

# Inspection Report & 2023-2024

**Nicola Metcalfe**

Childminder

24 January 2024

**Under the Regulation of Care Act 2013 and  
Regulation of Care (Care Services) Regulations 2013**



**DHSC**

We carried out this inspection under Part 4 of the Regulation of Care Act 2013 (the Act) as part of our regulatory functions. We checked whether the provider was meeting the legal requirements, regulations and standards associated with the Act. We looked at the overall quality of the service.

We carried out this announced inspection on 24 January 2024. The inspection was led by an inspector from the Registration and Inspection team.

### **Service and service type**

Nicola Metcalfe provides 'childminding' for one or more children under 8 years old by a person at a private dwelling for reward and for more than a total of 2 hours in the same day.

### **People's experience of using this service and what we found**

To get to the heart of people's experiences of care and treatment, we always ask the following five questions:

- Is it safe?
- Is it effective?
- Is it caring?
- Is it responsive to people's needs?
- Is it well-led?

These questions form the framework for the areas we look at during the inspection.

### **Our key findings**

The rooms used for childminding were well equipped, organised, light and bright. In the playroom there was a good selection of age appropriate toys readily available to the children. The children were observed choosing their own toys from the selection available during the inspection.

Throughout the visit the childminder remained focused and engaged with the children.

The children undertake a range of activities with Nicola which include outings to the park and beach, visits to community based child focused groups and other social activities as well as being provided with lots of different play opportunities within the setting.

The feedback received demonstrated that the parents are happy with the care provided.

There were no areas for improvement identified.

### **Parental feedback comments**

"Genuinely couldn't be anymore delighted, Nicola has a beautiful demeanour with [child] and does so much with [child], [child] is extremely comfortable with her and I have no concerns whatsoever"

"She does so many things: development activities, paintings, cultural trips, exercise, painting, baking and most importantly the warm connection she shares with the children, she's fantastic"

"Provides a loving care setting"

"Provides a wide range of educational and fun activities"

"Great communication - Via an app during the day and verbally at drop off and collection"

"Nicola is very personable, she is welcoming, cheerful and make us all feel very at ease."

"Nicola is very knowledgeable and can offer words of comfort and advice in a kind and respectful way. It is clear that Nicola treats all the children in her care as individuals and knows them really well which is very comforting."

"We are very grateful to send [child] to Nicola."

"I feel extremely happy with the care being provided by Nicola, she is patient and kind and [child] loves going to her. [Child's] basic needs are always met as well as engaging activities and outings provided."

"Nicola talks to [child] in a lovely friendly manner and comforts [child] when [child] needs it which is very important to us."

"Nicola asked for lots of information from us when [child] started with her. Nicola has always made us aware of things such as her boiler being replaced in advance and asked us to sign paperwork to show we understand and we're happy to attend still."

"I feel very comfortable discussing any concerns I have with Nicola and often do. An example of this is that [child] doesn't sleep very well both at night and naps. When discussing this with Nicola when [child] started with her, Nicola was always extremely understanding and sympathetic and offered words of comfort and reassurance. Nicola found a way to get [child] to nap using various methods including trying her in a different pram and using a sensory video. We are very grateful for Nicola's patience with this and [child] now has good naps with the other children which is great."

"Nicola keeps us informed through the Family app, text messages and verbally. Nicola always reassures us that we can message her anytime to see how [child] is getting on if we have any concerns. When arriving at Nicola's she always asks how [child] is and gives us an opportunity to share anything we feel she needs to know and always updates us with how [child] has got on during the day on collection."

### **About the service**

The registered person must not look after more than 6 (six) children at any one time under the age of 8 (eight) years, including the childminder's own children

Of these 6 (six) children:

- No more than 2 (two) children must be under the age of 1 (one) year
- No more than 3 (three) children must be under the age of 5 (five) years

Nicola lives in Onchan and has been registered as a childminder since 2020. Nicola currently has 6 (six) children registered for day care and after school sessions; 3 (three) children were present during the time of the inspection.

The areas of the premises used for childminding are on the ground floor and include the kitchen/ dining area and an adjoining playroom. The living room is used as a quiet space for naps and there is a downstairs toilet for use by older children who attend after school. There was also a large, secure garden for the children to use, weather permitting. All areas used in the premises were warm, clean and well presented.

Activities are planned on a daily basis depending on the children attending, for activities outside of the home the childminder will walk with the children or transport them in her own car.

Nicola has pet dog on the premises. All parents are made aware of this prior to their child starting the service, however the dog has areas away from the childminding spaces to sleep and be fed.

Parents are asked to provide their own child's lunch and any personal items they may require.

### **Notice of Inspection**

This inspection was part of our annual inspection programme which took place between April 2023 and March 2024.

Inspection activity started on 17 October 2023. We visited the location's service on 24 January 2024.

### **What we did before the inspection**

We reviewed information we received about the service since the last inspection. We used the information the provider sent us in the provider information return (PIR), notifications, complaints/compliments and any safeguarding issues.

We sent parental questionnaires to parents of minded children

### **During the inspection**

We used an observational framework for inspection, this is a way of observing care to help us understand the experience of people/children.

**C1 Is the service safe?**

**Our findings:**

Safe – this means we looked for evidence that people were protected from abuse and avoidable harm. The service does not require any improvements in this area.

This service was found to be safe.

**Prevention and control of infection**

To minimise the risk of infection Nicola reported a daily cleaning routine that appeared robust and well implemented. In her provider information return (PIR) Nicola stated, "All floors and surfaces are cleaned daily. High chairs are cleaned after each use with antibacterial spray. All soft materials are washed weekly and each individual child has their own blanket for nap times. Toys are wiped down regularly. Messy play, i.e. playdough, sensory rice or cornflour are disposed of after each use and equipment used is also washed after use too."

A copy of Nicola's sick child policy was seen and clearly sets out the position regarding exclusion for children who may have a contagious illness. There was evidence that parents had received a copy of this policy and had signed agreement prior to their child starting.

In addition Nicola told us that she practices regular hand washing with the children; after activities, when they have been out and before snack and meal times.

All children had their own lunch bags/boxes provided by the parents which contained ice-packs.

**Assessing Risk, Safety monitoring and management**

Nicola was up to date with her safeguarding and first aid training. There were written risk assessments in place for all indoor and outdoor spaces used, outings and a fire risk assessment which included the evacuation plan. These had recently been reviewed and were dated however advice was given about recording review dates for all risk assessments and policies.

All insurance and safety checks, within the premises and for the vehicle used to transport children, were current with renewals being completed within the required timescales. Smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector tests were recorded as being checked weekly and fire drills practised monthly. A new boiler had been recently installed.

Nicola had a medication policy and completed 'administration of medication' forms were reviewed. These were signed and dated by parents and childminder and accompanied by a record of administration. Incident reports seen were also signed and dated as required.

## Inspection Findings

### C2 Is the service effective?

#### **Our findings**

Effective – this means we looked for evidence that people’s care, treatment and support achieved good outcomes and promoted a good quality of life, based on best available evidence. The service does not require any improvements in this area.

This service was found to be effective.

#### **Children’s care and development needs are assessed, supported and promoted**

Nicola appeared to have a good understanding of each child’s needs, level of development and behaviour. She engaged with the children throughout the time of the inspection and was able to respond to and divide her attention equally between all three children. She was observed singing rhymes and reading stories with the children. There was a good variety of age appropriate toys available for the children to access which included building bricks, hammering pegs, toy kitchen and cleaning equipment as well as a case full of books.

Nicola was available to the children, she spoke gently and reassuringly when one child needed comfort and gave cuddles readily. All three children present seemed relaxed and comfortable in the setting and with Nicola.

The parental feedback received supports and praises the range of activities and outings available to the children recognising them as “educational and fun”. Parental feedback also describes Nicola as being “knowledgeable about children”, “approachable”, “having a warm connection with the children” and one commented “Nicola treats all the children in her care as individuals and knows them really well which is very comforting.”

Nicola reported she maintains some routine, such as snack, lunch and nap times which provides the children with consistency and familiarity, however within the routine they attend different daily group settings or experience different activities or outings. This allows the children the opportunity to learn and grow in all areas of their development.

Throughout the day Nicola will take photographs of the children and provides all parents with both pictures and a written update of their child’s activities and achievements each day. This is sent via a family App and can be used as a way to record the child’s progress. Verbal updates are also given to parents at drop off and pick up and Nicola maintains her own diary to record relevant information.

## Inspection Findings

### C3 Is the service caring?

#### **Our findings**

Caring – this means we looked for evidence that the service involved people and treated them with compassion, kindness, dignity and respect. The service does not require any improvements in this area.

This service was found to be caring.

#### **Ensuring children are being treated with kindness, respect and compassion, and are given emotional support when needed.**

Each child had their own individual file containing essential information about them as well as detailed information about their likes/ dislikes and preferences. This information was gathered initially from the parents prior to the child starting in the setting. There was evidence that this information was reviewed and updated regularly and updates were signed and dated by the parent.

Nicola told us “all children in my care are treated with kindness, respect and compassion. All children in my care are given equal opportunities to participate in activities. All children are given the time to play and are supported by myself. I give emotional support if a child is upset or distressed, we have lots of cuddles. I have a very good bond with all the children in my care and they are happy to come to me if they are upset. If they have come in and have had a bad night sleep etc. I will always assess how the children are feeling before we decide what activity we will do that day to ensure all needs are being met.” This statement was reinforced within the parental feedback provided and was observed during the inspection visit.

#### **Maintaining children's privacy, dignity and independence respected.**

Nicola has a confidentiality policy that forms part of the signed contract with the parents and she is also registered under data protection. All the child records are either kept on a password protected device or stored securely in a locked file which no one else has access to.

To ensure privacy and maintain the child’s dignity Nicola reported “nappy changes, if out and about are always done in a changing area, or at home I will change each child in an area away from the others to give privacy while I can still observe and be aware of what the other children are doing.”

Independence is encouraged by letting the child try to complete a task on their own before Nicola steps in to help. Nicola gave examples such as “In activities the children are offered support and assistance if they need it but I encourage them to play and explore independently. At lunchtime children are given spoons and feed themselves where they can and I assist if needed. Children are encouraged to put shoes/ coats on or off if we are heading out and about. Lots of this depends on each individual child, on their needs and their ages of what they are able to do and how much help they need.”

During the inspection Nicola spoke respectfully and positively about all the children she looks after and was heard giving praise and encouragement to the children present.

## Inspection Findings

### C4 Is the service responsive?

#### **Our findings:**

Responsive – this means we looked for evidence that the service met people’s needs. The service does not require any improvements in this area.

This service was found to be responsive.

#### **Delivering personalised care**

Before starting any child Nicola asks the parents to complete an information form detailing the child’s interests and dislikes, as well as all the other necessary information. Nicola offers a face to face meeting to ensure she is as well prepared as she can be to welcome the child and have a clear understanding of their specific needs, including any cultural or religious needs.

Activities are often arranged to support and develop a child’s curiosity; they are often ‘in the moment’ rather than pre-planned, depending on which children are present and their current interests.

Nicola attends a number of group activities with the children which helps to promote and build good personal skills, including language and communication, social and emotional growth and physical development. Also by attending different groups and activities the children have the opportunity to meet and mix with children and adults from different backgrounds, cultures and levels of ability.

Nicola demonstrated a good awareness of inclusion and the toys and books available to the children reflected a diverse range of cultures and makeup of family groups.

If areas of improvement have been identified the provider will be required to produce an action plan detailing how the areas of improvement will be rectified within the timescales identified. The R&I team will follow up and monitor any actions undertaken.