the views of families to help inform the development of the setting and children's achievements were also shared with them.
- The childminder's enabling and responsive attitude was supportive of building children's confidence and promoting their independence.

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/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

The responsive and caring approach of the childminder and their assistant (husband) had enabled children to form positive relationships. Children appeared happy and confident, they were comfortable in each others company and played well together, there was lots of smiles and laughter.

Suitable arrangements were in place for personal care that considered privacy and dignity of the children. Their confidence and security was promoted through the nurturing interactions of the childminder. Children's emotional security and overall development was promoted through good habits around sleep. Children also rested and took time to recuperate on the soft cushions and bean bags in the playroom and were also able to use the sofa's in the adjacent lounge.

Children ate their lunch together either at a small table or in high chairs, it helped to make it a positive social experience, there was a relaxed atmosphere and it was unhurried. The childminder and assistant were focused on the children that helped to promote close attachment. Parents provided all meals and snacks that catered for any dietary needs and food preferences. Children had water with their meal, water bottles were easily accessible and children were being encouraged to remain hydrated.

The childminder had got to know families and children well that helped them to be responsive to individual needs. They shared information with families on a daily basis at handovers and also used regular electronic communication that promoted continuity of care to the children. Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the personal plan, which contained key information about them, such as contact details, health needs, personal care and interests. We discussed the benefits of maintaining a programme of review of the plan through discussion with families and children (where possible), that also helped to ensure consistency of care.

The childminder was gaining confidence in the use of chronologies that helped with the identification of children's needs and directed action to support children well. Continued reference to good practice guidance would help to consolidate understanding and purpose.

Ref: Practice guide to chronologies - hub.careinspectorate.com

Parents told us that they had a good relationship with the childminder and that they felt fully involved in their child's care. Comments included:

'Karen and Chris are warm and caring people'.

'Our child seems to be thriving in Karen's care'.

'We have good communication and friendly handovers'.

'I receive very detailed daily updates along verbal descriptions of learning and how my children are improving and developing'.

There was an inconsistency in the management of required medication, as it was not in its original package with the prescription label. The childminder recognised it was an oversight as it was sent with the child and had not been needed. Prompt action would be taken to ensure safe practice guidance was followed.

Ref: Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services.

1.3 Play and Learning

Children moved freely and confidently around the play spaces. They benefited from spontaneous, planned and fun play experiences that helped their brain development and skills in language, literacy and numeracy. The childminder and assistant interacted well with the children that helped to support quality play and opportunities for learning. Children were encouraged to try things out for themselves, to explore and to test out how things worked. The childminder shared children's achievements with families, they also monitored children's progress and development.

Young children had fun with repetitive play such as filling and emptying containers, building and knocking them down. Children told us how they were building a rocket with the magnetic blocks and at the bottom was an engine to take it into space. Another child was building a car and was looking for the four wheels. Children played shops and counted the pennies, made pretend pizza together and enjoyed songs and actions that helped their muscle development and health. Children had some quiet time after lunch, they snuggled up together, listened and talked about a rhyming story with the childminder.

Children were keen to play outside in the garden, where they were able to build and dig in the sand pit with a variety of containers, they rode on wheeled toys and played catch with balls.

The recent addition of a dedicated playroom had provided additional space for floor play and enabled children to make wider choices in their play. Posters with letters and numbers provided easy reference and a talking point for children during play. We discussed further development of real and textured materials and open ended (no fixed purpose) play resources that promoted sensory play and excited children's imagination and exploration.

Ref: Growing my potential - hub.careinspectorate.com

Children's opportunities for play and learning were being enhanced through connections to their own and wider communities, children went for nature walks and visited play parks. The childminder was extending this further with a planned visit to the fire station and a short journey on a train to a town close by with a visit to the park to have a picnic.

Parents told us that their child was involved in a range of play and fun experiences that met their individual need and development. Comments included:

'Our childminder has a wide range of indoor and outdoor play'.

'The childminder recently brought a series of books that our child really enjoys at home'.

'Children are usually out daily playing in the garden or walks or parks'.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

Children benefited from being cared for in a comfortable, clean, well furnished and homely environment. It

helped to give the message to children that they mattered. Plenty of ventilation and natural light contributed to children's psychological wellbeing.

Infection control practices helped to support children's wellbeing such as hand washing before and after eating, using the toilet. The childminder used disposable gloves and aprons during personal care such as changing nappies. The childminder had completed food hygiene training that helped to ensure safe food practices.

The childminder identified and removed risks to children within the setting, both indoors and outdoors. Written risk assessments helped to identify action taken to minimise risk that supported safety and security of the children. We referred the childminder to the SIMOA keeping children safe practice notes - hub.careinspectorate.com

Indoor and outdoor play spaces were being structured to take account of children's stages of development and learning. The arrangement of furnishings in the lounge and playroom enabled children to take part in floor play activities. They were to make some free choices in their play from a shelving unit and boxes. A large wooden role play kitchen in the lounge was used to support imaginary play. The small front garden provided some opportunities for creative play. It was anticipated that a swing/climbing frame play set to be erected in the rear garden, would enable children to enjoy active play that supported their muscle strength and co-ordination.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

The childminder had appropriate records that were readily accessible. They had clear policies that supported them in running the service and they were shared with parents. We suggested that families and children's views (where possible) could also be reflected in a refresh of the vision and aims of the service, as it helped everyone to know what was important and unique.

The childminder had actively sought the views of families to help inform the development of the setting and children's achievements were also shared with them. A parent had shared their views through a personal testimony on leaving the service. They had expressed appreciation of the care given to their child, the regular sharing of information provided by the childminder and assistant had helped to ease their worries.

Parents told us that they were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. Comments included:

'if I have anything to raise or discuss my childminder is very open and welcoming'.

'We have good communication and friendly handovers'.

'I feel that I could contact Karen and Chris at any time'

To enable a consistent and manageable programme of improvement that was sustained, we discussed the benefits of a concise format for recording changes as they occurred and the impact of such changes. We also referred the childminder to the early years improvement programme for childminders - hub.careinspectorate.com

How good is our staff team?**4 - Good**

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

The childminder's enabling and responsive attitude was supportive of building children's confidence and promoting their independence. Their warmth and kindness towards the children helped them to feel valued, loved and secure.

The childminder was a member of a childminding organisation that provided relevant information and supported relevant training. They had also joined a childminding group chat. It had been beneficial in terms of confidence, reflection and improving their practice, such as ideas for play resources.

The childminder had completed core training such as child protection refresher, first aid, food hygiene and managing positive behaviour. We discussed the benefits of a simple reflective journal with the childminder, that helped to identify how they had used their learning to improve their practice and experiences for children and families. We suggested that this could also be extended to include the use of good practice guidance /research.

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 help ensure that families and children remained central to the personal planning process, the childminder should establish a consistent system of review, a minimum of 6 monthly.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15); and

'I am fully involved in developing and reviewing my personal plan, which is always available to me'. (HSCS 2.17)

This area for improvement was made on 28 August 2024.

Action taken since then

The childminder had ensured that families were involved in sharing information about the children and a consistent programme of review was being established.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To further enhance children's play experiences that help to develop their skills language, literacy and numeracy and engage their imagination. The childminder promotes children's choice and extends creative approaches indoors and outdoors that engage children's imagination.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'As a child I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, 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 28 August 2024.

Action taken since then

Children were engaged in play that was supporting their language, literacy and numeracy skills, they were able to make choices both indoors and outdoors that supported their learning and curiosity. The addition of a dedicated playroom had enabled wider access to choice of play.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To enhance the delivery of high-quality practice, that leads to improved outcomes for all, the childminder should consolidate a clear ethos of continuous improvement.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I am actively encouraged to be involved in improving the service I use, in a spirit of genuine partnership' (HSCS 4.7); and

'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 28 August 2024.

Action taken since then

The childminder had made improvement in the environment/activities for children that children having connections in their own and wider community. They shared information regularly with parents and had invited them to formally share their views.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To support enhanced outcomes for children the childminder should identify and undertake training/development linked to their own learning needs. Improvement resources and good practice guidance should also be used for such purposes.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled and are able to reflect on their practice. (HSCS 3.14)

This area for improvement was made on 28 August 2024.

Action taken since then

The childminder and assistant had undertaken core training to support children. The childminder had formed links with other childminders that had enabled them to be reflective and improve their own practice. They used their knowledge to enhance children's wellbeing and development.

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	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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