

# Nicole Main Childminding Child Minding

Aberdeen

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
25 February 2026

**Service provided by:**  
Nicole SUTHERLAND

**Service provider number:**  
SP2017989009

**Service no:**  
CS2017356121

## About the service

Nicole Main Childminding is provided from their property in a residential area of Cove, Aberdeen. The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age. Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's family and overnight care is not provided.

The service is close to parks, shops, local primary school, and other amenities. Children have access to the ground floor of the property which includes the kitchen, bathroom, living room, and a fully enclosed garden.

At the time of our inspection, eight children were registered with the service.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 25 February 2026 between 09:30 and 12:45. 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 three children using the service
- received five responses to our request for feedback from parents/carers through our online questionnaire
- 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 experienced warm interactions and were cared for by a childminder who knew them well.
- Children were happy and busy as they played.
- Families valued the close working relationship they had developed with the childminder to support children.
- Daily opportunities to spend time outdoors supported children's health and wellbeing.
- The childminder had effective systems in place to evaluate their service that led to meaningful improvements.
- Children benefitted from a childminder who was committed to their professional development and wanted to develop their service.

## 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	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

## Leadership 5 - Very Good

### Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement. Therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

Children and families experienced a homely and warm environment, supporting them to feel comfortable and valued. Parents advised they were always welcomed into the childminder's home which aligned with the setting's aims and objectives of "providing a safe environment" and "promoting positive relationships." The childminder advised these had recently been reviewed through informal consultation with families. This ensured they reflected their current needs and supported them to know what to expect from the service.

Children and families had meaningful opportunities to influence change. The childminder had consulted with families through daily conversations at drop-off and collection times, as well as more formally through questionnaires to gather specific feedback. Children were regularly asked their views and included in decision making, such as what they wanted to do throughout the day. This inclusive approach helped parents feel valued and ensured that their contributions were reflected in both their children's experiences and development of the service. Families commented positively on feeling meaningfully involved the development of the service. These included, "Asks for feedback periodically and requests any ideas of what we would like to see to improve the service on an ongoing basis. We feel involved in our children's care, well informed, and very happy" and "Very welcoming and always happy to discuss."

Embedded self evaluation and robust quality assurance processes supported continuous improvement. The childminder actively used quality audit tools and best practice guidance to evaluate their service. This approach supported them to identify strengths and areas for development to effectively inform improvements. From this, they had created and implemented a realistic and achievable improvement plan. Recent improvements, such as updating their outings risk assessment to reflect current strategies, were evident within the daily routine. The childminder was knowledgeable about how this had positively impacted on children's safety and wellbeing.

The childminder was experienced and committed to developing their service, with high quality care central to their practice. They made effective use of support from the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) which increased their confidence in specific areas of their role. Ongoing professional learning, including training in reflective practice and supporting children with additional needs, strengthened their skills and improved outcomes for children. Through self evaluation, they identified that they would benefit from regularly completing and revisiting post-training reflections and planned to include this within their improvement priorities. This would help measure the impact of their learning and further enhance children's experiences.

## Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

### Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement. Therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

Children were actively engaged in purposeful play within a well organised, developmentally appropriate

environment. Accessible resources enabled them to make independent choices, building confidence and supporting child-led play. The childminder was responsive to children's interests and cues, engaging with them at their level to sustain involvement. This approach supported children's sustained engagement, confidence, and overall wellbeing.

Children enjoyed play that reflected their interests, supported through a balance of spontaneous and planned activities. The childminder responded effectively to children's emerging interests, such as rotating resources when a child showed interest in babies. During the visit, they offered an ice exploration activity, allowing children to explore and problem solve. The childminder extended children's ideas and thinking through role modelling and some use of questioning. Children also engaged in mark making and reading, joining in freely and following their own ideas. These experiences promoted meaningful play and sustained engagement.

Children confidently explored experiences suited to their age and stage of development. Their problem solving skills were supported through activities such as colour sorting, unlocking boxes with keys, and completing puzzles. The childminder also used natural materials to spark children's curiosity. We discussed how expanding these resources could further promote children's creativity and enrich their play experiences.

Daily routines supported children's independence. For example, unhurried handwashing with effective support from the childminder allowed children to develop key skills. The childminder advised they used daily walks to support children's learning of the environment. We discussed how involving children more in simple risk assessment could strengthen their understanding of risk and how to keep themselves safe. We signposted the childminder to the Care Inspectorate's 'SIMOA - Keeping Children Safe' campaign to support this.

A range of planning and assessment approaches supported children's learning. The childminder had a clear understanding of child development and had recently introduced a more formal observation process. Individual observations identified children's skills and learning, with next steps recorded, where appropriate, to support their progression. Developmental overviews were also completed and used to plan for each child's stage of development. Regular, effective communication with families promoted a shared understanding of children's progress and supported their ongoing development.

Regular outdoor learning experiences were strengthened through strong links with the local community. Children enjoyed outings to parks, groups, and local walks, and the childminder had established connections with other childminders to promote social interaction. These experiences supported children's social development and their understanding of the wider world. Photos showed children engaging in a variety of outdoor activities, both in the garden and the local area. Parents valued the range of outdoor experiences, with one sharing, "[The childminder] takes them to playgroups, soft play areas, and walks regularly which they love and continue to learn."

## Children are supported to achieve **5 - Very Good**

### Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement. Therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

Children and families benefitted from an inclusive ethos and nurturing interactions. Through consistently warm and kind interactions, the childminder was responsive to children's individual needs and supported

their wellbeing. Consistently spending time with children at their level provided opportunities for attachment. The childminder recognised the importance of building positive relationships and felt this was a strength of their service. Parents agreed that they felt connected to the childminder. They commented, "I trust [the childminder] completely" and "[The childminder] actively keeps in touch ensuring [they have] the most up to date information to provide the best care." A child shared, "[The childminder] is very nice and funny and plays with us." This supported children and families to feel valued and included.

Embedded routines helped children feel secure and supported continuity of care. Individualised approaches to toilet learning and sleep respected children's home routines. Mealtimes were calm and sociable, with the childminder sitting alongside children to promote positive eating habits and social skills. They were attentive to children's cues and preferences, offering appropriate alternatives to support healthy nutrition. There remained scope to involve children more in food preparation to further promote their independence and develop important life skills.

A flexible and individualised settling in process supported positive transitions. Carefully planned visits allowed children to visit with their family before starting. This responsive approach helped new children feel comfortable and settled in the childminder's care. The childminder advised older children who attended before and after school were positive role models and enjoyed supporting younger children. One parent advised that one of the most positive aspects of the service was "How fast [my child] settled in as it is a home from home environment."

Children's wellbeing was supported through the childminder's knowledge of their individual needs. Personal plans were in place for each child, containing relevant information about children's health, preferences, and routines. These had been completed when children started and were reviewed regularly through collaboration with families. Parents agreed that they were involved in their child's care, commenting, "We were able to chat through how to deal with [my child's] behaviour" and "[The childminder] regularly asks if there is anything more that [they] could be doing with [my child] to aid [their] development. I always feel included."

The childminder understood their responsibility to keep children safe and was supported by current training and detailed policies. They were confident in identifying and responding to concerns, ensuring children's safety. Chronologies were in place and recorded significant events. We advised that adapting the format would support clearer and more effective follow up of actions. The childminder agreed to make these changes, further strengthening continuity of care for children and families.

## What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

### Requirements

#### Requirement 1

The childminder must ensure that children experience high quality care and support based on individual needs, guidance, and best practice and that they are accepted and valued.

In order to do this you must:

- 1) Ensure that you, the childminder, have the ability to provide developmentally appropriate, balanced, and wide ranging support for individual children.
- 2) Ensure that you, the childminder, can demonstrate age and stage appropriate knowledge and understanding of supporting children with additional support needs, promoting positive behaviour and child development.
- 3) Review policy and procedure for promoting positive behaviour to ensure they are underpinned by best practice guidance and you, the childminder, must display working knowledge of implementing this.

This is in order to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

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, are able to reflect on their practice, and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

**This requirement was made on 1 October 2021.**

#### **Action taken on previous requirement**

A range of resources reflected children's differing ages and stages of development. The childminder demonstrated an understanding of how children learn and develop and has strengthened their knowledge of supporting children with additional support needs. Policies and procedures were underpinned by best practice guidance and were reflected in their practice.

**Met - outwith timescales**

## **Complaints**

Please see Care Inspectorate website ([www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

## Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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