



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

February 2022

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 four 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 also tested the framework on inspections, and have listened to what our inspectors and service providers told us about how well we used our methodology to reflect the framework aspirations.

We are issuing this Early Learning and Childcare Quality Framework to the sector to support you in the self-evaluation of your setting. 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.

How we have incorporated children's rights within the quality framework

In developing this framework we recognise that children's rights are central to every aspect of their care, play and learning provision across all service types. As corporate parents we are committed to keeping 'The Promise' and the 'Pinky Promise' made to care experienced infants, children, young people, adults, and their families - that every child grows up loved, safe, respected, and able to realise their full potential. This reflects our values, responsibilities, and commitments as corporate parents. We pledge to listen to children and young people, take action and do our best to improve their life chances. We have used the Health and Social Care Standards alongside the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, (UNCRC) to illustrate the quality we would expect to see. This is to help providers see how all the aspects link together.

You can access the Standards at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-social-care-standards-support-life/> and the UNCRC at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

There are also many versions of the UNCRC that have been simplified to use with children that you may find helpful to access. The Children and Young People's Commissioner has a range of simplified documents that can help in exploring and promoting a rights-based approach with children, their families and your staff. <https://cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc/articles/>

There are four general principles of children's rights:

- **Non-discrimination:** Children must be protected from discrimination and treated fairly whoever they are.
- **Best interests of the child:** When making any decision, adults – including governments and businesses – must do what is best for children rather than themselves.
- **Survival and development:** Children must be supported to grow up into what they want to be without harmful interference.
- **Respect for children's views:** Children have opinions that must be taken into account in all the things they care about.

How is the quality framework structured?

The framework is framed around key questions. (See the table on page eight of this document). Since the Covid-19 pandemic, we introduced 'Key question 5: How good is our care and support during the Covid-19 pandemic?' This question has been removed from the framework, however, elements have been retained to promote infection prevention and control.

To try and understand what contributes to wellbeing, the key questions are:

- How good is our care, play and learning?
- How good is our setting?
- How good is our leadership?
- How good is our staff team?

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

Under each quality indicator, we have provided quality illustrations of these key areas at two levels on the six-point scale we use on 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, 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 other factors which might influence your capacity to improve the quality of the setting in the future. Such factors might include staff changes, plans to restructure, or significant changes in funding. We think this is an important question to ask as part of self-evaluation. This is not a question we will inspect against but our inspectors will consider this as part of their assessment in relation to a service's capacity to improve.

In each quality indicator, we have included a **scrutiny and 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 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. It is likely that we will inspect:

- 1.1 Nurturing care and support
- 1.3 Play and learning
- 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities
- 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well, and
- 4.1 Staff skills, knowledge, and values. (For childminders, without assistants)
- 4.3 Staff deployment.

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. The 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?

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



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, play 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?
<p>1.1 Nurturing care and support</p> <p>1.2 Children are safe and protected</p> <p>1.3 Play and learning</p> <p>1.4 Family engagement</p> <p>1.5 Effective transitions</p>	<p>2.1 Quality of the setting for care, play and learning</p> <p>2.2 Children experience high quality facilities</p>	<p>3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well</p> <p>3.2 Leadership of play and learning</p> <p>3.3 Leadership and management of staff and resources</p>	<p>4.1 Staff skills, knowledge, and values</p> <p>4.2 Staff recruitment*</p> <p>4.3 Staff deployment *</p> <p>*4.2 & 4.3 do not apply to childminders who do not work with assistants</p>
<p>Key question 5: What is our overall capacity for improvement?</p>			

Key question 1: How good is our care, play 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

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	Weak
Children are nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience	
Children experience warmth, caring and nurturing approaches to support their overall wellbeing. 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 nurture children’s security, confidence and positive relationships.	Children may not always experience warm, caring interactions across their day. The tone and manner of some interactions with staff does not support the overall wellbeing and nurture of children. 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

Children are nurtured and supported throughout their daily experience

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

Relevant staff work proactively with children, families, and other professionals to identify appropriate next steps and strategies based on individual needs and prior learning. This information 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.
- 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.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 3, Article 5, Article 6, Article 12, Article 18, Article 23,
Article 24, Article 28, Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

How do we ensure children's individual needs are considered, responded to and planned for with families?

How do we ensure children's personal plans are maintained in line with legislation and that they fully support children's needs?

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?

Key improvement resources

ACES:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/adverse-childhood-experiences/>

Additional support for learning:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-support-learning-action-plan/>

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/>

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Key improvement resources

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>

Grow, cook, eat:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/hwb19-grow-cook-eat.pdf>

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 and childminding 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>

Trees for cities:

<https://www.treesforcities.org/our-work/schools-programme/edible-playgrounds>

Quality indicator 1.2: Children are safe and protected

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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	
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

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 comprehensive 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.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 2, Article 3, Article 6, Article 19, Article 24

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

How well do we listen to and support children to ensure they are safe, secure and protected from harm?

How do we know our staff fully understand our systems to keep children safe?

How often do we review and update our processes to support and keep children safe?

How well are our relationships with other agencies working?

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?

How do we ensure staff are up to date and can recognise the signs of online abuse, such as, grooming, cyberbullying and sexting?

Key improvement resources

Children & Young People's Commissioner, Convention on the Rights of the Child:

<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc>

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC):

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

National child protection guidelines:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021/>

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/>

Online safety – NSPCC resource:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

What is Child Abuse? NSPCC resource:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/>

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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 children’s 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

Staff have a very good understanding of child development, relevant theory, and practice, and skilfully use this to support 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 miss 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 limited understanding of the importance of supporting children's emotional resilience and their 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.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 5, Article 6 , Article 12, Article 13, Article 23, Article 24,
Article 28, Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

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?

Key improvement resources

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

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?plsctl_id=19402

Play Strategy for Scotland:

<https://www2.gov.scot/resource/0042/00425722.pdf>

Play Types toolkit:

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

Realising the ambition - Being Me:

<https://education.gov.scot/media/3bjpr3wa/realisingtheambition.pdf>

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

This includes the extent to which children's rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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 learning in the child's home environment
- where needed, well planned early intervention supports and strengthens children's and families' overall health, wellbeing, and resilience
- 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. It supports the ambition of the Promise to support care experienced children and their families.

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.

Staff recognise the importance of engaging families in understanding how to support learning in the child's 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.

Little value is put on building effective trusting relationships with families to improve children's and families' overall health, wellbeing, and resilience.

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.

Quality illustrations

Very good

Weak

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 human rights are promoted.

Procedures are in place to ensure service policies do not compromise children's rights.

Staff are well informed about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and The Promise and are able to translate this into actions that promote children's overall wellbeing and quality of experience.

Along with the Health and Social Care Standards, this approach ensures high quality rights-based care, play and learning experiences for all children.

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 positive emphasis on challenging discrimination and stereotypes is evident in provision of resources and experiences for children. Children see themselves, their community and their families reflected positively in the resources available to them.

A strong focus on driving improvement, promoting flexibility and encouraging innovation to achieve high quality, rights-based care, play and learning experiences is evident throughout the work with children and families.

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.

Staff may not fully understand the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) or the Health and Social Care Standards and where they have some knowledge, this may not translate into the experiences and outcomes for children.

There is limited understanding of the five foundations of The Promise and how this should inform work with children in the setting.

Equality and diversity are not well promoted or supported and approaches to tackling discrimination are not well embedded. Therefore, families may not feel secure.

There is limited consideration of positive discrimination within the service. Negative or outdated stereotypes may be promoted through the resources provided. Children may not be able to recognise themselves or their communities in a positive light due to the limits of the resources available.

Plans for improvement do not take account of children's rights and as limits the opportunities to ensure all children and families have equality of access to high quality rights-based care, play and learning experiences.

Links to the Health and Social Care Standards

- 1.1 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.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 2, Article 5, Article 6, Article 14, Article 12, Article 13, Article 18, Article 23, Article 24, Article 28, Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

How well do we support and respect the individual needs and rights of children and families?

How well do staff understand, champion, and enable the rights of looked after and care experienced 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?

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Key improvement resources

Bringing Generations Together:

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/bringing-generations-together/>

Corporate parenting plan:

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/6039/Corporate%20Parenting%20Plan%202021-23.pdf>

Children & Young People's Commissioner, Convention on the Rights of the Child:

<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc>

Family learning and engagement:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/practice-exemplars/family-learning-framework/>

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>

Practice Guide – involving children and young people in improving children's services:

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1582/practice-guide-involving-children-and-young-people-in-improving-services.pdf>

Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights:

<https://www.celcis.org/news/news-pages/power-human-rights-improve-peoples-health-and-care>

The Children's Parliament:

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/>

The Independent Care Review:

<https://www.carereview.scot/>

The Promise Scotland:

<https://thepromise.scot/>

Quality indicator 1.5: Effective transitions

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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 any 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	
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Once transitions are agreed, these take place at short notice, with limited opportunities for children to adjust and feel secure.</p>

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

- 1.1 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.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 3, Article 5, Article 6, Article 23, Article 24, Article 28,
Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

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?

Key improvement resources

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>

Pre-Birth to Three: Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop - Transitions:

<https://youtu.be/6zIkBLTj-KM>

Scottish early childhood and families transitions statement:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/nih105-ScottishEYTransitionPositionStatementSummary.pdf>

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 care, play and learning
- 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities



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

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- children benefit from high quality care, play and learning settings
- staff enable children to influence the design of the setting, 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 supports children to access play and learning opportunities that will impact positively 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 care, play and learning settings	
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>The setting design has limited opportunity to empower children to actively experience play and learning challenges centred on their needs and interests.</p> <p>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. Children’s views do not sufficiently influence their access to outdoors. Staff do not always recognise when children need more energetic, outdoor experiences.</p> <p>Not enough thought has gone into meeting the range of needs of all children and reducing potential barriers to their play and learning.</p>

Quality illustrations

Very good

Weak

Children benefit from high quality care, play and learning settings

There are safe, cosy spaces indoors and outdoors where children can rest or sleep, as needed.

Arrangements for sleep are planned around the family routine and the child's developing needs.

The arrangements for children to receive personal care are well planned, support high levels of infection, prevention and control and respect children's privacy and dignity.

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.

The design of the setting does not take account of children's need to sleep or rest as appropriate. As a result, children's routines are disrupted, they may be overtired as a result. There is potential for risk where arrangements do not reflect safe sleep guidance.

The arrangements for children to receive personal care are not well considered and do not respect children's privacy and dignity. The use of the setting compromises infection prevention and control measures and as a result, children are at potential risk of harm.

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.

Quality illustrations

Very good

Weak

Staff enable children to influence the design of the setting, 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.

Staff embrace a risk benefit approach and support children to safely engage in play to push their own boundaries and build self-confidence.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
- 5.18 The premises have been adapted, equipped and furnished to meet my needs and wishes.
- 5.19 My environment is secure and safe.
- 5.20 My environment is relaxed, welcoming, peaceful and free from avoidable and intrusive noise and smells.
- 5.21 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.
- 5.22 I have enough physical space to meet my needs and wishes.
- 5.23 I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices.
- 5.24 I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 3, Article 6, Article 12, Article 23, Article 24, Article 28,
Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

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?

Key improvement resources

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>

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Key improvement resources

Play Strategy for Scotland Action Plan:

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1296/play-strategy-for-scotland-our-action-plan.pdf>

Playtime Revolution – a resource from Grounds for Learning:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/playtime-revolution-a-resource-from-grounds-for-learning/>

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

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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 ensuring appropriate safety measures are in place. It highlights the need for staff to be vigilant to risks to children and supports an appropriate level of risk assessment to minimise those risks and to keep children safe from harm, including the need for rigorous infection prevention and control. 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 limited 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.

Staff work well together to identify and remove risks to children within the setting both indoors and outdoors, across the whole day. They ensure children are accounted for at all times and that the environment is secure and safe. This includes when outdoors and in the wider community. In doing so children's activities are not compromised and they are supported to enjoy challenging, fun play experiences.

Robust infection prevention and 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.

Staff do not always work well together to promote a safe environment for children. they may have limited understanding of children's development and may not recognise when everyday items can pose risk. As a result children may be at risk from avoidable harm. Staff may unnecessarily limit children's experiences in order to keep them safe and as such children's quality of experience is compromised. Arrangements for security within the setting, outdoors and in the wider community may not be well considered and there is the potential for children to exit the setting or be unaccounted for across the day exposing them to risk of harm.

Infection prevention and 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.

Quality illustrations

Very good

Weak

The setting and equipment are safe, secure, and well-maintained

All staff understand the arrangements for cleaning within the service. Risk assessments have been undertaken that address the current guidance in respect of infection prevention and control. Staff have received appropriate training on infection prevention and control and are confident in ensuring a high quality safe environment for themselves and the children in their care.

There are clear policies and procedures in place to ensure consistent approaches across the setting. Children are protected as staff take all necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection.

Staff are unclear about their role in promoting a safe environment for themselves and children in respect of infection prevention and control. There may not have been recent training or the training received has not had an impact on the approach to infection prevention and control within the setting.

Policies and procedures may be unclear, or not up to date to support the highest standards of infection prevention and control in the setting. Children may be exposed to a potential risk as a result.

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

- 5.1 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.
- 5.18 The premises have been adapted, equipped and furnished to meet my needs and wishes.
- 5.19 My environment is secure and safe.
- 5.20 My environment is relaxed, welcoming, peaceful and free from avoidable and intrusive noise and smells.
- 5.21 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.
- 5.22 I have enough physical space to meet my needs and wishes.
- 5.23 I am able to access a range of good quality equipment and furnishings to meet my needs, wishes and choices.
- 5.24 I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 3, Article 6, Article 12, Article 23, Article 24, Article 28,
Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

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?

Key improvement resources

Guidance for care providers in Scotland using CCTV (closed circuit television) in their services:

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/4412/CCTV%20guidance%20v2.pdf>

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>

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/>

Keeping children safe-look, think, act campaign:

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/keeping-children-safe-look-think-act-campaign/>

National Cyber Security Centre:

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/about-ncsc/what-we-do>

Royal society for the prevention of accidents - Keeping kids safe:

<https://www.rospa.com/resources/information-hubs/keeping-kids-safe>

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

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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 or staff 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 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.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 3, Article 5, Article 6, Article 12, Article 18, Article 23, Article 24, Article 28, Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

How do we know our quality assurance processes improve outcomes for children and families?

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?

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?

Key improvement resources

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

Quality indicator 3.2: Leadership of play and learning

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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 ideas and interests in their way and for their 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 terms and in their 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.	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

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.

Staff understand when to engage and when to stand back and enable children to develop their play at their pace. Through skilful sensitive engagement, opportunities are provided for children to develop their skills, including those in language, literacy and numeracy.

There are frequent appropriate opportunities for children to develop their thinking, problem solving skills through imaginative play and storytelling.

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.

Staff may not understand when to engage children in their learning and may step in and interrupt the play to meet their agenda rather than the children's interests. They may also miss opportunities to extend learning, as such children miss out on a range of learning to support their overall development, including limited application opportunities to promote language, literacy and numeracy.

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.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 3, Article 5, Article 6, Article 12, Article 18, Article 23, Article 24, Article 28, Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

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?

Key improvement resources

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%20childminding%20experience.pdf>

My Childminding Journey:

<http://www.childmindingjourney.scot/>

Quality indicator 3.3: Leadership and management of staff and resources

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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	
<p>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.</p> <p>The capacity of the setting to deliver positive outcomes for children and families is enhanced.</p>	<p>There is a significant lack of leadership in the setting. Staff are demotivated and disengaged leading to poor outcomes for children and families.</p> <p>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.</p>

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. They harness the different abilities, strengths and expertise of staff to provide targeted high-quality care and support when children and families need it.

Arrangements for staffing ensure safe high quality care, play and learning outcomes are provided to all the children.

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 ability, strength and experience. This means there are gaps and inconsistent approaches to identifying next steps in children's care, play and learning.

There may be a potential for risk as a result of staffing decisions and children's care, play and learning outcomes are compromised as a result.

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.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 3, Article 5, Article 6, Article 12, Article 18, Article 23, Article 24, Article 28, Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

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?

Key improvement resources

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

This includes the extent to which children's rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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 United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 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.

Interactions from staff 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 working relationships between staff result in children sometimes not experiencing a warm atmosphere.

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.

Quality illustrations

Very good

Weak

Children and families benefit from staff that are well trained, competent, 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, UNCRC 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. There may be avoidable incidents or accidents that have the potential to put children at risk due to a limited understanding of childcare practice. Training and development opportunities have not improved outcomes for children.

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 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 UNCRC and the Health and Social Care Standards do not underpin the practice of some staff.

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.

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.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 3, Article 5, Article 6, Article 12, Article 18, Article 23, Article 24, Article 28, Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

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?

How do staff use their skills and knowledge to identify the everyday potential risks within our setting?

Key improvement resources

Early learning and childcare national induction resource:

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/3528/early-learning-and-childcare-national-induction-resource.pdf>

Keeping children safe-look, think, act campaign:

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/keeping-children-safe-look-think-act-campaign/>

My childminding experience:

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/my-childminding-experience/>

Royal society for the prevention of accidents - Keeping kids safe:

<https://www.rospa.com/resources/information-hubs/keeping-kids-safe>

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

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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, the UNCRC and the Health and Social Care Standards are used to ensure that each child is protected, safe and receives the right support and care from staff. Retaining a stable, high quality and motivated workforce is essential for the delivery of effective support for children. Comprehensive induction programmes for staff support and guide roles and responsibilities.

Quality illustrations	
Very good	Weak
Recruitment procedures are effective and reflect best practice guidance	
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

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 recognising the UNCRC and 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. Mentors 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 unclear of what is expected of them and may lack knowledge of how the UNCRC and the Health and Social Care Standards underpin the provision.

Mentoring arrangements, where these exist, are not well considered and do not support staff 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.
- 4.9 I can take part in recruiting and training people if possible.
- 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.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 3, Article 5, Article 6, Article 12, Article 18, Article 23, Article 24, Article 28, Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

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?

Key improvement resources

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

This includes the extent to which children’s rights are respected and promoted through the following key areas:

- 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
<p>Deployment and levels of staff are effective ensuring high-quality outcomes for children</p>	
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>The approach to staffing within the service is not outcome-focused. 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.</p> <p>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.</p>

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 or agency 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 the 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 the service. This task is identified as a role for the leaders in the service. Staff do not take responsibility to highlight any gaps in staffing and opportunities to improve are missed. Communication and team working between staff may be limited, 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 agency staff using the skills and knowledge of the existing staff team.

Arrangements for busier times of the day, such as mealtimes or arrival and departure times, are ineffective to ensure staff can fully meet children's needs. 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 agency 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.
- 4.16 I am supported and cared for by people I know so that I experience consistency and continuity.
- 4.27 I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources.



Summary of UNCRC Articles

Article 3, Article 5, Article 6, Article 12, Article 18, Article 23, Article 24, Article 28, Article 29, Article 31

Scrutiny and improvement toolbox

Improvement and support questions

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?

Key improvement resources

Guidance on adult to child ratios in early learning 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

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://sosc.n.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%202019-2022.pdf>

Care Inspectorate - Early learning and childcare improvement programme

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/early-learning-and-childcare-improvement-programme/>

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/>

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