

Natalie's Childminding Service

Child Minding

Banchory

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 March 2024

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2017989072

Service no:
CS2017356703

About the service

Natalie's Childminding Service provides a childminding service from their property in a quiet residential area of Torphins in Aberdeenshire. The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of six children at any one time under the age of 16, 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 the local primary school, shops, parks, woods and other amenities. The children are cared for in the living/dining room and a downstairs toilet. Children also have access to an enclosed rear garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 20 March 2024 between 15:30 and 18:00 and the 21 March 2024 between 15:30 and 17:15. One inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with children using the service and four parents of children who attend
- spoke with the childminder about the service provided
- observed play and the interactions between the childminder and the minded children
- we looked at the resources available and the use of space
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were at the heart of the service and were cared for by a childminder who knew them and their families well.
- Children experienced warm and caring interactions from the childminder.
- The setting made good use of the outdoors, at their home and in the community.
- The childminder recognised the importance of fun in children's play.
- The childminder should use their reflections to create improvements plans which would support improvement in the service.
- The childminder should document reflections on training opportunities and consider how this has improved outcomes for children.

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?	4 - 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

The childminder had formed positive relationships with the children in their care, having fun and sharing warm and caring interactions. The childminder knew children very well and spoke confidently about them and their needs. The childminder knew children's interests, in and outside of the setting, and spoke about their personalities and characters. Parents strongly agreed that the childminder knew their children well, including what they liked and what was important for their care. One parent said, "the childminder provides a nurturing, caring environment with a range of activities. She knows the children well and knows how to get the best out of them."

Each child had a personal plan which was used to gather information relevant to their continued care and wellbeing. These were completed with parents and supported the childminder to meet children's individual needs. Most parents strongly agreed that they were fully involved in their child's care. This included developing and reviewing their personal plans. The childminder had recognised the importance of safeguarding children, and chronologies were in place to capture significant events in children's lives. These would highlight any potential safeguarding issues arising and ensure that appropriate action had been taken to keep children safe and protected.

The childminder had a system in place for managing the administration of medication. This included a medication policy which supported children's health and wellbeing and highlighted the importance of obtaining parental permission. We directed the childminder to the guidance: 'Management of medication in day care and childminding services' to help them review the service policy to ensure their policy contained the most up-to-date information. This will help to keep children safe and well.

Snacks provided were very healthy and nutritious. Snack time was a social, unhurried and relaxed experience, allowing children to eat at a pace that suited them. The childminder and children chatted as they enjoyed snack. We saw photographic evidence that children often enjoyed baking activities which promoted various learning opportunities and encouraged independence. Most parents strongly agreed that their children could choose from a healthy range of snacks everyday. One child said, "we have good snacks and food."

Children did not sleep during our visit however; we did see that opportunities for resting had been well considered. We saw children relax on the comfy sofa with cushions and blankets. Most parents strongly agreed that children were able to rest within an area that was comfortable and cosy.

Quality Indicator: 1.3 Play and learning

Throughout our visit, children were very busy and engaged playing well together. Children could freely access resources supporting free choice which empowered them to lead their own play. The children had access to a wide range of quality age and stage appropriate toys and resources to support their play and learning. These included books, games role play resources and arts and crafts. These encouraged children's creativity, imagination and working together.

Children's numeracy and literacy was very well promoted with good selection of resources available throughout the setting, including mark making materials, books and games. We discussed including some open ended, real resources such as old phones, keyboards and scales for the children to explore during role play. One child said, "it's fun at Natalie's! She has good and interesting books that you can read anytime you want."

The childminder was very responsive to children's current interests and provided resources to engage children in meaningful play experiences. We saw the childminder and children play board games together. As it was a new game, they read the instructions together and younger children were well supported to read cards. Children were seen to be patient and respectful of each other playing the game. We heard that the childminder had connections with the local charity shop who contacted the childminder when new games came into the shop. We were able to see looking at the 'Family App' the wide range of activities the children had experienced. These included baking, flying kites, feeding birds, crafts and using loose parts to create bows and arrows. These supported the children's creativity, curiosities and problem solving skills.

Parents strongly agreed that their children had opportunities to be involved in meaningful, interesting and fun play experiences. One parent said "The childminder has taught the children to sew which they have enjoyed. During holiday time she runs lots of different activities such as geocaching (what is this?) and trips out". Another said "The childminder has taught my daughter new skills, and given her opportunities I could not. They offer a wide range of learning through play."

We saw that the childminder involved the children in planning for the holidays and took into account their likes and interests, for example going on bike rides and visiting a friend's ponies. The childminder used both 'notebook' and the 'Family App' to share observations with parents. These were linked to the wellbeing indicators and took account of children's learning through experiences and identified next steps. Parents told us they felt fully involved and informed about their children learning and development.

The childminder recognised and valued the importance of making connections with the community. We heard and saw from photographs that the children enjoyed exploring local places such as the park, woodlands, estates and the shops. This gave the children a real sense of belonging within their community.

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

The warm, welcoming, and homely environment met children's needs and interests very well. Children benefited from the use of the living room/dining area, toilet, and the enclosed back garden. These areas were well maintained and allowed children freedom and choice. We saw children moving confidently around the space. One child said, "I feel at home." One parent said, "It's a small group of children, friendly, home environment is ideal."

Resources were accessible to children, providing opportunities for them to direct their own play and be independent. Children were also able to make choices and develop their own interests. Parents strongly agreed that children had access to a good range of quality toys and play materials.

We heard that children usually have free flow access to the enclosed rear garden however; due to circumstances out with the childminder's control this was temporarily unavailable. As an alternative the childminder was using other outdoor spaces while the children had good daily opportunities to benefit from fresh air, exercise and to explore their local area walking to and from school. One parent said "the childminder provides a wide variety of play activities and helps them to learn new skills such as sewing. They have lots of outside play which is important."

Protective measures were in place to minimise risk and support children to be safe. Risk assessments identified potential hazards and helped ensure children's safety whilst out in the community. These could be further developed in line with current best practice supporting children's access to risky play opportunities. One parent said "we chose the childminder because they provide safe outdoor and indoor options."

During our visit we witnessed effective infection prevention and control practices. For example: effective hand washing and children's awareness of the hand washing routines. We also saw the childminder cleaning at appropriate times. The childminder understood the importance of maintaining a hygienic environment which contributed to ensuring that children were kept healthy, safe and well.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

We saw that the childminder was working in accordance with the service aims and objectives. This was evident in interactions and relationships developed with children and families. We spoke about involving children and families in accessing the service during the next review. This would support children and families to feel more valued and involved with the development of the service.

We found the childminder supported the children and families well. We saw the childminder welcome parents at pick up time and chat to them. They used technology such as the 'Family App' to communicate with families and share observations and photos. Parents told us they were given good quality information about their child's day. One parent said "I have great handovers when collecting my child. The childminder always says if I have any issues to let them know. I have had none." This ensured families felt involved and included in their child's experiences.

The childminder understood the importance of using the views of children and families to inform planning and the development of the service. Parents and children were regularly asked for suggestions around improving the service, although this had not been documented. We discussed the importance of documenting this as evidence that children and families had been involved in a meaningful way with their ideas and suggestions being used to influence change.

We saw the childminder reflected on their service. They should now use this reflection to identify areas for improvement. Engaging with quality audit tools such as: 'Quality Framework for the day care of children, childminding and school aged children' would support continued improvement within the service and positive outcomes for children.

The childminder had a range of policies and procedures in place supporting them to provide a quality service. We discussed reviewing existing policies and adding a sleep policy inline with best practice documents. Policies had been shared with parents, which contributed to them feeling included and well informed. Parents said, "they were confident the setting was well managed."

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

A very calm and caring approach ensured that the childminder was responsive to meeting children's needs. This contributed positively to children's wellbeing and helped them to feel settled, secure, and loved in the childminder's care. The childminder was very respectful of children's rights, providing care that was individualised and responsive to each child. She showed genuine love, compassion and care for children. One child said, "It's fun and Natalie is good to talk to. If I need help with anything I know I can talk to her, she listens and gives me good advice."

Our discussions highlighted that the childminder was very enthusiastic and committed to their role and to the families using the service. The childminder was able to discuss how she was supporting children and had a clear understanding of how they develop and learn. Parents strongly agreed that the childminder has the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to care for their children and support their learning. One parent said "my child has attended the Childminding service since P1, continuing through to P7. During this time I have watched them develop and grow with empowerment through the relationship they have with the childminder and also their family and other children under their care."

The childminder made very good use of professional development opportunities. They had recently completed training courses including: Paediatric first aid, Benefit risk assessment, STEM and GIRFEC. We discussed the benefits of keeping a record of professional development including information about courses attended. This would support the childminder to reflect on training and ultimately improve outcomes for children. The childminder should now take time to consider the impact training has had on their setting.

The childminder had some knowledge and understanding of best practice guidance and was able to discuss how they were using this knowledge to improve the setting and outcomes for children. For example, developing loose parts play. They were looking to extend this further and we sign posted them to 'Loose Parts Play - A toolkit.' This will help ensure the childminder continues to improve her practice and the experiences on offer to the children.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To support the care needs and wellbeing of children, the childminder should ensure that children's personal plan information is fully completed. Personal plans should be reviewed a minimum of once every six months in consultation with parents and a record of this kept. Personal plan information should also be expanded upon to take into account, the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state: 'My personal plan is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

This area for improvement was made on 9 October 2018.

Action taken since then

Each child had a personal plan which was used to gather information relevant to their continued care and wellbeing. These had been reviewed with parents and supported the childminder to meet children's individual needs. Observations of children were linked to the wellbeing indicators and took account of children's learning through experiences and identified next steps.

This area for improvement has been met.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at 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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good

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