

Thomson, Irena Child Minding

Dundee

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 October 2025

Service provided by:
Irena Thomson

Service provider number:
SP2003900189

Service no:
CS2003000668

About the service

Irena Thomson is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of eight children at any one time 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 childminder's family, and no overnight care will be provided.

The service is provided from the childminder's home in Dundee and is close to local nurseries, schools, shops, parks and other amenities. Children have access to the downstairs of the home and an enclosed back garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 23 October 2025 between 09:15 and 11:45. This inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year. To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke/spent time with three children using the service
- received four completed questionnaires from families using the service
- spoke with the childminder
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

During this inspection we gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Children were happy, confident, and having fun in their chosen play experiences.
- A warm, nurturing and safe environment meant children felt secure and had developed strong attachments.
- Informal quality assurance processes were beginning to support the childminder to identify their strengths and areas for improvement.
- Professional learning opportunities were beginning to develop the childminder's knowledge of best practice and guidance.
- Most infection prevention and control measures were followed which meant the potential risk for the spread of infection was minimised.

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

Leadership	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children benefitted from a knowledgeable childminder who was passionate about the care they provided. The childminder's aims and objectives reflected their passion, as they stated, 'a stimulating, loving and happy environment'. We suggested that the childminder revisit their aims and objectives in consultation with their children and families. This would enable the childminder to develop a vision that was meaningful to their current service and ensure that they were inclusive of their children and families' values.

Informal quality assurance processes were beginning to enable the childminder to reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement. Consultations with children and families highlighted their views, which supported them to feel listened to and valued. Older children completed questionnaires independently which enhanced their ownership and choice. We suggested methods the childminder could consider to record their identified improvements. This would enable the childminder to shape their service, guided by the views of their children and families. As a result, sustained improvements could be embedded and could support positive outcomes for children and their families.

The childminder had policies and procedures, however, these would benefit from being regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that they followed best practice and guidance. For example, we asked the childminder to develop a 'missing child' policy to detail their procedures in the event of a child leaving the service. This would ensure that the childminder's policies and procedures were effective in supporting children and families in their care.

Quality Indicator: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children benefitted from the childminder's warm and responsive approach. Cuddles and comfort were shared and supported children's emotional wellbeing. One parent commented, 'We always feel welcome in Irena's home and feel able to discuss our daughters care'. During the inspection, we observed consistently positive interactions that helped children to feel loved, respected and valued. This contributed to the development of secure and trusting relationships.

The childminder had a wealth of experience working with children of all ages. They had a clear understanding of child development and substantial experience of providing a childminding service. Children benefitted from the childminder's understanding of how they play, learn and develop as they knew when to observe, and when to interact and extend experiences. For example, they recognised children's cues when a change of space and play type would support them to feel more settled. As a result, their skills and knowledge helped to enhance outcomes for children.

Professional learning and development was beginning to impact the childminder's knowledge and skills. The childminder had participated in first aid training and reflected on the impact within their practice. Their knowledge of the children in their care meant that they were confident in safeguarding their wellbeing and procedures, should a concern arise. We signposted the childminder to the best practice guidance, 'National child protection in Scotland (updated 2023)' to maintain their knowledge and skills, whilst they seek further training. The childminder would benefit from continuing to develop their knowledge and understanding of best practice and guidance. We signposted the childminder to, 'A quality framework for the early learning and childcare sectors: childminding,' to support their practice. This would enable them to continue to promote positive outcomes for children and their families.

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Play, learning and developing

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children were happy, confident, and having fun in the childminder's care. They made their own choices about where to play and were able to move freely around the home. Children were developing their imaginations as they used small world toys to explore the play space. They engaged in experiences for extended periods, which enabled them to learn skills for life as they played.

Opportunities to develop language and literacy skills were promoted throughout children's play. The childminder chatted with children, shared explanations, asked questions and encouraged them to join in with a range of activities. Books were actively shared together, where the childminder invited children to repeat and predict favourite stories. Singing was a natural part of children's time with the childminder which they enjoyed together. As a result, children were developing their early literacy skills.

Children's creative skills were developed as they explored craft activities and musical instruments. The childminder shared that they enjoyed sharing their families love of music with the children in their care. Resources were age and stage appropriate which enabled the childminder to cater for children's differing ages. A pool table, games and a wide range of activities were available which enabled older children to have ownership within their play choices. One parent commented, 'She has amazing facilities for all ages'. This meant that activities had been carefully considered to promote children's motivation and engagement.

Progress reports had recently been introduced to highlight children's successes and achievements. The childminder shared these with families and had identified new skills to support children's development. We suggested that these could be further developed to evidence observations of children's development within their identified next steps. This would enable children to recognise and celebrate their own achievements and foster a sense of pride.

Children are supported to achieve 4 - Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children benefitted from consistently warm and caring interactions from a childminder who was attentive to their needs. The childminder actively listened to children and responded to their requests with kindness and love. One parent commented, 'Irena takes such a genuine interest in each child, and looks after them with such care and compassion'. This meant that children experienced responsive care that fostered their wellbeing.

Effective communication between the childminder and children's families enabled them to share key messages to meet children's needs. One parent commented, 'Irena is very approachable and gives good feedback'. Families were warmly welcomed into the childminder's home which demonstrated that they were valued. The childminder had developed secure relationships and attachments with families over several years, and this was evident within their practice. One parent commented, 'Irena cared for myself and my younger sister and now my daughter. I feel very secure in my daughters place at Irena's and the care she provides'. As a result, trusting relationships had been formed which supported positive outcomes for children and their families.

Supportive transitions enabled the childminder to effectively meet children's individual needs. For example, information was shared as children transitioned between new stages of development, such as, learning to use the toilet. The childminder was respectful, listened to children and ensured they provided praise and encouragement. This demonstrated that children were supported by consistent relationships when learning new skills.

The childminder knew the children in their care and their families very well. They told us that they shared daily, informal information with families, which enabled them to meet children's current needs. Personal plans were introduced as children joined the childminder's service, however these were not formally reviewed, in line with legislation. This would support the childminder to effectively plan and evidence children's progress and development, in consultation with families. An area for improvement was made during a previous inspection and has been carried forward and reworded. (See area for improvement 1).

Snacks were provided by the children's families and were nutritious which supported children to develop healthy bodies. The childminder was passionate about working with families to develop their understanding in relation to healthy meals and snacks. They were responsive to children's cues when they indicated that they felt hungry. The childminder shared stories with children as they ate their snack which contributed to helping to settle them in their home. We reminded the childminder of the importance of effective infection prevention and control measures, such as hand washing and a suitable space to sit and eat snacks. This would minimise the potential risk of the spread of infection and potential risk of choking.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children's wellbeing needs and routines are met, the childminder should further develop personal plans. These should be formally reviewed at least every six months with children and families.

This should include, but is not limited to:

- Identifying children's current routines and health needs
- Identifying and evaluating children's likes, dislikes, and progress
- identifying next steps in their learning and development.

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

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 plan for children's care and development, personal plans should be further developed. Plans should contain relevant up-to-date information and reflect children's ongoing development and the care they need. Plans should be reviewed with parents at least once in every six months or as needs change.

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

'My personal 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).

This area for improvement was made on 30 November 2023.

Action taken since then

The childminder knew children and their families very well. Daily informal communications ensured they were kept updated and were able to meet their wellbeing needs. Personal plans had not been formally reviewed, updated or developed since the last inspection.

This area for improvement had not been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children and families experience a service that is continuously developing and improving, the childminder should develop their approach to self-evaluation and improvement planning.

This should include but is not limited to:

- a) carry out self-evaluation of the service using best practice guidance; and
- b) consult and record families' and children's views regularly as part of the service self-evaluation process.

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 30 November 2023.

Action taken since then

Informal evaluations enabled the childminder to identify areas for improvement within their service. Consultations with children and families meant that their views were listened to and valued.

This area for improvement had been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure they keep their knowledge and understanding current and provide best possible outcomes for children, the childminder should engage in relevant training opportunities. They should prioritise mandatory training in child protection and first aid.

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

'I experience high quality care and support that is right for me and is based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice'. (HSCS 4.11).

This area for improvement was made on 30 November 2023.

Action taken since then

The childminder had participated in first aid training to upskill their knowledge and understanding. They knew the children and families in their care very well and spoke confidently about safeguarding children's wellbeing. They were actively sourcing training to further embed their child protection knowledge and skills.

This area for improvement had 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

Leadership	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	4 - Good
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	4 - Good

Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good

Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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