

Dawn Connah Childminding Child Minding

Peterhead

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 January 2026

Service provided by:
Dawn Connah

Service provider number:
SP2014985801

Service no:
CS2014324918

About the service

Dawn Connah Childminding provides a childminding service from their property in a residential area of Mintlaw, Aberdeenshire. 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 service is close to shops, green spaces and other amenities. Children have access to the kitchen, play room and a fully enclosed garden.

Two children were present at the time of the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 15 January 2026 between 08:30 and 12:10. 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- received three responses to our request for feedback from families
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and children's experiences
- 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.

Key messages

- Children were at the heart of the service and were cared for by a childminder who knew them and their families well.
- Children experienced warm and caring interactions from the childminder.
- The setting made good use of the outdoors, at their home and in the wider community.
- Quality assurance practices could be improved to promote a culture of continuous improvement and positive 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

Leadership	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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 3 – Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as **satisfactory/adequate** where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

The ethos of the setting reflected the childminder's values by providing a safe, homely, welcoming environment for children to enjoy. However, these values had not been reviewed or updated recently in consultation with children and families. Involving families and children in shaping the ethos would ensure an inclusive approach where everyone feels valued and respected, reinforcing a strong sense of partnership (see area for improvement one).

There was some potential for children and families to become involved in the service and influence change. The childminder explained that questionnaires had been used in the past but felt informal conversations with parents were more effective. The childminder shared that families were happy with the service and had not suggested any improvements. Parents told us they felt involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service and had previously been given questionnaires to complete. We suggested exploring the digital tools they were currently using to share updates and photos with parents to gather feedback and ideas for ongoing improvements. We also highlighted the benefits of sharing any changes that had been implemented as a result of feedback and the positive impact on outcomes for children. The childminder also listened to children's views within the setting. For example, a child requested more small world animals, and this interest was then extended through a visit to a local farm, giving them first hand experience with real farm animals. While some informal consultation took place, developing more structured and transparent ways for families and children to contribute would strengthen partnership working and ensure the service continued to evolve in response to their needs and interests (see area for improvement one).

Some quality assurance processes were in place to support positive outcomes for children and families. For example, the childminder had shared policies with families to ensure clarity around approaches. However, several policies required updating in line with current best practice guidance to maintain relevance and accuracy (see area for improvement one).

The childminder had completed a range of relevant training that positively informed and enhanced their practice. They reported having used the Care Inspectorate HUB regularly kept them up to date with current guidance and publications. For example, they highlighted that the guidance on loose parts had been particularly valuable, enabling them to provide experiences that promoted children's creativity and problem-solving skills. The childminder also shared that being part of a local childminding group had been beneficial. This network offered mutual support, opportunities to share ideas, and examples of good practice. This contributed to the childminder's ability to deliver good experiences and improved outcomes for the children in their care.

The childminder had yet to engage with recognised audit tools, such as the new Quality Improvement Framework for Childminding. We discussed the benefits of self-evaluation and using this document to identify strengths within the service and highlight areas for development. Implementing a structured self-evaluation process would support continuous improvement, ensuring the service evolves in line with best practice and delivers consistently high-quality outcomes for children and families (see area for improvement one).

Areas for improvement

1. To support improvement to the service and ensure positive outcomes for children, the childminder should develop quality assurance practices. This should include but is not limited to;
 - a) Reviewing values, visions and aims in consultation with children and families.
 - b) Gathering and using children and families views to inform developments.
 - c) Updating policies in line with best practice guidance.
 - d) Implementing a self-evaluation process to support improvement, including the new Quality Framework for Childminding.

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).

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.

The childminder held a recognised childcare qualification and demonstrated a good understanding of child development, clearly explaining the rationale behind the experiences offered. For example, the childminder showed good knowledge of schematic play and provided resources that enriched young children's learning. During the inspection, we observed that children were engaged in transporting toys; in response, the childminder had thoughtfully included a range of bags, buggies and prams to support and extend this interest. This reflected a good foundation in child development and a proactive approach to adapting practice in line with children's emerging needs. The childminder also worked effectively with families to deepen their awareness of schematic play, which was well received and supported parents' understanding of play based learning.

Young children engaged in both planned and spontaneous play. They were involved in their chosen activities and benefited from extended periods of uninterrupted play at their own pace. Children were given meaningful opportunities to lead their learning, explore their environment, and express curiosity. Role play was particularly popular, with children showing sustained interest in pretending to cook using loose parts in the toy kitchen. After snack time, the childminder introduced a new activity involving a piece of polystyrene, golf tees, and wooden hammers. The children explored this with excitement, experimenting with hammering the tees, pushing them in by hand, and creating their own patterns. These experiences supported children's natural curiosity and provided opportunities to develop fine motor skills.

The childminder's skilled and responsive interactions supported children's play and learning. They demonstrated a good awareness of when to step back and observe and when to sensitively join in to extend learning. For example, when a child brought over a keyboard, the childminder modelled how to play it and encouraged participation by saying, "Can you try?". This prompted the child to explore the instrument independently. To further extend the child's interest, the childminder introduced an additional musical toy and modelled how it worked, inviting the child to engage by saying, "Can you spin it?". As the child attempted this, the childminder provided commentary, "round and round", reinforcing the action and supporting language development. Interactions such as modelling, asking open-ended questions, and offering descriptive commentary promoted children's curiosity, sustained engagement, and deepened their understanding of cause and effect.

Although children did not spend time outdoors during the inspection, photographic evidence demonstrated that the childminder placed value on outdoor learning. The enclosed garden was well resourced and offered a variety of stimulating play opportunities, including a mud kitchen and loose parts play. Children also benefited from regular outings within the local community. Visits to Aden Park, the beach, the local fire station, and a nearby farm provided rich, real world learning experiences. These opportunities enabled children to connect with nature, develop an understanding of their community, and explore the wider world around them.

The childminder used developmental trackers to monitor children's progress. We discussed the importance of clearly dating these records to show progression over time. We also explored how the trackers could be used more effectively to identify areas where children may need further support or additional challenge, ensuring each child reaches their full potential. Digital technology, such as WhatsApp, was used to share photos, videos, and updates with families, helping them stay informed about their children's experiences. We discussed the added value of also sharing learning goals or next steps with parents so that these could be supported collaboratively between home and the setting.

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 benefited from warm, responsive care that promoted their overall wellbeing. The childminder offered comfort when needed and maintained a calm, reassuring approach throughout the day. They were attentive to children's cues and supported their individual care needs effectively. For example, one child was being gently encouraged to play without their dummy. The childminder approached this sensitively, giving the child the time and emotional support they needed to settle, helping them feel secure, and ready to engage in play. Parents told us they have a good relationship with the childminder. One parent said; "[The childminder] is a very trustworthy and honest individual who has made it really easy to communicate with [them]. [They have] been so approachable and supportive. There is always good humour." Another parent commented; "[The childminder] communicates weekly through WhatsApp and I feel comfortable letting [them] know any changes we have in our family when needed'. This demonstrate that the childminder has established trusting relationships with families, supported by open and effective communication.

The childminder approached care routines including mealtimes and personal care in a respectful and nurturing manner, using them as opportunities to strengthen relationships. Children also showed that they were familiar with these routines, going to wash their hands when snack time was mentioned. This provided children with a sense of being safe and cared for.

Daily routines, including mealtimes, were calm, unhurried, and well organised. The childminder sat alongside the children, which supported effective supervision while also creating meaningful opportunities for social interaction and language development. The childminder actively promoted healthy eating habits by offering a variety of fruit provided through the local authority scheme. They encouraged young children to develop independence, for example by supporting them to chop their own bananas. These experiences helped build children's understanding of nutrition and contributed to the development of important life skills for the future. We discussed the importance of reinforcing good hand hygiene practices, such as ensuring children washed their hands after eating and avoiding the sharing of water for hand washing. Strengthening these routines would support effective infection control.

Personal plans were in place for all children, enabling the childminder to gather meaningful information about each child's development, interests, and individual needs. Most plans had been reviewed regularly; however, some had not been updated in partnership with parents, resulting in certain information becoming out of date. To strengthen practice, updates should be clearly recorded and consistently shared with families. This would contribute to a shared understanding, ensuring continuity of care which would tailor support to meet each child's current needs. We discussed the importance of including chronologies within children's files to record and monitor significant events in their lives. Maintaining clear and up to date chronologies supports effective safeguarding practice and helps ensure children remain safe and well.

The childminder explained that parents were welcome to enter the home; however, most preferred to drop off and collect their children at the door. One parent commented that they had been invited inside to support their child's settling-in period, while another noted that they seldom entered the home, in line with a mutually agreed approach to support their child to settle. The childminder also made effective use of digital communication tools, including WhatsApp, to provide parents with regular updates and photographs of their children's experiences. This contributed to partnership working and supported continuity of care for the children.

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 review and update:

- The complaints policy to inform the complainant of the action (if any) that is to be taken within twenty working days.
- The child protection policy to:
 - a) review the emergency contact details for the relevant child protection agencies
 - b) make parents aware that they may not be consulted prior to referral of any child protection concerns to an external agency
 - c) refer to the National Guidance for updated child protection information.

National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16. Standard 13: Improving the Service and Standard 14: Well-Managed Service.

This recommendation was made on 8 October 2015.

Action taken on previous recommendation

The complaints policy had been updated and informed the complainant of the action (if any) that is to be taken within 20 working days. The child protection policy had been updated to detail the emergency contact details for the relevant child protection agencies and to make parents aware that they may not be consulted prior to referral of any child protection concerns to an external agency. However, the child protection policy did not reference current guidance and therefore this recommendation has only been partially met.

This area for improvement was made on 8 October 2015.

Action taken since then

The child protection policy still did not reference current guidance. This area for improvement has been reworded within 'Leadership and management of staff and resources.'

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	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
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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