care inspectorate

A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare

June 2021

Changes to our inspections

We are developing new approaches to scrutiny. We want to make sure that our inspections and other scrutiny work are strongly focused on assessing the extent to which children experience wellbeing. We also want to understand the difference care and learning makes to their lives.

Since 1 April 2018, the **Health and Social Care Standards** have been used across Scotland. They have been developed by Scottish Government to describe what people should experience from a wide range of care and support services. The Care Inspectorate's expectation is that they will be used in planning, commissioning, assessing and delivering care and support. We will use them to inform the decisions we make about quality.

From 2018, on an incremental basis, we have been rolling out revised methods for inspecting care and support services including, care homes for children and young people and schoolcare accommodation (special residential schools). The changes build on approaches we have introduced in the past three years: an emphasis on experiences and outcomes, proportionate approaches in services that perform well, and a focus on supporting improvement in quality.

This framework for early learning and childcare was planned to be launched in spring 2020 but was delayed due to the pandemic. We widely consulted during the development of the framework with the sector. We have not yet been able to test the framework on inspections, however we developed Key question 5, "How good is our care and support during the Covid-19 pandemic?" We used this key question in our scrutiny work of self-evaluation, virtual and on-site inspections during the pandemic. The format of the key question mirrors this extended framework so the sector will be familiar with this.

We are issuing this Early Learning and Childcare Quality Framework to the sector to support you in the self-evaluation of your setting. We will test this in settings when we return to full inspections. After testing the framework at some inspections when it is appropriate to do so, we will update the framework if changes are needed and issue a final version. Before we use it in our full inspection programme, we will notify the sector in advance of full implementation.

The core of the new approach for all early learning and childcare settings including school aged childcare and childminders is a quality framework which sets out the elements that will help us answer key questions about the impact care and learning is making to children.

The primary purpose of a quality framework is to support settings to evaluate their own performance. This framework is then used by our inspectors to provide independent assurance about the quality of care and support.

By setting out what we expect to see in high-quality care and learning provision, we can also help care and learning for children improve. Using a framework in this way develops a shared understanding of what constitutes good care and learning. It also supports openness and transparency in the inspection process.

We have used the Health and Social Care Standards and best practice guidance to illustrate the quality we would expect to see. In addition to reflecting the principles of the Health and Social Care Standards within the illustrations, we have also included direct links to the Health and Social Care Standards. This is to help providers see how all the aspects link together. You can access the Standards at **http://www.newcarestandards.scot/**

We have also identified a range of best practice documents to support high quality outcomes in settings, these are detailed in the 'Improvement toolbox' available within this resource.

How is the framework structured?

The quality framework is framed around key questions. (See the table on page eight of this document). Since the Covid-19 pandemic, we have introduced 'Key question 5: How good is our care and support during the Covid-19 pandemic?' This question will remain in the framework and will be used while settings are operating during the pandemic.

To try and understand what contributes to wellbeing, the key questions are:
- How good is our care and learning?
- How good is our setting?
- How good is our leadership?
- How good is our staff team?
- How good is our care and support during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Under each key question, there are a small number of quality indicators. These have been developed to help answer the key questions. Each quality indicator has a small number of key areas and short bullet points which outlines the areas of practice covered.

Under each quality indicator, we have provided quality illustrations of these key areas at two levels on the six-point scale we use in inspections.

The illustrations describe what we might expect to see in a care setting that is operating at a 'very good' level of quality, and what we might see in a setting that is operating at a 'weak' level of quality.

The illustrations are not a definitive description of care and support and learning provision but are designed to help settings and inspectors evaluate the quality indicators, using the framework.

The final key question is:

- What is our overall capacity for improvement?

This requires a global judgement based on evidence and evaluations from all the other key areas.

The judgement is a forward-looking assessment, but it also takes account of contextual factors which might influence an organisation's capacity to improve the quality of the setting in future. Such factors might include senior staff changes, plans to restructure, or significant changes in funding. We think this is an important question to ask as part of self-evaluation.

In each quality indicator, we have included an **improvement toolbox.** This includes examples of questions that you may use in evaluating the quality of provision. It also contains links to key practice documents that we think will help settings in their improvement journey.

How will this quality framework be used during inspections?

Inspectors will use this quality framework instead of the older approach where we inspected against quality themes. Inspectors will look at a selection of the quality indicators. Which, and how many quality indicators will depend on the type of inspection, the quality of the service, the intelligence we hold about the service and risk factors that we may identify.

When using the framework at inspections, we will select a small number of quality indicators to inspect against. Unless inspecting against Key Question 5, it is likely that we will inspect:

1.1 Nurturing care and support
1.3 Play and learning
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well, and
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values.

We will use the quality illustrations in our professional evaluations about the care and support we see.

In developing this framework, we have considered how best to represent the early learning and childcare sector, including childminders and school-aged childcare. The indicators have

been written to represent the high-quality outcomes we expect in all types of provision. Where the indicator refers to play and learning approaches, we expect services to match this to the needs of their children and service type. Most quality indicators also relate to childminders. These exceptions are quality indicators 4.2 and 4.3, which only apply where childminding assistants are employed.

We will provide an overall evaluation for each of the key questions we inspect, using the six-point scale, from 'unsatisfactory' (1) to 'excellent' (6). This will be derived from the specific quality indicators that we inspect. Where we inspect one quality indicator per key question, the evaluation for that quality indicator will be the evaluation for the key question overall. Where we inspect more than one quality indicator per key question, the overall evaluation for the key question will be the lowest evaluation of the quality indicators for that specific key question.

This recognises that there is a key element of practice that makes the overall key question no better than this evaluation.

How will we use the six-point scale?

The six-point scale is used when evaluating the quality of performance across quality indicators.

6	Excellent	outstanding or sector leading
5	Very good	major strengths
4	Good	important strengths, with some areas for improvement
3	Adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
2	Weak	important weaknesses – priority action required
1	Unsatisfactory	major weaknesses – urgent remedial action required

An evaluation of **excellent** describes performance which is sector leading and supports experiences and outcomes for people which are of outstandingly high quality. There is a demonstrable track record of innovative, effective practice and/or very high-quality performance across a wide range of its activities and from which others could learn. We can be confident that excellent performance is sustainable and that it will be maintained.

An evaluation of **very good** will apply to performance that demonstrates major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for people. There are very few areas for improvement. Those that do exist will have minimal adverse impact on people's experiences and outcomes. While opportunities are taken to strive for excellence within a culture of continuous improvement, performance evaluated as very good does not require significant adjustment.

An evaluation of **good** applies to performance where there is a number of important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh areas for improvement. The strengths will have a significant positive impact on people's experiences and outcomes. However, improvements are required to maximise wellbeing and ensure that people consistently have experiences and outcomes which are as positive as possible.

An evaluation of **adequate** applies where there are some strengths, but these just outweigh weaknesses. Strengths may still have a positive impact but the likelihood of achieving positive experiences and outcomes for people is reduced significantly because key areas of performance need to improve. Performance which is evaluated as adequate may be tolerable in particular circumstances, such as where a service or partnership is not yet fully established, or in the midst of major transition. However, continued performance at adequate level is not acceptable. Improvements must be made by building on strengths while addressing those elements that are not contributing to positive experiences and outcomes for people.

An evaluation of **weak** will apply to performance in which strengths can be identified but these are outweighed or compromised by significant weaknesses. The weaknesses, either individually or when added together, substantially affect children's experiences or outcomes. Without improvement as a matter of priority, the welfare or safety of people may be compromised, or their critical needs not met. Weak performance requires action in the form of structured and planned improvement by the provider or partnership with a mechanism to demonstrate clearly that sustainable improvements have been made.

An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** will apply when there are major weaknesses in critical aspects of performance which require immediate remedial action to improve experiences and outcomes for people. It is likely that people's welfare or safety will be compromised by risks which cannot be tolerated. Those accountable for carrying out the necessary actions for improvement must do so, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that people are protected, and their wellbeing improves without delay.

How can early learning and childcare (ELC) services use this quality framework?

The framework is designed to support care services in their self-evaluations. We will work with ELC services and sector-wide bodies to build the capacity for self-evaluation, based on this framework.

Self-evaluation is a core part of assuring quality and supporting improvement. The process of self-evaluation, as part of a wider quality assurance approach, requires a cycle of self-evaluation based around these three questions.

- **How are we doing?**
  This is the key to knowing whether you are doing the right things and that, as a result, people experience high quality, safe and compassionate care and support that meets their needs, rights and choices.

- **How do we know?**
  Answering the question 'how we are doing?' must be done based on robust evidence. The quality indicators in this document, along with the views of people experiencing care and support and their carers can help you to evaluate how you are doing. You should also consider performance data collected nationally or by your service.

- **What are we going to do now?**
  Understanding how well your service is performing should help you see what is working well and what needs to be improved. From that, you should be able to develop plans for improvement based on effective practice, guidance, research, testing and available improvement support.

Using this quality framework can help provide an effective structure around self-evaluation. The diagram below summarises the approach.

How are we doing?

How do we know?

- How good is the care and learning, and what difference is it making?
- How good is our staff team?
- How good is our leadership?
- How good is our setting?
- How good is our care and support during the Covid-19 pandemic?

What are we going to do now?

Irrespective of our role as the national scrutiny body, care providers will want to satisfy themselves, their stakeholders, funders, boards and committees that they are providing high-quality services. We believe this quality framework is a helpful way to support care services to assess their performance against our expectations of outcomes for children outwith the inspection process.

2. The quality indicators

Key question 1: How good is our care and learning?	Key question 2: How good is our setting?	Key question 3: How good is our leadership?	Key question 4: How good is our staff team?	Key Question 5: How good is our care and support during the Covid-19 pandemic
1.1 Nurturing care and support	**2.1** Quality of the setting for play and learning	**3.1** Quality assurance and improvement are led well	**4.1** Staff skills, knowledge, and values	**5.1** Children's health and wellbeing are supported and safeguarded during the Covid-19 pandemic.
1.2 Children are safe and protected	**2.2** Children experience high quality facilities	**3.2** Leadership of play and learning	**4.2** Staff recruitment*	**5.2** Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff.
1.3 Play and learning		**3.3** Leadership and management of staff and resources	**4.3** Staff deployment *	
1.4 Family engagement			***4.2 & 4.3 do not apply to childminders who do not work with assistants**	**5.3** Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during Covid-19.
1.5 Effective transitions				***Not applicable to childminding services who do not employ assistants.**

Key Question 6: What is our overall capacity for improvement?

Key question 1:
How good is our care and learning?

This key question has five quality indicators associated with it.

They are:
1.1   Nurturing care and support
1.2   Children are safe and protected
1.3   Play and learning
1.4   Family engagement
1.5   Effective transitions

Quality indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Key areas include the extent to which:

- children are nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience
- children's individual wellbeing benefits from the effective use of personal planning
- all children get the support they need to reach their full potential.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on how well children are nurtured and supported. Children's care and learning routines are individual to their needs and are delivered with kindness and compassion. Personal planning reflects the holistic needs of each child to improve their wellbeing and support positive outcomes. It highlights the importance of involving children and their families in making decisions about their care and development. Staff are skilled at building resilience and identifying and supporting children with any additional support needs. It considers how planning and assessment ensures appropriate, proportionate and timely support, including specialist input where required. It focuses on the need for effective communication and for children to be well supported at times of change and transition.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children are nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience	
Children experience warmth, caring and nurturing approaches to their personal care and learning needs. Practice by staff reflects families' personal preferences and promotes children's independence, privacy and dignity. Where children require support with personal care, interactions throughout are warm, caring and nurtures children's security, confidence and positive relationships.	Children's personal care needs are delivered in a manner that does not fully reflect personal preferences. Opportunities are missed to foster independence, privacy, and dignity. Where children require support with personal care, this approach may be task orientated and lacking in warm, caring interactions.

Quality illustrations

Very good	Weak
When meals and snacks are provided, children are fully involved in the planning and preparation of these as appropriate. Children and staff enjoy eating together in an unhurried and relaxed atmosphere, ensuring a caring and positive social experience. Staff recognise daily routines as a rich opportunity to promote close attachment. Staff are focused on all children and can respond immediately should an emergency, such as choking, occur. Food choices are nutritious and reflect current guidance. They are appropriate for children's individual cultural and dietary needs. Children experience warm, caring relationships with staff when receiving support with feeding. Where children are weaning, or are receiving their nutrition from milk feeds, this is well planned. Where appropriate, children are included in the overall meal or snack experience with others in the setting. Fresh water is available throughout the day and children are encouraged to remain hydrated. Children's safety and emotional security and wellbeing are supported through sensitive arrangements for sleep routines. Staff understand the importance of sleep for children's overall development. Routines are reflective of individual children's needs and family wishes and promote good habits around sleep.	When meals and snacks are provided, there is little involvement of children in the planning and preparation. Children and staff do not sit together, and staff may be busy on other tasks. This can lead to a hurried and stressful experience for children. Staff may be distracted and not alert to what is happening with the children. Food choices may be unhealthy and are not reflective of current guidance. There is limited understanding of children's individual cultural and dietary needs. Where children are weaning or are receiving their nutrition from milk feeds, staff have limited understanding of the need to promote warm, caring relationships at this time. They may receive their meals or snacks in a task driven manner rather than reflecting their individual needs. Children may not be included in the overall meal or snack experience with others in the setting, limiting their opportunity for social engagement. Children may be thirsty throughout the day as fresh water is not easily accessible to them. Staff do not understand the importance of hydration. Children's safety, emotional security and wellbeing are compromised by poor sleep arrangements. Staff have limited understanding of the importance of sleep for children's overall development. Routines do not fully reflect individual children's needs and family wishes and as such may impact on good habits around sleep.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children's individual wellbeing benefits from the effective use of personal planning	
Children's overall wellbeing is supported through effective use of personal planning, taking account of the wellbeing indicators. Children and families are central to this process ensuring effective information sharing which is used by staff to promote consistency and continuity of care. This enables the relevant staff to respond quickly, sensitively, and compassionately to changes in a child's life. Where children require medication, this is delivered in a safe and sensitive manner. Staff support children's understanding of their need to take medication ensuring increased confidence and independence in the management of their condition.	Children's holistic wellbeing needs are not always met as staff have limited understanding of the importance of embedding wellbeing indicators within their personal planning approach. Personal plans do not comply with national guidance and legislation, or support consistency and continuity of care routines and development. Personal plans are not always well maintained or regularly reviewed, and children and families have little input in this process, which could result in poorer outcomes overall. There is inconsistency or a lack of understanding regarding the management and administration of medication. Children's confidence to manage their medication may be affected. There may also be the potential of risk for children where they refuse to take their medication.
All children get the support they need to reach their full potential.	
All children get the support they need to reach their full potential. Relevant staff work proactively with children, families, and key agencies to identify appropriate next steps and strategies based on individual needs and prior learning. This is used consistently and effectively by all to ensure positive outcomes. Staff are knowledgeable about the potential impact on children of adverse childhood experiences and can implement supports to build children and family resilience where needed.	The views, knowledge and expertise of children and families are not fully recognised and valued. Links with other professionals are not yet resulting in positive outcomes for children. Staff lack an awareness of the potential impact of adverse childhood experiences and miss opportunities to implement supports to build children and family resilience where needed. Therefore, not all children get the support they need to reach their full potential.

Links to the 'Health and Social Care Standards'

- 1.14 My future care and support needs are anticipated as part of my assessment.

- 1.15 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.

- 1.19 My care and support meets my needs and is right for me.

- 1.23 My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected.

- 2.15 I am enabled to resolve conflict, agree rules and build positive relationships with other people as much as I can.

- 2.17 I am fully involved in developing and reviewing my personal plan, which is always available to me. Children are supported to feel safe, secure and protected from harm.

- 3.5 As a child or young person, I am helped to develop a positive view of myself and to form and sustain trusting and secure relationships.

- 3.6 I feel at ease because I am greeted warmly by people and they introduce themselves.

- 3.10 As a child or young person I feel valued, loved and secure.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How do we ensure children's individual needs are considered, responded to and planned for with families?	ACES: https://www.gov.scot/publications/adverse-childhood-experiences/
How do we ensure children's personal plans are maintained in line with legislation and that they fully support children's needs?	Additional support for learning: https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-support-learning-action-plan/

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How do we know personal plans are having a positive impact on children's nurture, care and support? What best practice and current approaches are we using to influence and support children to reach their full potential? How do we link effectively with other professionals to support all of our children and families?	Applying nurture as a whole school approach: **https://bit.ly/3apyBCM** Becoming breastfeeding friendly Scotland: **https://www.gov.scot/publications/ becoming-breastfeeding-friendly- scotland-report/pages/15/** Early years safe sleep guide: **https://scottishcotdeathtrust.org/wp- content/uploads/2019/02/early-years- safe-sleep-guide.pdf** Food matters: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ how-we-support-improvement/ care-inspectorate-programmes-and- publications/food-matters/** Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC): **https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/** Good practice guidance: prevention and management of choking episodes in babies and children: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ media/3913/good-practice-guidance- prevention-and-management-of- choking-episodes-in-babies-and- children.pdf**

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
	Guide to the General Data Protection Regulations, (GDPR): **https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/ government/uploads/system/uploads/ attachment_data/file/711097/guide-to- the-general-data-protection-regulation- gdpr-1-0.pdf**
	Infection prevention and control in childcare settings (daycare andchildminding settings): **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ media/1538/infection-prevention-and- control-in-childcare-settings.pdf**
	Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ media/1549/management-of-medication- in-daycare-of-children-and-childminding. pdf**
	Nappy changing facilities for early learning and childcare services-information to support improvement: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ media/1558/nappy-changing-guidance-for- early-years-and-childcare-services.pdf**
	Safe sleep Scotland: **https://safesleepscotland.org/**
	Toothbrushing Programme National Standards, (Childsmile): **http://www.child-smile.org.uk/ professionals/childsmile-core/ toothbrushing-programme-national- standards.aspx**

Quality indicator 1.2: Children are safe and protected

Key areas include the extent to which:

- children are supported to feel safe, secure and are protected from harm.
- staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and are supported by comprehensive child protection procedures to inform their practice.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on how effective relationships ensure children are safe, secure and protected from harm. It is about ensuring staff have the capacity to competently respond and action wellbeing, child protection and safeguarding concerns. The importance of how staff take account of local and national policies to promote the safety and protection of children is highlighted. Children accessing digital and on-line learning opportunities are safe and protected from potential harm.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children are supported to feel safe, secure and are protected from harm	
All staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities relating to keeping children safe and protected. They are proactive in keeping their knowledge up to date. Strong links and effective partnerships with other organisations are in place to ensure children's safety and wellbeing. A competent and well-trained designated person has overall responsibility for child protection and safeguarding. They help to reduce the risk of harm to children through effective monitoring of practice. This ensures the relevant person takes the appropriate action at the earliest opportunity.	The relevant staff do not know children and families well enough to build meaningful relationships. They do not have all the information they need to help keep children safe and protected from harm. Procedures are not in place to evaluate the effectiveness of staff practice. This means there is an increased risk to children. Leaders have failed to address and identify staff training weaknesses. Links with other organisations, which could assist in the protection of children, are not fully effective.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children are supported to feel safe, secure and are protected from harm	
Staff work together to accurately identify and address areas of learning in relation to safeguarding and child protection practice and procedures. Staff skilfully engage with families, other organisations and the wider community to minimise risks to children. They promote fairness, challenge discrimination, and ensure children receive the support they need at the right time to build resilience. They support children to stay safe including when engaging in online activities while in the service.	Staff may be unfamiliar with online activity children engage in and fail to recognise the risks presented. They may lack confidence and understanding of digital and online resources. As a result, there is a potential that children may be at risk while participating in online activity within the service.
Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and are supported by effective child protection procedures to inform their practice	
Detailed safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are in place to help the relevant staff keep children safe and protect them from harm. These policies and procedures reflect emerging issues within society. Accurate record keeping and meaningful chronologies ensure that the relevant staff have the information they need to help them keep children safe and protected.	Leaders have not sufficiently developed and implemented effective child protection policies and procedures. Staff have a limited understanding of their roles and responsibilities, therefore there is a potential increased risk to children. Sensitive information is not stored securely and presents a risk to children's confidentiality. Poorly maintained children's records and chronologies increase the risk to children. The relevant people do not have access to the information they need to assess children's needs and keep them safe and protected. Overall, leaders have not taken all the necessary steps to uphold the rights of all children to be safe and protected from harm.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 3.20 I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.

- 3.21 I am protected from harm because people are alert and respond to signs of significant deterioration in my health and wellbeing, that I may be unhappy or may be at risk of harm.

- 3.22 I am listened to and taken seriously if I have a concern about the protection and safety of myself or others, with appropriate assessments and referrals made.

- 4.17 If I am supported and cared for by a team or more than one organisation, this is well coordinated so that I experience consistency and continuity.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How well do we listen to and support children to ensure they are safe, secure and protected from harm?	Children & Young People's Commissioner, Convention on the Rights of the Child: **https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc**
How do we know our staff fully understand our systems to keep children safe?	Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC): **https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/**
How often do we review and update our processes to support and keep children safe?	National child protection guidelines: **https://www2.gov.scot/ Resource/0045/00450733.pdf**
How well are our relationships with other agencies working?	National risk framework to support the assessment of children and young people: **https://www.gov.scot/publications/ national-risk-framework-support- assessment-children-young-people/**
How do we ensure we communicate effectively with all parties to ensure children's safety and wellbeing?	
How can we be confident that our children are protected from all forms of abuse when accessing online activities within our service?	Online safety – NSPCC resource: **https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping- children-safe/online-safety/**
How do we ensure staff are up to date and can recognise the signs of online abuse, such as, grooming, cyberbullying and sexting?	What is Child Abuse? NSPCC resource: **https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is- child-abuse/**

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Key areas include the extent to which:

- children have fun as they experience high quality play, learning and development opportunities.
- children are empowered to be fully involved in their play and learning through the skilled interactions and actions of staff.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on children's right to play, have fun, experience joy and the resulting impact this has on their learning and development. It recognises the value of play as a concept in itself, as well as an opportunity for developing life skills and learning. It highlights the importance of placing the needs and interests of children at the centre of their play and learning. It acknowledges the critical role of staff to support children's current interests and curiosities to promote their learning and development.

It emphasises the importance of a very good understanding of child development, theory and practice. Quality assessments are used effectively to promote all aspects of children's development, learning and wellbeing. This ensures that children's successes and achievements are maximised, and any supports are identified and implemented.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children have fun as they experience high quality play, learning and development opportunities	
Children are meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned high quality experiences that promote children's choice and independence. Well considered innovations and creative approaches successfully engage children's imagination and enrich their play and learning. Play experiences develop skills in language, literacy and numeracy.	Children have too few opportunities to have fun and be actively involved in leading their play and learning. Planning approaches to play and learning may be too adult directed or lack appropriate adult input. There are missed opportunities to support children's creativity and choices through their play experiences.

Not all children experience learning that is relevant, personalised, or sufficiently challenging for their stage of development |

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children have fun as they experience high quality play, learning and development opportunities	
Planning approaches are child centred and responsive to children's interests and life experiences. As a result, children are progressing well, and are happy and confident. Children's opportunities for play and learning are enhanced through strong connections to their own and wider communities.	Children have little access to their own or wider communities. This limits access to a wide range of resources and experiences to stimulate children's interests and enhance play and learning opportunities.
Children are empowered to be fully involved in their play and learning through the skilled interactions and actions of staff	
high quality play and learning experiences. They support the emotional resilience of children and families through holistic and nurturing approaches to secure children's wellbeing including the right to play. High quality observations and skilled interactions promote children's creativity and curiosity. Effective use of questioning, extends children's thinking, widens their skills, and consolidates their learning through play. Children make informed choices about leading their play and learning within a stimulating, challenging, creative setting. Through careful observations and effective assessment of information, progress and achievements are recognised and enhanced. Any additional supports are identified, planned for, and implemented. This highly responsive approach ensures children are developing a broad range of lifelong learning skills.	Current child development, theory and practice is not used effectively to develop quality play and learning experiences for children. Conversations with children lack structure and challenge and missed opportunities to build on their interests. Some children are not experiencing appropriate opportunities to support and consolidate their own learning through play and are not sufficiently challenged at an appropriate level. There are limited approaches in place to evaluate children's progress and achievements. Staff do not use information effectively to enable them to respond and plan appropriately to meet children's individual needs, including additional supports where required. There is a lack of understanding of the importance of supporting emotional resilience and children's right to play. Children are not fully supported to reach their potential and develop lifelong learning skills

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 1.27. I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me.

- 2.27. 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 to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity.

- 3.13 I am treated as an individual by people who respect my needs, choices and wishes, and anyone making a decision about my future care and support knows me.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How are we using national and current best practice to plan children's play and learning experiences? How well do we support and encourage children's natural curiosity in our setting? What approaches are we using to promote children's developing language, numeracy and literacy skills? How effective are our processes to track children's development, progress and achievements? How well are we involving children in identifying and assessing their learning and progress?	Animal Magic: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/animal-magic/ Out of school care - a review of children's experiences: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/3465/out-of-school-care-review-of-childrens-experiences-march-2019.pdf Curriculum for Excellence: https://scotlandscurriculum.scot/4/ Gender Equal Play: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/gender-equal-play-in-early-learning-and-childcare/ Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC): https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/ Loose parts play - a toolkit: https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Loose-Parts-Play-web.pdf

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
	My Childminding Experience: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/my-childminding-experience/

Our Creative Journey: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/our-creative-journey/

Out to Play: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1289/out-to-play-creating-outdoor-play-experiences-for-children-practical-guidance.pdf

Playwork Principles: https://www.playscotland.org/resources/print/The-Playwork-Principles-an-overview.pdf?plsctml_id=19402

Play Types toolkit: https://www.playscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/Play-Scotland-Play-Types-Tooolkit-bringing-more-play-into-the-school-day.pdf

Play Strategy for Scotland: https://www2.gov.scot/resource/0042/00425722.pdf

Realising the ambition - Being Me: https://education.gov.scot/media/3bjpr3wa/realisingtheambition.pdf |

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
	Schematic Play: https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Learning-resources/schematic-play
	Space to Grow: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/space-to-grow/
	What is Play?: https://www.playscotland.org/playful-learning/what-is-play-2/

Quality indicator 1.4: Family engagement

Key areas include the extent to which:

- high-quality engagement facilitates a partnership approach to care play and learning outcomes.
- staff recognise the importance of engaging families in understanding how to support their child's learning in the home environment.
- where needed, well planned early intervention supports and strengthens children's and families' overall health, wellbeing and resilience.
- it recognises the need to ensure that children's and families' rights are respected and promoted.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on engaging with families to support children's care, play and learning together. This recognises the importance of sharing key approaches with families focused on the home learning environment. The emphasis is on working in partnership with families to achieve positive outcomes for children. It highlights the importance of children and families building resilience and feeling loved, safe and respected so that children can realise their full potential. It recognises family differences and responds without judgement.

Staff understand the importance of children's human rights and reflect this in all of their work. This ensures children are healthy, happy and safe and that they have a say in their lives. Staff value diversity and challenge discrimination where this is needed.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
High-quality engagement facilitates a partnership approach to care, play and learning outcomes	
Families benefit from respectful and trusting relationships from the first contact and are encouraged to regularly and meaningfully engage in their children's play and learning. Staff recognise the strengths that families bring to the setting, they use individualised approaches to capture this knowledge for the benefit of all children. Creative approaches are used to engage families to be fully involved across all aspects of their children's play and learning.	Families' introductions to the setting are not planned or sufficiently flexible to support their circumstances and children's needs. There is limited understanding of the aims, purpose and benefits of family engagement. Family strengths and knowledge are not shared and used to influence learning opportunities for the benefit of all children.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Staff recognise the importance of engaging families in understanding how to support their child's learning in the home environment	
Staff have established strong partnerships with families to share information on children's learning at home and in the setting. There is regular and structured engagement with families that impacts on the quality of the children's learning experiences.	Staff do not engage effectively with families to share information on children's learning at home and in settings. Engagement with families is not structured or planned effectively. There is little evidence of impact or benefits to children's learning at home.
Where needed, well planned early intervention supports and strengthens children's and families' overall health, wellbeing, and resilience	
Families are supported to build trusting relationships at the earliest possible stage. Staff recognise that families need the time and space to build secure relationships. Families are active participants in identifying and agreeing intended outcomes for their children and staff support them to achieve this. Staff understand that supporting families to build overall health, wellbeing and resilience in their lives must be appropriate, proportionate, and timely.	The needs of families are not fully understood by the staff who support them. Opportunities to respond effectively at an early stage are missed. Little value is put on building effective trusting relationships with families to improve children's and families' overall health, wellbeing, and resilience.
It recognises the need to ensure that children's and families' rights are respected and promoted	
All staff recognise and promote the rights of children and families; all children and their families are treated with dignity and respect and their basic human rights are upheld. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), along with the Health and Social Care Standards, inform the approach to considering children's rights in decision making.	A rights-based approach is not evident within the service and at times procedures may compromise children or families' dignity and respect. This may be observed in staff interactions or indirectly through written communication, policies and procedures.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
It recognises the need to ensure that children's and families' rights are respected and promoted	
Diversity is valued and discrimination is challenged. Effective plans are in place to improve outcomes for all children with a focus on those facing the most challenges. A strong focus on driving improvement promoting flexibility and encouraging innovation to achieve high quality, rights-based care and learning experiences is evident throughout the work with children and families.	Staff are not familiar with the UNCRC, and Health and Social Care Standards and children's rights are not considered in decision making. Equality and diversity are not well promoted or supported and approaches to tackling discrimination are not well embedded. Therefore, families may not feel secure. Plans for improvement do not take account of the unique challenges faced by children and their families, limiting opportunities to reach those families facing the most challenge.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- I am accepted and valued whatever my needs, ability, gender, age, faith, mental health, race, background or sexual orientation.

- 1.2. My human rights are protected and promoted, and I experience no discrimination.

- 1.6. I get the most out of life because the people and organisation who support and care for me have an enabling attitude and believe in my potential.

- 1.29 I am supported to be emotionally resilient, have a strong sense of my own identity and wellbeing, and address any experiences of trauma or neglect.

- 2.2. I am empowered and enabled to be as independent and as in control of my life as I want and can be.

- 2.3. I am supported to understand and uphold my rights.

- 2.9 I receive and understand information and advice in a format or language that is right for me.

- 3.14 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.

- 4.2. The organisations that support and care for me help tackle health and social inequalities.

- 4.16 I am supported and cared for by people I know so that I experience consistency and continuity.

- 4.18 I benefit from different organisations working together and sharing information about me promptly where appropriate, and I understand how my privacy and confidentiality are respected.

- 4.23 I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How well do we support and respect the individual needs and rights of children and families? When children and their families first arrive at our setting, how do we know they are welcomed and have a positive experience of their induction? In what ways do we build empowering and respectful relationships with children and families? How do we ensure we are providing an inclusive service for children and families? How well do we ensure that our children and families voices are included in our decision making? How effective are our partnership approaches (parents, health education, social service, third sector, other care services) when ensuring children's wellbeing needs are being met?	Family learning and engagement: **https://education.gov.scot/ improvement/practice-exemplars/ family-learning-framework/** Bringing Generations Together: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ how-we-support-improvement/ care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/bringing-generations-together/** Children & Young People's Commissioner, Convention on the Rights of the Child: **https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc** Out of school care, survey of parents in Scotland: **https://www.gov.scot/publications/out-school-care-survey-parents-scotland/** Parents as partners in their children's learning – toolkit: **https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/ Documents/parents-as-partners-toolkit. pdf** The UNCRC **https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc**

Quality indicator 1.5: Effective transitions

Key areas include the extent to which:

- approaches to transitions promote children's security and wellbeing.
- effective communication, throughout transition promotes continuity and progression of children's care, play and learning.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on the need for children to be well supported at times of transition. Recognising that moving into and out of the early learning and childcare setting, or moving through different rooms or stages of learning requires careful planning. This includes developing procedures that consider children's individual and developmental needs within the transition planning process. It promotes the need for meaningful consultation and effective communication with children, families and all professionals involved when any changes in the arrangements for their care, play and learning are due to take place.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Approaches to transitions promote children's security and wellbeing	
The approach to transitions places the child and their family at the heart of any decision-making process. Wherever possible, children are supported to transition when it is appropriate, and they are ready to do so. There is a wider focus on children's development and learning and decisions are not solely based on children's age. Once transitions are agreed, there is a planned approach that is individual to each child and their family to enable them to feel secure with the changes. This is not limited to visits, but also includes other innovative ways to make connections and begin to build trusting relationships before permanent moves take place.	The approach to transitions does not give due consideration to the needs of the children and their families. The process of decision-making may be inflexible or may not be consistently applied. Key information is not considered when planning for changes to children's care, play and learning experience. It is likely that decisions are based on children's age rather than including a broader range of considerations. Once transitions are agreed, these take place at short notice with limited opportunities for children to adjust and feel secure.

Quality illustrations

Very good	Weak
Approaches to transitions promote children's security and wellbeing	
Staff are sensitive to, and can recognise, where any change may impact on other children. They use flexible approaches and innovative ideas to enable children to maintain friendships where appropriate.

Together these approaches support children and families to feel confident and secure as they move to another stage of learning or to a new setting. | A tokenistic approach to supporting transition is applied and opportunities to support children to begin to form trusting relationships may be missed or limited.

There is limited understanding of the impact on remaining children and as such some children may not receive support as they experience change and in some cases loss. Children experience insecurity and distress because of the management of transition within the setting. |
| **Effective communication, throughout transition promotes continuity and progression of children's care, play and learning** | |
| All staff recognise the importance of effective communication and implement this when children are experiencing any transition. Arrangements are in place to foster positive working relationships internally and across other settings children move to, such as local primary schools or another childcare setting.

Key information to support children's continuity and progression in their care and learning are shared appropriately, securely and in good time. Staff use this information effectively to plan for both continuity and change in children's care, play and learning needs. As a result, children are happy, stimulated and receive appropriate challenge throughout their transition. | Arrangements in the setting do not support effective communication when children are experiencing transition. Implementation of transition processes contribute to creating or maintaining barriers. Staff communication is ineffective whether internally or externally, and opportunities to support children are missed.

Key information to support children is not shared appropriately, securely and in good time. Where information is shared it may not be sufficiently up to date or detailed to accurately provide a current picture of the child and their family. There may be significant gaps in information or staff may not use information well. As a result, children will experience a lack of continuity and progression in their care, play and learning needs throughout transition. |

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- I am accepted and valued whatever my needs, ability, gender, age, faith, mental health, race, background or sexual orientation.

- 1.2. My human rights are protected and promoted, and I experience no discrimination.

- 1.6. I get the most out of life because the people and organisation who support and care for me have an enabling attitude and believe in my potential.

- 1.29 I am supported to be emotionally resilient, have a strong sense of my own identity and wellbeing, and address any experiences of trauma or neglect.

- 2.2. I am empowered and enabled to be as independent and as in control of my life as I want and can be.

- 2.3. I am supported to understand and uphold my rights.

- 2.9 I receive and understand information and advice in a format or language that is right for me.

- 3.14 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.

- 4.2. The organisations that support and care for me help tackle health and social inequalities.

- 4.16 I am supported and cared for by people I know so that I experience consistency and continuity.

- 4.18 I benefit from different organisations working together and sharing information about me promptly where appropriate, and I understand how my privacy and confidentiality are respected.

- 4.23 I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How do we know our approach to transition supports best outcomes for children and their families? In what ways do family and children's views influence decisions about transitions within our setting? How well do we link with other professionals to make a positive difference to children's experience of transition? How confident are we that our record keeping and relevant information to support children and their families is shared effectively and securely to support positive transitions? How well do we ensure that transitions are child-centred, sensitively planned and implemented? How effective are our partnership approaches (parents, health education, social service, third sector, other care services) when ensuring children's wellbeing needs are being met? How do we measure the positive difference our transition process is making to children and their families?	Bringing generations together: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/bringing-generations-together/** Children & Young People's Commissioner, Convention on the Rights of the Child: **https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc** Out of school care, survey of parents in Scotland: **https://www.gov.scot/publications/out-school-care-survey-parents-scotland/** Parents as partners in their children's learning - toolkit: **https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/Documents/parents-as-partners-toolkit.pdf** The UNCRC: **https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc** Pre-Birth to Three: Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop - Transitions **https://youtu.be/6zIkBLTj-KM**

Key question 2:
How good is our setting?

This key question has two quality indicators associated with it.

They are:

2.1   Quality of the setting for play and learning
2.2   Children experience high quality facilities

Quality indicator 2.1: Quality of the setting for play and learning

Key areas include the extent to which:

- Children benefit from high quality play and learning settings.
- Staff enable children to influence the design of the setting and the provision of appropriate resources and how they use them.

Descriptor

This indicator highlights the importance of having an inspiring setting, whether delivered indoors, outdoors or a blend of both. It makes clear the importance of children having an active role in influencing the design of the setting and in shaping their experiences and activities throughout the day. It positively supports children to access play and learning opportunities that will impact on their development, health, wellbeing and happiness. Staff understand the importance of outdoor play for children's health and wellbeing, promoting sustainability and caring for the environment. The setting reflects a risk benefit approach to children's play, learning and development.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children benefit from high quality play and learning settings	
The setting has been designed to empower children to actively experience play and learning challenges centred on their needs and interests. Opportunities are well matched to the stages of development of children and promote fun, learning and independence.	The setting design has limited opportunity to empower children to actively experience play and learning challenges centred on their needs and interests.
Staff recognise the right of all children to enjoy outdoor play. Children can influence when they play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural play and learning environment. Children are confident in exploring and developing their outdoor environment, supported by staff who actively support and encourage children in their endeavours.	The design of the setting provides limited play and learning opportunities. Not enough thought has gone into meeting the range of needs of all children and reducing potential barriers to their play and learning.

The setting is not well maintained and may compromise children's health, safety and wellbeing. |

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children benefit from high quality play and learning settings	
There are safe, cosy spaces indoors and out where children can rest or sleep when they choose. There is appropriate space where staff can speak in confidence to parents and carers when needed. Children benefit from social spaces that are designed around them. The layout enables children's privacy to be respected. The setting stimulates children's natural curiosity, and they have fun as they develop their skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving. Children are engrossed and motivated in their play as they learn and are progressing very well in all aspects of their development. Staff understand the positive impact rich, multi-sensory outdoor play and learning has on children's resilience, health and wellbeing. Children have uninterrupted time to become absorbed in their play and have fun.	Staff demonstrate limited understanding of the benefits of the outdoors to children's play, learning and development. Current best practice or research is not used effectively to inform their knowledge in this area. Access to outdoor areas may be limited by a lack of vision, limiting children's opportunities to benefit from enriching outdoor experiences. Children's views do not sufficiently influence their access to outdoors. Staff do not always recognise when children need more energetic, outdoor experiences.
Staff enable children to influence the design of the setting and the provision of appropriate resources and how they use them	
The design of the setting enables children to be independent and make choices. Children are encouraged to take positive risks which support them to develop skills for life. Positive approaches to the benefits of risky play underpin effective outdoor and physical play and learning experiences. Staff have worked with parents to ensure that they understand the benefits of children enjoying riskier play.	Children's needs and views are not consistently sought or taken into consideration when designing the setting and experiences. The design of the setting limits children's opportunities to be independent and make choices. Children are unable to direct their own play and activities in the way they choose. There are few opportunities for children to learn about sustainability and caring for their natural environment.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Staff enable children to influence the design of the setting and the provision of appropriate resources and how they use them	
Staff embrace a risk benefit approach and support children to safely engage in play to push their own boundaries and build self-confidence. Staff actively engage with children to enable them to direct their play and activities in the way they choose. Children know that they are listened to and that their views matter. They have a key role in shaping the environment and their experiences. Space has been thoughtfully arranged to allow children control over what they do and how they play. Opportunities are provided for children to learn about sustainability and caring for their natural environment. Well-resourced play areas and experiences support and extend children's learning in all areas. The extensive range of interesting materials, access to nature, tools and open-ended resources enable big scale and small world play. This engages children's curiosity and challenges their thinking.	Staff may demonstrate an approach to risk that is either risk averse or not well considered. This may result in the potential for harm. Staff may not engage effectively with parents and carers to deepen their understanding of the benefits of riskier outdoor play and learning experiences. Children's confidence may be affected where staff place unnecessary restrictions on their play and learning experiences. The breadth and balance of resources do not sufficiently meet children's stages of development or offer challenge and exploration. Resources are of poor quality and do not engage children's interest.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 1.25 I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.

- 1.32 As a child, I play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural environment.

- 2.24 I make informed choices and decisions about the risks I take in my daily life and am encouraged to take positive risks which enhance the quality of my life.

- 2.27 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.

- 5.17 My environment is secure and safe.

- 5.18 My environment is relaxed, welcoming, peaceful and free from avoidable and intrusive noise and smells.

- 5.19 My environment has plenty of natural light and fresh air and the lighting, ventilation and heating can be adjusted to meet my needs and wishes.

- 5.20 I have enough physical space to meet my needs and wishes.

- 5.21 I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices.

- 5.22 I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How can we be confident that our setting maximises opportunities for children to be challenged, creative and engaged in their play and learning? In what way does the design of our setting enable children to be independent and make choices, shaping their individual play and learning needs? How effective are we at using current and national practice to effectively capture and extend children's play and learning opportunities? How do we know our setting provides a wide range of challenging outdoor play and learning experiences that support health and wellbeing across all spaces for children? How do we ensure we are confident in promoting outdoor play experiences? What approaches do we have to ensure children access and effectively use, develop and care for their natural environment?	ELC: Delivering High Quality Play and Learning Environments Outdoors. Practice note: **http://www.careinspectorate.com/ images/ELC_practice_note.pdf** Loose Parts Play - toolkit: **https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/ wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Loose- Parts-Play-web.pdf** My World Outdoors: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ how-we-support-improvement/ care-inspectorate-programmes-and- publications/my-world-outdoors/** Our Creative Journey: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ how-we-support-improvement/ care-inspectorate-programmes-and- publications/our-creative-journey/** Out to Play: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ media/1289/out-to-play-creating- outdoor-play-experiences-for-children- practical-guidance.pdf** Play Strategy for Scotland: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ media/1297/play-strategy-for-scotland- our-vision.pdf** Play Strategy for Scotland Action Plan: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ media/1296/play-strategy-for-scotland- our-action-plan.pdf**

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
	Playtime Revolution – a resource from Grounds for Learning: **https://education.gov scot/nih/ Documents/**
	Positive approach to risk in play: **https://www.careinspectorate. com/index.php/guidance/9- professional/2961-positive-approach-to- risk-in-play**
	Scotland's Outdoor Play and Learning Coalition Position Statement **https://www.playscotland.org/wp- content/uploads/Scotland%E2%80%99s- Outdoor-Play-based-Learning- Coalition-Position-Statement.pdf**
	Space to Grow: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ how-we-support-improvement/ care-inspectorate-programmes-and- publications/space-to-grow/**

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Key areas include the extent to which:

- the setting is well furnished, comfortable and homely *(not applicable to fully outdoor settings)
- the setting's indoor and outdoor environments are developmentally appropriate spaces
- the setting and equipment are safe, secure and well-maintained
- children's information is securely stored and managed.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on the physical environment in which children are cared for, ensuring that the environments are appropriate with high quality furnishings and equipment. It highlights how children's needs are considered and offering exciting and stimulating play spaces. The indicator acknowledges the need for regular maintenance and appropriate safety measures are in place.. All aspects of security are recognised as important, including the storage of confidential records and information.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
The setting is well furnished, comfortable, and homely	
The setting is very comfortable, furnished to a very high standard and welcoming, with plenty of natural light and ventilation. It gives a strong message to children that they matter. They have ample space for their needs.	The setting may look or feel neglected, may be clinical or a functional environment, rather than warm and welcoming for children. There is a lack of attention to detail such as homely touches, decoration, and the quality of furniture. There may be unpleasant smells or intrusive noise levels.
The setting's indoor and outdoor environments are developmentally appropriate spaces	
The indoor and outdoor environments are sensitively structured and take account of all children's stages of development and learning. Spaces reflect children's current interests and curiosities, with appropriate resources and materials to support learning.	The indoor and outdoor environments do not demonstrate the children's stages of development and current interests. The setting does not offer children a range of rich stimulating play resources to support and develop their learning.

Quality illustrations

Very good	Weak
The setting and equipment are safe, secure, and well-maintained	
Well-functioning arrangements for monitoring, maintenance and repair of the setting, equipment and vehicles are consistently implemented. Damaged items are promptly replaced.

Robust infection control and food safety practices provide high levels of safety for children. These are supported by effective quality assurance practices. | The arrangements for monitoring, maintenance and repair of the setting, equipment and vehicles are not sufficient to ensure repairs are carried out without delay. Essential equipment does not fully function or breaks down regularly.   This has a negative impact on children's care, play and learning experiences.

Infection control and food safety practices do not follow best practice guidelines. There is concern about the levels of safety for children. There is no effective and regular system for rigorous quality assurance processes. |
| **Children's information is securely stored and managed** | |
| The setting provides security and safety without impinging on children's rights and reflects the service's aims and objectives. Any use of CCTV, is lawful, fair, proportionate and protects their dignity. It is only used for purposes that support the delivery of safe, effective, and compassionate care for children.

Protection of children's personal information is paramount and complies with relevant best practice. Leaders and staff are well-informed about their responsibilities. Appropriate systems are in place to manage electronic information in line with general data protection requirements and advice on cyber-threats. | The use of CCTV is not well understood in the setting. Families may not have been consulted about any CCTV or informed of their rights. The arrangements for CCTV do not meet the requirements of current legislation.

Arrangements for the storage of and processing of children's personal information is poorly managed and does not comply with relevant best practice. Leaders and staff are not well-informed about their responsibilities. |

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

5: I experience a high-quality environment if the organisation provides the premises.

- 5.1 I can use an appropriate mix of private and communal areas, including accessible outdoor space, because the premises have been designed or adapted for high quality care and support.

- 5.2 I can easily access a toilet from the rooms I use and can use this when I need to.

- 5.3 I have an accessible, secure place to keep my belongings.

- 5.4 If I require intimate personal care, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed.

- 5.5 I experience a service that is the right size for me.

- 5.6 If I experience care and support in a group, I experience a homely environment and can use a comfortable area with soft furnishings to relax.

- 5.11 I can independently access the parts of the premises I use, and the environment has been designed to promote this.

- 5.16 The premises have been adapted, equipped and furnished to meet my needs and wishes.

- 5.17 My environment is secure and safe.

- 5.18 My environment is relaxed, welcoming, peaceful and free from avoidable and intrusive noise and smells.

- 5.19 My environment has plenty of natural light and fresh air, and the lighting, ventilation and heating can be adjusted to meet my needs and wishes.

- 5.20 I have enough physical space to meet my needs and wishes.

- 5.21 I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices.

- 5.22 I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How can we be confident that our setting is maintained to the highest standards ensuring a healthy environment for children? How effective are our systems for reporting repairs and maintenance within our setting? How do we know we are using CCTV appropriately and in line with all current legislation? How do we ensure our electronic information is stored securely and is protected from cyber threats? How do we ensure children are protected when using the internet in our setting?	Guidance for care providers in Scotland using CCTV (closed circuit television) in their services: **https://www.careinspectorate.com/ images/documents/4412/CCTV%20 guidance%20v2.pdf** Information about health and safety at work: **https://www.hse.gov.uk** Information Commissioner Guidance - General Data Protection requirements: **https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/ guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the- general-data-protection-regulation- gdpr/** National Cyber Security Centre: **https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/about- ncsc/what-we-do**

Key Question 3:
How good is our leadership?

This key question has three quality indicators associated with it.

They are:

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well
3.2 Leadership of play and learning
3.3 Leadership and management of staff and resources

Quality indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Key areas include the extent to which:

- a shared vision, values, aims and objectives positively informs practice
- children and families are meaningfully involved and influence change within the setting
- quality assurance, including self-evaluation and improvement plans are in place and lead to continuous improvement.

Descriptor

This indicator highlights the need for leaders to ensure an ambitious, shared vision which focuses on improvements and positive outcomes for all. There is a strong ethos of continuous improvement which enhances the delivery of high-quality practice, leading to improved outcomes for all. It underlines that self-evaluation is the responsibility of all involved in the life of the setting. A key factor is how well self-evaluation leads to high quality care and support tailored towards the needs of children and families.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
A shared vision, values, aims and objectives positively informs practice	
Leaders promote and sustain a shared vision for the setting that reflects the aspirations of children, families, partners and the wider community. This helps all staff know what is important for the setting to meet the needs of children and families. Leaders create conditions where all people feel confident to initiate well-informed change and share responsibility for the process.	The vision, values and aims for the setting are unclear and there is limited focus on improvement. Not everyone involved in the service are aware of the aims or their role in promoting these. Staff are not supported to reflect on their practice in a meaningful way. Changes which have been made to practice and the setting have little impact on children and families. Leaders show some resistance to change and this impacts negatively on the ability to deliver improved outcomes.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children and families are meaningfully involved and influence change within the setting.	
Children's and families' views are actively sought to inform the development of the setting. Successes and achievements are shared with children, families and partners and are used as a starting point for future improvements. Strong leadership supports staff to have high aspirations and confidence in their capacity to support children and families to reach their full potential.	Children and families do not feel well informed about changes to the setting or why they are happening. The improvement plan is not used consistently to inform improvement in the quality of the service for children and families. The culture of self-evaluation for improvement is at an early stage of development or has not resulted in sustained improvements. The culture in the service may not enable staff or families to confidently highlight complaints or improvements. Leaders fail to respond promptly to feedback and therefore positive change is too slow to make improvements.
Quality assurance, including self-evaluation and improvement plans are in place and lead to continuous improvement.	
Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the importance of using the views of children and families as well as partners, to inform planning and development of the service. Self-evaluation enables the service to deliver high quality care and support tailored towards children's and families' particular needs and choices. Staff reflect well together and use these reflections to bring about positive change to outcomes for children and families. Leaders ensure that high-quality learning through play is at the heart of improvement planning.	There is insufficient capacity and skill to support a programme of continuous improvement. There are significant gaps in the areas covered by the quality assurance systems in place. Inconsistencies in practice are not fully identified and do not highlight areas for improvement. Leaders fail to motivate staff and staff are not sufficiently challenged to raise standards. Staff reflect together; however, these reflections do not influence positive change to outcomes for children and families. When changes are implemented, they are often done in isolation and are not underpinned by current thinking and best practice. Staff are not consistently able to drive and sustain improvement.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 4.6 I can be meaningfully involved in how the organisations that support and care for me work and develop.

- 4.7 I am actively encouraged to be involved in improving the service I use, in a spirit of genuine partnership.

- 4.8 I am supported to give regular feedback on how I experience my care and support and the organisation uses learning from this to improve.

- 4.11 I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.

- 4.19 I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.

- 4.20 I know how, and can be helped, to make a complaint or raise a concern about my care and support.

- 4.21 If I have a concern or complaint, this will be discussed with me and acted on without negative consequences for me.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How do we know our quality assurance processes improve outcomes for children and families?	Self-evaluation for improvement - your guide: **https://www.careinspectorate. com/images/Self_evaluation_for_ improvement_-_your_guide.pdf**
How do we ensure that everyone in our service has a shared understanding of service improvements?	
How effectively do we promote partnership working to ensure the best outcomes for our children and families?	Self-evaluation - How good is our early learning and childcare: **https://education.gov.scot/ improvement/documents/frameworks_ selfevaluation/frwk1_niheditself- evaluationhgielc/hgioelc020316revised. pdf**
In what way do we ensure children are involved and influence their day-to-day experiences?	
How do we engage our families and children to ensure they have a key role in our quality assurance?	

Quality indicator 3.2 Leadership of play and learning

Key areas include the extent to which:

- high-quality play and learning culture is fully embedded
- children actively lead their play and learning.

Descriptor

This indicator relates to the leadership of improvements in play and learning. Leaders understand the importance of empowering children to lead their own play and learning. It is about how children follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons. This effectively promotes all aspects of children's development, learning and wellbeing.

It focuses on the importance of a shared ethos and commitment to developing high quality play, based on children's needs and interests. This is achieved through observation approaches that place children at the centre of planning and evaluation.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
A high-quality play and learning culture is fully embedded	
Leaders support and empower children to have ownership of play through learning on their own terms and in their own ways. There is a strong professional development and learning culture which supports shared reflections that ensure children are at the centre of all planning for play and learning. Leaders work together with children, families and partners to support children to enjoy their successes and share their achievements in play and learning.	Significant weaknesses in leadership impact on the motivation of staff and the time available to work together to plan children's play and learning experiences. The balance between organised and freely chosen play impacts negatively on the opportunities available for children to develop depth and breadth in their learning, social skills and become confident learners. The approach of the leadership limits staff ability to learn from and implement positive changes using early learning and childcare theory, guidance and training. Leaders provide limited opportunities to work together with children, families and partners to support children to enjoy their successes and share their achievements in play and learning.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children actively lead their play and learning	
Children are supported to actively explore the world around them and be confident learners that reflect on and reshape their experience through play. Conversations and observations with children are used to implement support and plan effectively for their play and learning needs. Children believe in their own potential and have fun in freely chosen and extended play experiences that develop skills in language, literacy and numeracy.	Leaders offer limited support and guidance to enable staff to be flexible and responsive in their approach to children's developmental needs. There is a lack of understanding of children's abilities when planning for their next steps. Leaders do not provide sufficient challenge to staff to ensure children actively lead their play and learning. Opportunities to build on children's successes and share in their achievements are missed. There are too few opportunities for children to develop their thinking, problem solving skills through imaginative play and storytelling.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 1.27 I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me.

- 1.30 As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling.

- 2.24 I make informed choices and decisions about the risks I take in daily life and am encouraged to take positive risks which enhance the quality of my life.

- 2.27 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.

- 4.11 I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How do we know our children lead their play and learning? How do we support staff to understand and provide high quality learning experiences for all of our children? Who are the role models within our service and how do we use their experience to benefit our staff and children? How do we engage and encourage leadership at all levels when promoting play and learning in our setting? How do we ensure staff knowledge, skills and creativity are having a positive impact on children's progress?	Self-evaluation for Improvement - your guide: **https://www.careinspectorate. com/images/Self_evaluation_for_ improvement_-_your_guide.pdf** Self-evaluation - How good is our early learning and childcare: **https://education.gov.scot/ improvement/documents/frameworks_ selfevaluation/frwk1_niheditself- evaluationhgielc/hgioelc020316revised. pdf** My Childminding Experience: **http://www.careinspectorate.com/ images/documents/4026/My%20 childminding%20experience.pdf** My Childminding Journey: **http://www.childmindingjourney.scot/**

Quality indicator 3.3: : Leadership and management of staff and resources

Key areas include the extent to which:

- leadership is empowering and motivating, which has a positive impact on children and families.
- staff, resources and finances are used effectively to meet the needs of children and families.

Descriptor

This indicator highlights the importance of effective leadership of all staff within the setting. Wellbeing and pastoral support are enhanced through leadership that fosters positive and inclusive relationships for all. It focuses on the importance of having the right number of staff with sufficient time and appropriate skills to meet the needs of children and families. Resources and finances are effectively managed to sustain and maximise the best outcomes for children and families.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Leadership is empowering and motivating, which has a positive impact on children and families	
Leaders act as role models for the development of positive and nurturing relationships and this ensures the pastoral care and wellbeing of others. They recognise the contributions of staff which help them to feel supported, challenged and engaged. This means that all are empowered and motivated to make decisions and lead on initiatives which promote positive outcomes for children and families. This contributes to high levels of satisfaction and professional growth and builds on strengths. The capacity of the setting to deliver positive outcomes for children and families is enhanced.	There is a significant lack of leadership in the setting. Staff are demotivated and disengaged leading to poor outcomes for children and families. Children and their families are not meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them. Consequently, an ethos of inclusion and respect is not evident. There is little evidence that staff are supported or encouraged to use their initiative to improve the quality of care and support.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Staff, resources and finances are used effectively to meet the needs of children and families	
Leaders ensure that roles are defined, understood and staff are deployed well. This helps to harness the different abilities, strengths and expertise of people to provide targeted high-quality care and support when children and families need it. Leaders enable staff to monitor, evaluate and review the use and impact of resources to maximise children's and families' potential. Lines of communication and accountability are clear and are used to inform future financial and resourcing decisions.	Leaders do not always deploy staff in the best way to ensure good team working and the right mix of experience and depth of knowledge. This means there are gaps and inconsistent approaches to identifying next steps in children's care, play and learning. Poor financial management by leaders means that resources do not take full account of the importance of meeting all children's needs. This limits opportunities to build children's confidence and self-esteem through engaging in independently chosen activities and interests that matters to them and their friends. Overall, this leads to missed opportunities for children to reach their full potential.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 3.15 My needs are met by the right number of people.

- 3.16 People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me.

- 3.17 I am confident that people respond promptly, including when I ask for help.

- 3.18 I am supported and cared for sensitively by people who anticipate issues and are aware of and plan for any known vulnerability or frailty.

- 3.19 My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well.

- 4.23 I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.

- 4.27 I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How do we ensure staff are deployed effectively in our service? What approaches do we take to tasks in the service to ensure children are supported across the whole day? How do we ensure resources are wide ranging and support individual play and learning needs of all our children? How do we know that staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to support children to be the best that they can be?	Improving children and young people's understanding of their wellbeing: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/ media/3752/improving-children-and- young-peoples-understanding-of-their- wellbeing.pdf** Self-evaluation for improvement - your guide: **https://www.careinspectorate. com/images/Self_evaluation_for_ improvement_-_your_guide.pdf** Self-evaluation - How good is our early learning and childcare (HGIOELC) 2016 **https://education.gov.scot/nih/ Documents/Frameworks_SelfEvaluation/ FRWK1_NIHeditSelf-evaluationHGIELC/ HGIOELC020316Revised.pdf**

Key Question 4:
How good is our staff team?

This key question has three quality indicators associated with it.

They are:

4.1 Staff skills, knowledge, and values
4.2 Staff recruitment*
4.3 Staff deployment*.

*4.2 and *4.3 do not apply to childminders who do not work with assistants.

Quality indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

Key areas include the extent to which:

- staff support children's wellbeing through compassionate and responsive care
- effective feedback and support enable staff to develop and improve through reflective practice
- children and families benefit from staff that are well trained, competent, skilled and registered with the relevant professional body.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on the ability of staff to build strong relationships with children and families. It highlights the importance of skilled interactions to promote children's confidence and to have a positive influence on their lives as they develop and learn. It looks at how staff development and reflective practice is promoted through feedback and support. Professional learning is well planned, reviewed and matched to identified needs and draws on local, national and international evidence and research.

It looks at how staff practice is underpinned by the Health and Social Care Standards, and relevant codes of practice. This is used to foster a culture where children thrive and flourish.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Staff support children's wellbeing through compassionate and responsive care.	
Staff warmth, kindness and compassion enables children to feel valued, loved and secure. Staff recognise the importance of nurturing, warm, responsive attachments and interactions. Staff provide individualised support by effectively engaging with children and take account of their views and experiences. Effective team working fosters a warm atmosphere where staff are courteous and respectful. This enables staff to have time to support, speak and listen to children	Staff's limited interactions lack compassion and do not fully support children's needs and interests. Staff do not always make themselves physically accessible to children, for example, they do not consistently sit at a low level or are generally not close to children. Staff rarely initiate conversations with children. They sometimes respond negatively to children's verbal and non-verbal communication. The quality of staff's working relationships result in children sometimes not experiencing a warm atmosphere.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Effective feedback and support enable staff to develop and improve through reflective practice	
Support and feedback are used constructively to build effective and professional relationships and is valued by staff. They receive and participate in regular support and supervision from skilled leaders which enables them to feel empowered. Highly effective supervision provides an opportunity for staff to be clear on their responsibilities and accountable for their role. Staff reflect on and improve their practice which enables learning needs to be identified which is centred on improving outcomes for children. Performance is constructively reviewed, with effective support planned and evaluated.	Support and feedback is infrequent or not tailored to the needs of individual staff. Where staff require support to develop their skills and knowledge, this is not consistently identified and addressed. This means there are poor outcomes for children. Feedback does not always support staff to reflect on their practice and identify learning needs. There is poor professional knowledge and limited skills.
Children and families benefit from staff that are well trained, skilled and registered with the relevant professional body.	
Staff have a clear understanding of how children develop and learn. They make very good use of professional development opportunities that link directly to enhanced outcomes for children, individual staff learning needs and the setting's improvement plan. Research, best practice, national and local policy and the Health and Social Care Standards are used in this process. There is a wide range of opportunities for staff to hold professional discussions and use these to inform practice. Staff reflect and implement their learning to improve practice and children receive high quality interactions and experiences.	There are limited opportunities for ongoing development for staff. Where learning needs are identified, these are not fully taken forward. This results in gaps in professional knowledge and skills which impacts negatively on the quality of children's experiences. Training and development opportunities have not improved outcomes for children.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children and families benefit from staff that are well trained, skilled and registered with the relevant professional body.	
Staff are aspirational and have an enabling attitude which supports children to achieve their potential. Staff use skilled questioning and interact in a sensitive, responsive and stimulating way to promote curiosity, independence and confidence. They recognise the importance of fun in children's play to enable learning to be taken forward. Staff undertake qualifications relevant to their role and engage in continuous professional learning. They maintain effective records of the impact of their learning and development and have a clear learning action plan. Where required they maintain a registration with a professional body and follow the codes of practice.	Staff do not fully understand their responsibility to maintain professional registration. Where registration with professional bodies is required, this is incomplete or may have lapsed. They do not fully understand their responsibilities for continuous professional learning as detailed in the relevant codes of practice. They may not take sufficient account of the codes of practice in their work. The principles of the Health and Social Care Standards do not underpin the practice of some staff.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 3.6 I feel at ease because I am greeted warmly by people and they introduce themselves.

- 3.7 I experience a warm atmosphere because people have good working relationships.

- 3.9 I experience warmth, kindness and compassion in how I am supported and cared for, including physical comfort when appropriate for me and the person supporting and caring for me.

- 3.14 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.

- 4.1 My human rights are central to the organisations that support and care for me.

- 4.2 The organisations that support and care for me help tackle health and social inequalities.

- 4.3 I experience care and support where all people are respected and valued.

- 4.11. I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How do we ensure that all interactions are characterised by warmth, kindness and compassion? In what ways do our feedback and support systems ensure improvements in the quality of our work? How do we ensure staff are reflective practitioners and that training embeds improvement in practice?	Early learning and childcare national induction resource: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/3528/early-learning-and-childcare-national-induction-resource.pdf My childminding experience: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/my-childminding-experience/ Safer recruitment through better recruitment: https://hub.careinspectorate.com/resources/national-safer-recruitment-guidance/ The Code of practice for social service workers: https://www.sssc.uk.com/the-scottish-social-services-council/sssc-codes-of-practice/ The national occupational standards: https://www.ukstandards.org.uk/ The SSSC learning zone: https://www.sssc.uk.com/supporting-the-workforce/learning-zone/

Quality indicator 4.2: Staff recruitment

Key areas include the extent to which:

- recruitment procedures are effective and reflect best practice guidance
- induction is tailored to the learning and development needs of the individual staff member.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on applying safe recruitment procedures to ensure that trained, competent and skilled staff are employed to promote positive outcomes for children. It focuses on how policy, guidance, legislation and Health and Social Care Standards, are used to ensure that each child is protected, safe and receives the right support and care from staff. It recognises that retaining a stable, high quality and motivated workforce is essential for the delivery of effective support for children. It highlights how induction programmes support and guide work roles and responsibilities.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Recruitment procedures are effective and reflect best practice guidance	
The importance of recruiting and retaining a stable and skilled workforce is recognised as being essential to the delivery of high-quality care, play and learning for children. Staff are recruited in a way which has been informed by all aspects of safer recruitment practices. Leaders understand their responsibility to ensure any temporary staff are safely recruited and understand their responsibilities within the staff group. The candidate's skills, experience and qualifications are evaluated in relation to the role they will be employed in. There is a strong emphasis on value-based recruitment. Children and families have opportunities to be involved in the process in a meaningful way.	The recruitment procedures may compromise the welfare or safety of children. Key elements of the process may be ignored, for example, exploring gaps in employment history, disciplinary records or staff start working before all the required checks have been undertaken or received. Staff lack some of the skills and experience required for their role. Their values and motivation are not fully consistent with the ethos of the setting.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Induction is tailored to the learning and development needs of the individual staff member	
The induction programme is thorough and is personalised to meet the different roles in the setting. The induction process ensures staff are confident in meeting the needs of individual children. Staff are supported to develop an understanding of the ethos and culture of the setting. There is sufficient time to ensure that staff can understand all the information and what is expected of them. This includes an emphasis on implementing the Health and Social Care Standards as underpinning values for all care and support. There is a clear process for mentoring and supporting staff new into their roles, using the skills and knowledge of experienced staff. There is time allocated to effectively take this forward. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities, with written information they can refer to.	The induction process is not planned to take account of staff who are new to their role and their ongoing learning and development. Induction may be limited to a one-off event, focusing on policies and procedures with little consideration of the care, play and learning needs of children. Staff are unsure of their responsibilities and relevant professional codes of practice. They are unclear of what is expected of them. Mentoring arrangements, where these exist, are not well considered and do not support them to better understand their role. Staff undertaking mentoring roles have insufficient time allocated to do this well.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 3.14 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.

- 4.23 I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed.

- 4.24 I am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited.

- 4.9 I can take part in recruiting and training people if possible

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How do we ensure staff recruitment processes reflect current best practice and national guidance? In what ways do we ensure our recruitment process attracts people with the best values, skills and knowledge for the role? How do we ensure that our induction processes are tailored to meet the needs of different staff roles and responsibilities?	Early learning and childcare national induction resource: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/3528/early-learning-and-childcare-national-induction-resource.pdf** Out of school care start up guide: **https://soscn.org/start-up/start-up-intro** Safer recruitment through better recruitment: **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/resources/national-safer-recruitment-guidance/** Skills development plan prospectus: **www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43127/early-learning-and-childcare-sip-digital.pdf**

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Key areas include the extent to which:

- deployment and levels of staff are effective in ensuring high quality outcomes for children
- staff are flexible and support each other to work as a team to benefit children.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on ensuring that the deployment and staffing levels takes account of the skills mix, routines and activities of the day. This ensures safety and high-quality outcomes for children. It highlights the importance of considering the complexity of individual children's needs in addition to the wider group and circumstances. Routines and use of available space whether indoors or outdoors are planned for appropriately.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Deployment and levels of staff are effective ensuring high-quality outcomes for children	
The importance of ensuring that the service is appropriately staffed during the day is recognised by leaders as essential to the wellbeing of children in the service. Effective use is made of the differing experience, knowledge and skills of the staff group to ensure children's experience across the whole day is positive and that they are safe.	The approach to staffing within the service is not outcome-focused and at points across the day there are gaps in specific skills needed to keep children safe and promote high quality outcomes for children. At these times, opportunities for children are more limited.
Arrangements are in place to promote continuity of care across the day and ensure positive transitions and communication with families. Leaders recognise the need for high levels of interaction and support to promote wellbeing and safety and staff breaks are planned to minimise impact on the children whilst enabling staff to rest and be refreshed.	Continuity of care across the day is variable and this impacts on the transitions and communication levels with families. Staff may not receive enough breaks or may be on breaks at a time when higher levels of supervision are required, such as mealtimes. Activities become task orientated rather than an opportunity for high quality engagement and interaction.

Quality illustrations

Very good	Weak
Deployment and levels of staff are effective ensuring high-quality outcomes for children	
Arrangements for absence whether planned or unplanned are managed to support minimum disruption to children's routines. Children are prepared in advance for their key workers absence, wherever possible. Families and children are kept informed and are introduced to any temporary staff in the team who may be caring for their children.

Appropriate policies are in place to maximise the attendance of staff and all staff understand the impact of unplanned absence on the provision of the service. There is a positive ethos of attendance within the service. | Arrangements for planned absence are poorly managed resulting in disruptions to children's routines. Children and families are not always advised when staff will be absent and are not prepared for, or introduced to, temporary staff.

Systems to support management of staffing when unplanned absences occur is poorly managed. Temporary staff appointed do not always reflect the needs of the wider staff group or children attending.

Maximising attendance is not well understood by the staff team and unplanned absence levels are high and impacting on the quality of outcomes for children. |
| **Staff are flexible and support each other to work as a team to benefit children** | |
| Leaders promote awareness of the need to effectively deploy staff within their service. Staff are proactive in recognising where gaps may exist, and these are soon remedied. Staff communicate very well with their colleagues when a task may take them away from their responsibilities. Staff work together to ensure effective supervision and quality engagement with the children across the day. | There is a lack of awareness of the need to effectively deploy staff within their service. The responsibility for this task is identified as the responsibility for the leaders in the service. Staff do not take responsibility to highlight any gaps and opportunities to improve are missed. Communication and team working between staff may be poor leading to gaps in interactions across the day and poorer overall outcomes for children. |

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Staff are flexible and support each other to work as a team to benefit children	
Busier times of the day, such as mealtimes or arrival and departure times, are recognised and planned for. This ensures staff can fully meet children's needs at these times. Staff are flexible when specific outings or additional activities require changes to their routines. This ensures staff or volunteers are available and in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of the children. There is a clear process for mentoring and supporting temporary staff using the skills and knowledge of the existing staff team.	Busier times of the day, such as mealtimes or arrival and departure times, are not recognised, and arrangements are ineffective to ensure staff can fully meet children's needs at these times. Staff are not flexible when specific outings or additional activities require changes to their routines. There may be insufficient numbers of staff to meet the needs of the children when attending specific events. Temporary or new staff are not well supported and may be working with children without enough guidance to support them to meet children's needs.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 3.14 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.

- 3.15 My needs are met by the right number of people.

- 3.16 People have time to support and care for me and to speak with me.

- 3.17 I am confident that people respond promptly, including when I ask for help.

- 3.18 I am supported and cared for sensitively by people who anticipate issues and are aware of and plan for any known vulnerability or frailty.

- 3.19 My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well.

- 4.27 I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox	
Improvement and support questions	**Key improvement resources**
How does staff deployment, meet the individual care and support needs of all children throughout the session? How do we ensure our staff work well together? How do we promote a positive staff ethos in our service? How do we know staff enjoy working here and feel involved and part of an effective team?	Guidance on adult to child ratios in early earning and childcare settings: **https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/4334/Guidance%20on%20adult%20to%20child%20ratios%20in%20early%20learning%20and%20childcare%20settings.pdf** Skills Development Plan Prospectus: **www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43127/early-learning-and-childcare-sip-digital.pdf**

Key question 5:
How good is our care and support during the Covid-19 pandemic?

This key question has three quality indicators.

5.1   Children's health and wellbeing are supported and safeguarded during the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.2   Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff.

5.3   Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during Covid-19.

Quality indicator 5.1: Children's health and wellbeing are supported and safeguarded during Covid-19

Key areas include the extent to which:

- children are nurtured and supported throughout their changed experience in their early learning and childcare setting
- effective communication with families enables responsive care to support children through changing circumstances.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on the implementation of the national Covid-19 guidance in ELC settings (including out of school care and childminders) and establishes how well services are responding to ensure children are secure and confident within different delivery models. It promotes a rights-based approach for children and their families whilst meeting the standards required to maintain safety during the pandemic. It recognises the importance of new and existing attachments, connections and relationships between children, their friends and staff members and how they are supported wherever possible. It promotes innovation in the approaches to communication with families. It highlights the importance of children and families building resilience during these difficult times.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children are nurtured and supported throughout their changed experience in their early learning and childcare setting	
Children are supported to understand the need for the changes to their childcare experience. Staff use fun and imaginative ideas to engage children in a positive way while establishing new routines. Children experience warmth, caring and nurturing approaches that ensure their personal development and care needs are met. Where children require support with their emotional wellbeing due to the changes, staff are responsive to this and work with families to promote children's security within the setting.	Changes implemented to keep children safe, have not been well explained and children may be confused and uncertain in the environment. Routines have been imposed on children without consideration of how to engage children to ensure their understanding. Children may experience warmth, caring and nurturing approaches generally, however staff do not sufficiently take account of the impact of Covid-19 changes on children's emotional wellbeing.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children are nurtured and supported throughout their changed experience in their early learning and childcare setting	
Consideration has been given to maintaining friendship and sibling groups wherever possible when establishing patterns of attendance or groups. Where it is not possible to maintain children in existing friendship or sibling groups, staff work to foster these relationships in safe and innovative ways. Sensitive settling-in procedures support children in getting to know staff members who may be new to them. Arrangements are in place to maintain links with existing staff members. Effective information sharing across team members promotes continuity of care. Children have opportunities to shape their play and learning experiences helping to develop their understanding of the situation and provide a safe outlet to express their emotions where needed.	Children's natural reaction to change may not be well understood leading to missed opportunities to work with families to promote children's security within the setting. Little consideration has been given to maintaining friendship and sibling groups when establishing patterns of attendance or groups. Where it is not possible to maintain existing friendship or sibling groups, staff may not understand the importance of these relationships to children. As a result, children may suffer from unnecessary anxiety. Arrangements for settling in is limited and children do not always know the staff members who are caring from them. Opportunities to link with existing staff members may be ad-hoc and not form part of a planned approach for maintaining relationships. There may be gaps in information sharing across team members leading to challenges in the promotion of the continuity of care.
Effective communication with families and other professionals enables responsive care to support children through changing circumstances	
Recognising the challenges that exist with physical distancing between adults, staff have developed a range of processes to ensure effective communication between families and the service that take account of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).	There has been limited consideration given to the impact of Covid-19 on communication between families and the setting. Little account of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDRP) has been taken when developing methods of communication. As a result, some families may not have opportunities to engage in the life of their child in the setting. Important information may not be shared, compromising children's quality of care.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Effective communication with families and other professionals enables responsive care to support children through changing circumstances	
Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities to protect children from harm and have reviewed their approaches in line with the impact of the change to provision due to Covid-19. Existing relationships with other professionals have been enhanced to ensure effective communication between agencies to support families with any challenges they may experience.	Staff may demonstrate understanding of their responsibilities to protect children in their usual day-to-day practice, however challenges in relation to Covid-19 have not been fully explored and this has the potential for child protection and safeguarding concerns not to be identified or acted upon. There is a lack of action in relation to strengthening communication with other agencies and as such, there is the potential for families to miss out on additional support.

Quality indicator 5.2: Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff

Key areas include the extent to which:

- children are protected as staff take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on how well the service has worked to implement the necessary precautions to promote hygiene and infection prevention and control practices within the service. It looks at the overall hygiene within the environment and includes the arrangements for increased cleaning between groups or children's patterns of attendance. It includes the approaches to supporting children's understanding of hygiene and hand washing.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children are protected as staff take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection	
Children are protected as staff take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection. All staff understand the new arrangements for cleaning within the service. Risk assessments have been undertaken that addresses the areas within the national Covid-19 guidance. They have received training on infection prevention and control which adheres to Covid-19 guidance. There are clear policies and procedures in place to ensure consistent approaches across the setting.	Children are exposed to potential risk from infection as staff working in the service are not familiar with, or do not follow up-to- date guidance on infection prevention and control in respect of Covid-19. Risk assessments are limited and do not provide a comprehensive overview in line with Covid-19 guidance. Staff show limited understanding of when and how they should use PPE and other infection prevention and control methods, such as handwashing and physical distancing.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children are protected as staff take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection	
Arrival and departure times and the operating model take account of the need to schedule enhanced cleaning. Children experience a clean and safe environment as a result. Personal protective equipment is used appropriately in the service when delivering personal care and arrangements are in place for re-stocking. Children are supported to understand the need for good hygiene and effective use is made of pictures and activities such as songs and rhymes to encourage a fun approach to this. Clear expectations are set around children remaining at home when unwell. In particular, the service has worked well with families to encourage the understanding of the guidance in respect of isolating when a family member has symptoms. Prompts are available for families about contact with NHS Inform and the Scottish Government's Test-and-Protect programme. Physical distancing is implemented for adults in the setting and this includes families. Where children's emotional needs support their parent entering the setting, this is managed well, in line with guidance on hand washing and physical distancing between the adults in the setting.	Children are not protected from the spread of infection because cleaning schedules are not based on good practice guidance or carried out when needed. Routines across the day, and in particular at arrival and departure times, do not allow for sufficient time to undertake the cleaning between groups of children or groups. Children are not well supported to understand the need for good hygiene and there may be risks identified as a result of ineffective hand washing or infection control practices in relation to the children the setting. Expectations in relation to children remaining at home when unwell are not effectively implemented and may be applied inconsistently. Guidance about isolating when a family member has symptoms has not been promoted in the setting and as a result there may be confusion about when children should stay at home. Arrangements to support parents entering the setting are not well understood or effectively managed and parents may be unnecessarily excluded or may enter without precautions being implemented.

Quality indicator 5.3: Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during Covid-19

Key areas include the extent to which:

- staffing arrangements meet the needs of children and families
- staff are well supported and confident.

Descriptor

This indicator focuses on how well the service is staffed to meet the needs of the children. It examines how the service has worked to support and upskill their staff team in respect of the changes in working practice because of Covid-19. It promotes consistency of staff arrangements wherever possible to support continuity of care for children. It recognises the need to be responsive to staff wellbeing, promoting resilience while recognising the needs of individual staff members in relation to shielding or family situations.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Children are nurtured and supported throughout their changed experience in their early learning and childcare setting	
The service is always appropriately staffed to meet the children's needs and attention has been paid to the additional demands placed on staff in response to Covid-19. Staff ratios enable continuity of care for the children wherever possible. Staff time is planned across the day to ensure additional tasks can be carried out to a high standard without compromising the quality of care, play and learning experiences for children. Staff are clear about their roles and are deployed effectively. Staff help each other by being flexible in response to changing situations to ensure care and support is consistent and stable.	Arrangements for staffing do not take account in the changes to service provision as a result of Covid-19 and children may experience compromises relating to their continuity of care. There may be competing demands on staff time leading to reduced opportunities for high quality play and learning experiences for children. Staff understanding about their roles may be mixed and there is a lack of flexibility leading to instability in the provision of children's care and support.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	**Weak**
Staff are well supported and confident	
Staff are well supported by their organisation and recognise the potential impact of Covid-19 within work and their personal circumstances. Staff feel connected and committed to their work and demonstrate a positive ethos which promotes a happy and secure environment for children.	Staff may feel unsupported in their roles and may bring their stress to work. This has the potential to impact on the ethos in the service and on children's quality of experience as a result.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 1.14 My future care and support needs are anticipated as part of my assessment.

- 1.15 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.

- 1.19 My care and support meets my needs and is right for me.

- 1.23 My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected.

- 2.15 I am enabled to resolve conflict, agree rules and build positive relationships with other people as much as I can.

- 2.17 I am fully involved in developing and reviewing my personal plan, which is always available to me. Children are supported to feel safe, secure and protected from harm.

- 3.5 As a child or young person, I am helped to develop a positive view of myself and to form and sustain trusting and secure relationships.

- 3.6 I feel at ease because I am greeted warmly by people and they introduce themselves.

- 3.10 As a child or young person I feel valued, loved and secure.

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox
this is applicable to all quality indicators within key question 5

Improvement and support questions	Key improvement resources
How do we ensure staff recruitment processes reflect current best practice and national guidance? In what ways do we ensure our recruitment process attracts people with the best values, skills and knowledge for the role? How do we ensure that our induction processes are tailored to meet the needs of different staff roles and responsibilities?	Additional support for learning: **https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/additional-support-for-learning/** Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): **https://www.gov.scot/publications/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces/** Applying Nurture as a Whole School Approach: **https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/inc55ApplyingNurturingApproaches120617.pdf** Coronavirus in Scotland: **https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-Covid-19/** Guide to the General Data Protection Regulations, (GDPR): **https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/** Infection prevention and control in childcare settings (Daycare and Childminding Settings): **https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1538/infection-prevention-and-control-in-childcare-settings.pdf** Realising the ambition, being me **https://education.gov.scot/media/3bjpr3wa/realisingtheambition.pdf** Scottish early childhood and families transitions statement: **https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/scottish-early-childhood-and- families-transitions-statement**

Useful links

Care Inspectorate:
https://www.careinspectorate.com

Care and Learning Alliance:
www.careandlearningalliance.co.uk/

Children 1st:
https://www.children1st.org.uk/

Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland:
https://cypcs.org.uk/

Early Years Scotland:
https://earlyyearsscotland.org/

General Teaching Council of Scotland:
www.gtcs.org.uk/home/home.aspx

The Hub:
https://hub.careinspectorate.com/

National Day Nursery Association (Scotland):
https://www.ndna.org.uk/NDNA/All_About_Us/Scotland.aspx

NSPCC:
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/

Play Scotland:
https://www.playscotland.org/

Scottish Childminding Association:
https://www.childminding.org/

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations:
https://scvo.scot/

Scottish Out of School Care Network:
https://soscn.org/

Scottish Social Services Council:
https://www.sssc.uk.com/

Resources

Additional support for learning: statutory guidance 2017:
https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-education-additional-support-learning-scotland/

Care Inspectorate Corporate Plan 2019-2022:
https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/4858/Corporate%20Plan%20 2019-2022.pdf

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 Early Learning and Childcare Statutory Guidance:
https://www.gov.scot/publications/early-learning-childcare-statutory-guidance/

Equality Act 2010:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: principles and practice:
https://www.gov.scot/publications/funding-follows-child-national-standard-early-learning-childcare-providers-principles-practice/

Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: Operating Guidance
https://www.gov.scot/publications/funding-follows-child-national-standard-early-learning-childcare-providers-operating-guidance/

How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare?:
https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/frameworks_selfevaluation/ frwk1_niheditself-evaluationhgielc/hgioelc020316revised.pdf

Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010:
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2010/8

Realising the ambition, being me:
https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/realising-the-ambition/?fbclid=IwAR3g8sxG-oLnVM01qNQUHyqukfAZuP9XVjrk6nSK7PA92g5K-nSLvE3DyvE

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence:
https://scotlandscurriculum.scot/4/

The National Performance Framework:
https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/

Website: www.careinspectorate.com
Email: enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot
Enquiries: 0345 600 9527

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