

# Helping Hands Child Minding

Inverurie

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
26 February 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Pauline Mark

**Service provider number:**  
SP2011983051

**Service no:**  
CS2011303927

## About the service

Helping Hands operates a service from their family home in Inverurie. They are registered to provide a childminding service to care for a maximum of six children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom no more than five are under 12 years, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminder's family.

The service is close to local amenities including green spaces, local nursery and school. The service is delivered from the family home with children accessing the living room, kitchen/dining space and a downstairs toilet. Children benefit from outdoor learning experiences through access to an enclosed rear garden and the local community.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 February 2024 between 09:15 and 12:00. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- gathered feedback about the service from three families
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children were happy, settled and relaxed in the childminder's care. The childminder was responsive to children, providing caring interactions.
- Children were able to direct their own play and activities, choosing and freely accessing appropriate materials and resources to support their play and learning.
- Trusting and positive relationships were formed with families and effective communication supported families to be involved in their child's care.
- Children are cared for in a welcoming and nurturing environment.
- A range of mandatory training courses and other professional development opportunities had been accessed, supporting the childminder to develop their skills and knowledge.

## From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions from the childminder who supported their care needs. The childminder knew the children very well and was responsive to their emotional and wellbeing needs. The childminder supported children to resolve minor conflicts, offering reassurance and cuddles when needed. This supported children to feel safe and secure during their time at the service. Children were confident inviting the childminder into their play. The childminder sat at child's level and engaged in conversations and play experiences with children. As a result, children were listened to and well supported. A parent told us, "Pauline always provides a flexible responsive approach to the day with a relaxed pace which allows for our child to build confidence and resilience."

Children's care and support was agreed in consultation with families. Their overall health and wellbeing was supported by consistent care that met their individual needs. Personal plans were developed for each child and detailed their routines, progress, and possible next steps in their development. Children requiring care plans had these in place and we advised that some of these could be more detailed, for example, more information on what would be classified as an emergency for a child with medical needs. Personal plans were being updated regularly which helped ensure they received the right care at the right time. A parent commented, "Pauline is always very professional in her approach to information held as part of my child's personal plan and is updated and shared regularly. She uses two-way communication in daily chats at drop off/pick up times, messages with pictures and videos using WhatsApp. Pauline will share well-being success and achievements from the day along with activities enjoyed that day and anything our child may have struggled or needed support with."

Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable experiences for children. The childminder sat with children during mealtimes which promoted close attachments and supported early language and communication skills. Most foods were provided by parents; however, the childminder was responsive to children's requests and provided raspberries to a child who wanted them. This ensured children had food they liked to eat. One parent commented, "The snacks she provides are fab and my son who eats quite a limited diet has been introduced to new foods and experiences thanks to Pauline. Children had some opportunities to be independent at mealtimes, such as choosing where they sit and the foods they like to eat. We made suggestions on how these could be developed further."

Clear policies and procedures were in place to protect children from harm. The childminder understood the role they played in keeping children safe. They had undertaken child protection training and were confident in the procedures they would follow should they have any concerns about a child.

### Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and Learning

Children were happy and enjoying their time with the childminder. They had a variety of opportunities which met their developmental needs, interests, and curiosities. These experiences offered children play and learning which included exploring, being creative, and problem solving. Children were seen to be choosing where they played and the childminder was responsive to their interests and requests. As a result,

children were listened to, valued and included. A parent commented, "Pauline creates an enabling environment where children feel welcome, loved and cared for. Pauline provides a flexible environment to accommodate children's changing needs and interests. There is direct access to the garden which children use on a daily basis. There are designated areas within Pauline's home where children can rest and relax. Children are able to choose from a very good range of age-appropriate and interesting resources to supported high quality learning and play. Pauline also supports children to use their imagination and creativity skills by offering a wide range of open-ended resources and access to sensory play experiences. Pauline always supports the children to be independent learners, following their own ideas and curiosities to reach their full potential. A child told us, "I like that Pauline plays football with me. It makes me happy when I go to Pauline's. She gets fun things for us to play with."

Children benefitted from opportunities to develop their skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. Experiences were enhanced naturally through play. For example, there was a very keen interest in the Thomas trains. The childminder used skilled and timely interactions to investigate colour, number and problem solving with children. As a result, children were engaged in their play whilst developing literacy and numeracy skills.

Play experiences linked to children's interests. The childminder used observations of play alongside daily chats with children and their families to identify children's interests. As a result, the childminder could forward plan activities and be responsive to children's ideas and interests, aware of their differing developmental needs. The childminder's knowledge of child development supported children to reach their full potential. The childminder used their sound knowledge and observation skills to track children's achievements and plan relevant next steps. As a result, children were supported to reach their full potential. A parent commented, "Pauline is particularly good at planning play and learning around the particular needs and interests of the children for who she cares for. Both of our children are hyper mobile and have been delays in their gross and fine motor development. Pauline has always supported our children exceptionally well and provided activities which are specific to their needs and requirements."

Children's health and wellbeing was promoted with daily access to the outdoors. The childminder recognised and valued the importance of outdoor play and made good use of local spaces and parks. Children benefitted from trips further afield such as, Café's, castles, woodlands, bowling club and Bennachie centre. This supported children to be included within their own and wider community. A parent told us, "Our child has frequent access to the community, for example, local parks, play centres, kinder gym, soft play, nature walks, cafes, childminder meet-ups, and toddler groups."

## How good is our setting?

**5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in a safe, welcoming and homely environment contributing to children feeling happy and secure. The environment had been organised to allow children to move around freely with space to play on the floor, choose their toys or relax using soft furnishings. Children appeared confident in the space and were leading their own play and learning. A parent commented, "Pauline provides an environment which is like home from home. Both my children love attending and 100% feel at home at hers. Her home is safe. Her home and toys are clean and well looked after. She has a super safe and large outdoor space where my boys enjoy playing. She offers a variety of experiences both indoors and outdoors. When required, Pauline

provides suitable sleeping arrangements for my youngest to nap."

Children's stages of development, interests and curiosities were well considered and reflected in the selection of resources on offer. The toys and resources were easily accessible which promoted choice and enabled children to be independent in their play and learning. A varied range of resources ensured that children had access to a variety of learning experiences. Children were seen to be utilising these freely leading their play.

Children benefitted from a well-considered and safe environment. The childminder had completed written risk assessments and these were regularly reviewed. They were alert to potential risks in their setting, outdoors, and in the local community. This safeguarded, protected, and supported children's wellbeing and safety.

Infection prevention and control measures included cleaning and handwashing routines that were effective. The childminder supported children effectively with handwashing and they recited a rhyme whilst handwashing, supporting children to practice effective handwashing. Personal care routines were well considered and personal protective equipment (PPE) was used, helping prevent cross contamination.

Children and families' personal information was securely stored. This showed the childminder understood their responsibilities regarding storing and processing children's personal information.

## How good is our leadership?

**5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

### Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder had created a happy and welcoming ethos in the service. This promoted a positive atmosphere for children to play and learn. The aims and objectives of the service promoted a shared vision between the childminder and families. These were shared with families as children enter the service. We suggested when reviewing these in future, the childminder consults with the children and families using the service, further supporting them to feel valued and included.

Effective communication enabled the childminder to gather information that helped them achieve their commitment to meeting the needs of children. Regular consultations in the form of formal questionnaires and informal feedback from parents was sought. This supported the childminder to make meaningful changes to service delivery. Parents told us, "We are very happy with the service that Pauline provides" and "Both children said nothing would make Pauline's better."

Self-evaluation processes encouraged the childminder to reflect on their service and identify areas to improve. Best practice guidance including Care Inspectorate's, 'A quality framework for day care of children, childminding and school aged children' had been used to develop the service. This process had supported the childminder to reflect on service delivery and needs of the children, highlighting key areas for improvement. For example, more opportunities for stories and the development of loose parts play. As a result, children were supported to access a high-quality service that was right for them.

**How good is our staff team?****5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

**Quality Indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values (childminders)**

The childminders kind, caring and consistent approach helped children to feel loved and secure. The childminder had good knowledge of specific children, resulting in their needs being met and interests supported. Interactions were loving and supported children to develop thinking skills. Respectful relationships were a key strength and children benefitted from childminders warmth and encouragement. A parent commented, "Pauline is a highly skilled passionate and committed childminder. The children benefit greatly from her compassionate and responsive care. Pauline displays very high-quality interactions with the children in her care, helping to develop children's self-esteem, confidence and independence."

It was clear that relationships and communications with families were a key strength of the service. The childminder had developed strong relationships with children and families, supporting them to feel included and valued. A parent told us, "Pauline is like an additional member of our family - our boys have a lovely relationship with her and she does the utmost to care for our children like her own. She is always adapting her play experiences to suit the needs and interests of the children, and ensures their learning is progressing."

The childminder demonstrated their knowledge and skills were up to date to offer high-quality experiences for children. As a part time primary school teacher, they had attended a range of training courses. Reflecting on new learning had enabled the childminder to identify how it could enhance their practice. Children's outcomes were improved as a result. A parent said, "Very strong leadership - very knowledgeable, helpful, understanding, approachable, down-to-earth, kind, hard-working and excellent at what she does. I feel confident that my son has a lovely time whilst in Pauline's care."

Children benefitted from good supervision which ensured they were safe at all times.

**Complaints**

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good



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