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11 January 2023

Dear Provider

As we begin a new year, my colleagues in the Care Inspectorate and I want to express our sincere gratitude for the extraordinary effort and work of the early learning and childcare (ELC) sector across Scotland. As we look to the year ahead, the Care Inspectorate continues to be fully committed to supporting all those who provide care and learning in ELC settings.

I am writing to all providers of ELC, including childminders and school-aged childcare, as I wish to alert you to our concerns about some incidents involving children in these settings, including children leaving without an adult and incidents at mealtimes. This is so that you can consider mitigations within your setting to prevent further incidents wherever you can.

Your staff team is the greatest resource you have in supporting children to have positive care and learning experiences and we want to encourage you to continue to support them to deliver the best outcomes for children. We would encourage you to review the deployment and expectations of staff and consider how the environment within your setting supports children to be safe and protected at all times. We all want children to have a good experience and be supported in safe and stimulating environments by the adults who care for them.

The Care Inspectorate has a critical part to play in ensuring that ELC services in Scotland are of high quality. In the course of our work, we have seen some very good practice delivered by dedicated staff, and we have also identified some common themes which are areas for improvement in services. It is important we let you know about these areas for improvement so you can make sure you make the relevant improvements to ensure children are kept safe.

Practice notes

To assist you, we are producing a series of [practice notes](#) to support improvement and to help ELC staff keep children safe. Following the expansion of ELC many settings are providing meals for the first time or have less experienced staff. In particular, we want to draw your attention to our practice note [supporting positive mealtime experiences](#) and ask you to support your staff team to review their current approach to ensure children have a safe and enjoyable mealtime experience.

A key area of concern across the sector is children leaving settings without an adult. To support you and raise awareness, we developed our [SIMOA](#) (Safety, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act) campaign to help you consider the child's relationships and safety. We also strongly encourage you to consider the physical environment in your setting and the supervision of children by your staff.

Providers are responsible for taking preventive action to eliminate the potential risks of children leaving their setting, without an appropriate adult, and are required to put preventive measures in place. Where we find concerns about the premises or the provision of care, we will review the evaluations and may re-evaluate the grades for your setting.

Providers must ensure the right preventative measures are in place such as the following:

- The premises must be safe and secure for children.
- Staff are accountable for the children, know who they are responsible for and where they are at all times.
- Staff must be alert, regularly assess and take action to improve the safety and security of their setting.
- Staff should be aware of where children are and who children are with at pick up and drop off times, when transitioning from areas and when outdoors or on outings.
- Staff teams should work well together, communicate effectively, and have a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe.
- Staff should identify where improvements might be needed and take action, putting in place relevant guidance and risk assessments.
- Staff should ensure children are fully engaged in their activities and are secure in their relationships with the staff in your setting.

Please review the [SIMOA](#) campaign tools and [practice notes](#) available on The Hub website. They will help to remind all ELC staff to be aware of **how** and **why** children could leave a setting without a responsible adult and actions to prevent these incidents from happening.

Our [Quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare](#) can be used by you and your staff to monitor children's experiences and where improvements are needed this will assist and support you to implement these.

Notifications

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you of the requirement to submit the appropriate notifications. The Care Inspectorate requires all care services to submit notifications in a range of circumstances, including details of any incident that is detrimental to the health and welfare of a person using a service. This should include, but is not restricted to, incidents such as:

- a child absconding from the service
- a person given wrong medication and/or wrong dose
- any incident resulting in injury
- any incident required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)
- any incident that would be described as a 'near miss' that could have led to injury of harm to a person using a service
- any incident that is considered as an adult or child protection matter.

Please ensure your settings continue to submit all the required notifications.

As you continue to keep families and children at the forefront of all your considerations, please be assured that we will continue to do all we can to support you to deliver high-quality care and learning.

Thank you for all you do and for your attention to this letter.

Yours faithfully



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