

Donna Cruickshank Child Minding

Ellon

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 September 2026

Service provided by:
Donna Cruickshank

Service provider number:
SP2004938486

Service no:
CS2003052763

About the service

Donna Cruickshank provides a childminding service from their property in the Newburgh area of Aberdeenshire.

Donna Cruickshank is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of seven children under the age 16 years, 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 of the childminder's family. Overnight service will not be provided.

Children are mainly cared for in the dining/kitchen area. They also have access to a smaller playroom which provides space for sleep and nappy changing. There is a fully enclosed rear garden. The part of the premises not to be used is the garage, although it can be used for supervised access to the rear garden.

There was one child present during the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 3 September 2026 between 11:30 and 14:45. 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:

- interacted with one child
- received four completed questionnaires from families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and daily experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing relationships.
- Children were happy, safe, and making good progress in their learning and development.
- Children took part in fun play experiences that reflected their interests and stage of development.
- Strong partnerships with families helped ensure children received consistent, individualised care and support.
- Effective self evaluation and professional learning supported continuous improvement and positive outcomes for children and their families.

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

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.

The childminder was experienced and committed to providing high quality care and support for children. Training in areas, such as first aid and child protection, helped support children's safety and wellbeing. Other professional learning included self evaluation and neurodiversity. Learning from training was used to improve practice and better support children's individual needs. The childminder had also developed supportive links with local childminders, providing opportunities to share ideas, reflect on practice, and improve outcomes for children and families.

A clear set of aims and objectives supported the childminder's practice. These had recently been reviewed to reflect the current service and focused on providing a warm, nurturing environment that supported children's wellbeing, learning, and development. This was evident in daily practice and helped families understand what the service offered.

Families and children had opportunities to share their views and contribute to the development of the service. Feedback was gathered through regular discussions and questionnaires, and families spoke positively about their experiences. Children's views were gathered through daily conversations, observations, and their choices during play. The childminder knew children well and responded to their interests and changing needs. This helped ensure children took part in play experiences they enjoyed and that met their individual needs.

The childminder demonstrated a confident approach to self evaluation and reflection to support continuous improvement. They regularly considered what was working well and where improvements could be made. This had led to positive changes, including improvements to resources, the outdoor play environment, and children's records.

Quality assurance processes were effective in supporting positive outcomes for children. Policies, procedures, and practice were reviewed regularly and records were organised and up to date. This helped ensure the service operated safely and in line with current guidance and legislation. Areas for ongoing improvement had been identified, including maintaining accurate records and continuing to access professional learning opportunities to meet the changing needs of children and families.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

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 happy, settled, and engaged in their play. Younger children enjoyed playing with dolls and stacking cups, which helped support their creativity, imagination, and problem-solving skills. Older children had access to age-appropriate resources, including Lego, which encouraged concentration and creative thinking. Resources were well organised and easily accessible, allowing children to make choices, follow

their interests, and lead their own play. This helped develop their confidence, independence, and decision-making skills.

Children were able to play safely in a fully enclosed garden. The outdoor space was well maintained and provided opportunities for physical play, water play, and planting. These experiences encouraged children to be active, develop physical skills, and learn about the world around them.

Children regularly enjoyed outings in the local community, including visits to the beach, woods, library, and parks. These outings were risk assessed to help children take part safely and develop confidence in managing risk. Children enjoyed den building and imaginative play using loose parts and natural materials to explore their ideas and creativity. Attendance at local groups, such as dancing and toddler sessions, provided opportunities for younger children to make friends, build confidence, and learn alongside others. One child shared, "We are always going somewhere different or learning something new. [The childminder] takes me to different places and groups, such as sensory play, Lego club, the beach, parks, and woodlands."

The childminder was warm, nurturing, and responsive in their interactions with children. They spent time playing alongside children, offering encouragement and support when needed. For example, they joined children in role play, encouraged them as they built with blocks, and praised their efforts when trying something new. The childminder used simple questions to encourage children to talk about their experiences, solve problems, and develop their ideas. As a result, children were confident, engaged, and making good progress in their learning.

The childminder knew children well and provided experiences that reflected their interests, stage of development, and individual needs. Observations with identified next steps, regular reviews, and daily discussions with families informed planning. This helped ensure children enjoyed their play, felt included, and made good progress in their learning and development.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

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 were cared for with patience, kindness, and humour, helping them feel safe, secure, and loved. The childminder responded quickly to children's cues and offered comfort and reassurance when needed. This helped children develop trusting relationships. Parents spoke highly of the support provided. One parent commented, "Donna has a wonderful way with children. [They are] patient and attentive in [their] care." This reflected the nurturing and responsive approach that helped children feel valued and supported.

Children benefited from familiar routines which helped them feel secure and understand what would happen throughout the day. Care routines, including nappy changing, respected children's dignity and privacy. Interactions were warm and caring, helping children feel relaxed and secure. Good hygiene practices, including handwashing, supported children's health and wellbeing and helped them develop healthy habits.

Children's individual sleep routines were respected and supported in a warm and calm environment. Quiet activities, such as reading stories, helped children relax before rest. When children were unsettled, they received comfort and reassurance in line with their needs. Older children had opportunities to relax quietly

on the sofa or enjoy independent play in a separate area. This helped ensure children's individual wellbeing needs were met throughout the day.

Children brought their lunch from home and enjoyed healthy snacks provided by the childminder. Older children were involved in choosing and preparing snacks, helping them learn about healthy eating and develop independence. The childminder sat with younger children during mealtimes and used encouragement and reassurance to help them feel relaxed and confident to try new foods. This helped make mealtimes safe, enjoyable, and supportive of children's wellbeing.

Personal plans were in place for all children and had been reviewed with families in line with legislation. These included information about children's interests, preferences, and support needs. Older children contributed their own views through 'All About Me' information. This helped ensure the childminder knew children well and could respond to their changing needs. Training and professional learning were used to support individual children, including undertaking neurodiversity training to further develop knowledge and skills.

Medication was managed safely. Appropriate records were in place and medication was stored securely and labelled with the child's details and dosage instructions. Information about medication administration was shared with families, helping to keep children safe and well.

Strong relationships with families supported positive outcomes for children. Parents felt welcomed, valued, and confident that their children were safe and well cared for. Daily communication and photographs helped keep families informed about their child's day. Parents spoke very positively about the childminder. Comments included, "I always feel that Donna is taking great care to look out for each child as individuals" and "Donna has an open door policy. [They are] available after hours to text and always replies." Another parent shared, "I am literally in Donna's house every night at pick-up and often end up there for at least an hour after." These comments demonstrated the strong, trusting relationships that had been developed and the childminder's approachable and supportive nature.

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

In order to continue to provide positive outcomes for children, the childminder should embed a system for self evaluation and improvement. Parents and children should be included in the 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).

Supporting guidance includes: A quality framework for day care of children, childminding and school-aged childcare; Your Childminding Journey; My Childminding Experience; Self evaluation for improvement – your guide.

This area for improvement was made on 13 May 2025.

Action taken since then

The childminder had embedded self evaluation into daily practice and used feedback from children and families to support the ongoing development of the service.

Regular reflection, discussions, questionnaires, and observations helped identify strengths and areas for improvement. This had resulted in changes to resources, the outdoor environment, and recording systems.

Children and families were actively involved in shaping the service, helping to support continuous improvement and positive outcomes for children. This demonstrated a commitment to quality assurance and improvement in line with the Health and Social Care Standards and 'A quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors: childminding'.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To continue to meet the individual care needs and interests of each minded child, the childminder should ensure their personal plans are reviewed, with parents, at least once every six months.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected' (HSCS 1.23).

This area for improvement was made on 13 May 2025.

Action taken since then

Personal plans were in place for all children and had been reviewed with families in line with legislation. Plans contained up to date information about children's health and wellbeing needs, interests, preferences, and routines.

Regular discussions with parents ensured that any changes in children's circumstances or support needs were identified and reflected in their plans. This helped ensure the childminder knew children well and could provide care and support that was responsive to their individual needs. As a result, children's needs, wishes, and preferences were understood and respected.

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.scot.

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

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.scot

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.