

Duncan-Kerr, Fiona

Child Minding

Peebles

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
10 September 2024

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2008972555

Service no:
CS2008192074

About the service

Fiona Duncan-Kerr is registered to provide care for a maximum of 7 children at any one time up to 16 years of age:

of whom no more than 6 are under the age of 12;

of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and;

of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months.

Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

The service is close to local primary schools, parks and other amenities. Children had access to a living room with dining area, playroom, kitchen, upstairs bathroom and bedroom for sleeping. The enclosed garden was accessed through the kitchen.

About the inspection

This was a short notice announced inspection which took place on 5 September 2024 between 10:20 and 13:00. 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:

- met one child during the inspection and spoke with three children via video call as part of the inspection;
- spoke with the childminder;
- received online feedback from four families;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents;
- spoke with three partner professionals.

Key messages

- The childminder was warm, kind, loving and caring, creating a safe and cosy home from home setting.
- Children's rights were deeply integrated into the childminder's approach, creating a highly supportive environment where children felt valued and secure.
- Children thrived in an environment rich with both structured and spontaneous experiences, providing exceptional opportunities for play, learning, and development.
- The childminder's aspirational and enabling attitude significantly enhanced the experiences and outcomes for children, setting a sector leading standard of outstanding quality.

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?	6 - Excellent
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	6 - Excellent
How good is our staff team?	6 - Excellent

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent, where performance was innovative and sector leading.

Quality Indicator 1.1: - Nurturing care and support

The childminder was warm, kind, loving and caring, creating a safe and cosy home from home setting. This was echoed by a parent who told us, "We feel she has welcomed us all in to her family and her family home and she has created an environment that is unbelievably nurturing and caring. Every child is treated as an individual and unique whilst she also brings them together as a family". By fostering a family like atmosphere, the childminder ensured that everyone felt welcomed and respected. Parents recognised the significant role the childminder played in their children's lives, as one noted, "Fiona has offered a home from home environment for both my children. They feel safe and nurtured when there. She knows them as well as I do and has had a huge part in helping to raise them". This confirmed the deep trust and connections built with both children and families, resulting in a loving environment that felt like a second home.

The childminder's approach was deeply rooted in children's rights, creating an exceptional space where children felt valued, secure and empowered. As one child shared, "For me, rights is about respect, courage, and compassion". Another noted, "We have a charter that means we are heard, safe, we play and learn and listen to others". The childminder used contemporary best practices and guidance, such as 'The Voice of the Infant: best practice guidelines' to ensure each individual's feelings and their voices were heard, including those of pre-verbal children and babies. This greatly enhanced their emotional wellbeing. In addition and in the spirit of working in true partnership with families, the childminder continually shared children's work and efforts. She also sought families' input during the development of the Rights-based approach policy. This meant there was a meaningful and holistic approach to protecting and promoting children's rights, resulting in confident, secure, and happy children thriving in a loving and supportive environment.

Children were cared for by a childminder who knew them, and their families, extremely well. An exceptionally detailed, personalised and engaging approach to personal planning that was innovative and effective benefited both children and parents. As confirmed by all families through electronic feedback forms, children and families were central to this process, giving them a strong sense of support and partnership whilst ensuring children had a voice in the process. This enabled the childminder to respond quickly, sensitively, and compassionately to changes in a child's life. As a result, children experienced meaningful and supportive care, play and learning, with continuity between home and the setting.

The childminder's approach to nutrition was exemplary. By providing all meals and snacks and ensuring dietary requirements were met, the childminder demonstrated a commitment to children's health and wellbeing. The inclusion of a wide range of activities, such as growing herbs, involvement in menu planning, meal preparation, and food selection, fostered independence, engagement, and a deeper appreciation for healthy eating. Regular visits to the local supermarket and weekly visits from the fish van added excitement and variety to the children's food choices, encouraging them to explore new flavours and textures. The childminder's practice of sitting at the table with children during meals created a warm, family-like atmosphere, making mealtimes enjoyable and nurturing for everyone.

The childminder's approach to school transitions greatly improved children's security and wellbeing. Each child received a bag with resources to support emotional wellbeing, including familiar items such as stories and lunch trays, which boosted their confidence and readiness for school. This reduced anxieties for both children and families, with additional support through guidance leaflets and practical help. Older children

also helped by answering questions, adding a comforting, personalised touch. As a result, children felt more secure and confident, leading to a smoother transition to school.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

A lending library outside the childminder's home, stocked with books and food, was both accessible and convenient for minded families and the community. This initiative encouraged language development and a love of reading among children and families, while fostering community engagement and a strong sense of connection. The library was inclusive, providing options for children who preferred to hear stories on an electronic device along with the book. It also supported families to engage in a community pantry, which enabled them to discreetly access essential foods, promoting resource sharing and generosity. This community focused approach enhanced local support networks, nurtured a spirit of sharing, and contributed to a supportive environment for all.

Children thrived in an environment rich with both structured and spontaneous experiences, providing exceptional opportunities for play, learning, and development. Children had numerous opportunities to develop language, literacy and numeracy through meaningful conversations, problem solving and real-life experiences. The childminder's innovative approach, emphasising child-led play, provocations, and hands-on learning, was highly effective. Parents observed this impact, noting that, "Fiona's days and activities are always child-led," and "She tailors her approach to individual interests, creating something spectacular". Children themselves commented on the childminder's dedication, saying, "I wanted a beach day and Fiona made that happen", "She arranged a football day for me" and "She spoils us and takes us on adventures". This focus on fun, tailored to each child's needs and interests, fostered high levels of engagement, independence, and personal achievements, resulting in progress, happiness, and confidence among the children.

Children's bond with their family, was strengthened by welcoming grandparents regularly in the setting, providing emotional support and fun through activities such as playing cards, painting and making breakfast together. This intergenerational practice had introduced children to unique skills and stories, which helped enrich the learning environment for all children, especially those who do not have an extended family. Their presence also increased children's social and emotional development while building stronger family connections. This warm welcoming approach was further confirmed by a parent who told us, "One thing my children have loved is the grandparents' days when she invites the grandparents in to play with the kids once a month. They have both loved it and get so much from it".

The childminder actively embraced the local community, engaging children in various activities such as maintaining the local supermarket garden, inviting community members and neighbours for tea, and fostering connections with a local charity shop. Visits to cafes and receiving donations from community members such as loose parts resources and herbs, meant the childminder had created a rich, interactive environment. Children were keen to tell us, "We made a hedgehog house and frog cottage and hid them in Tesco garden", "Sometimes we donate to the food bank" and "We are all famous in Tesco, we drew pictures of our litter pick and they are on display". A parent noted, "For me, what my child enjoys the most is the time that they get out and about in the community, in nature and spending time with older children that feel like family". This approach positively impacted children by expanding their social experiences, building a sense of community, and encouraging them to develop a greater sense of belonging, responsibility, empathy and appreciation for their surroundings.

Providing children with frequent opportunities to explore nature in a meaningful way was of great importance to the childminder. By supplying wellies and waterproofs, the childminder ensured that all children could participate, eliminating any financial burden and the need for families to remember extra clothing. Children regularly explored local woodlands, parks, the River Tweed, streams, and scenic walking

routes, fostering a connection with the natural world. The childminder also encouraged participation in the '1000 hours outside challenge', promoting extended outdoor play. A 'Barefoot Challenge' offered sensory experiences such as paddling, walking on grass, and feeling sand between toes. This approach was appreciated by all families who responded to our online questionnaire, with one noting, "I love the nature awards that Fiona has been tracking and winning. Rain, snow, sun, wind, whatever the weather, Fiona ensures they are appropriately dressed for the weather and off they go on their adventure". These experiences supported children's physical development, sensory awareness, and emotional wellbeing, building resilience, creativity, and a strong appreciation for nature.

Children were learning through enriching experiences shaped by their individual and common interests. The childminder's approach was rooted in theoretical underpinnings of child development and learning, inspired by Montessori and Reggio Emilia philosophies. This was evident in the design of play spaces, children's opportunities for creativity and expression, and the childminder's attuned and enriching interactions. The childminder had been externally recognised for her approach to recording children's learning journeys. These homemade scrap books, completed with and by children, celebrated each child's unique learning journey while also ensuring that interests and needs for support were thoughtfully considered.

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 childminder's home was a bright, airy space filled with natural light, creating a calming and welcoming environment for children. Children were immersed in a nature rich environment which contributed to their overall wellbeing and happiness. Authentic natural elements such as houseplants, foliage and wooden resources created an important connection with nature, whilst, soft lighting and thoughtful details further enhanced the calm, peaceful environment that had been created. This contributed to children's sense of wonder, curiosity and appreciation for the world around them.

Thoughtfully placed and intriguing loose parts in various places throughout the setting encouraged imaginative play and allowed children to lead their own learning. This approach not only fostered a sense of autonomy but also sparked children's natural curiosity and imagination, within an environment that provided endless opportunities for exploration and discovery.

A secure back garden in the childminder's home featured rugs, cushions, and blankets, which created a comfortable and inviting space for children. With unrestricted access to the garden, children could freely explore and engage with a range of developmentally appropriate, stimulating experiences. This environment not only enhanced their connection with nature but also supported children's wellbeing. The child we met during the inspection was visibly relaxed and confident as they transitioned between indoor and outdoor spaces, reflecting the positive impact of this thoughtfully designed environment on their overall development and comfort.

Robust infection prevention and control and food safety practices positively impacted children's health and wellbeing. Additional equipment within the bathroom promoted young children's independence whilst visiting the toilet. The kitchen, while homely, was maintained without hazards or infection control issues, supporting safe food preparation. Handwashing was consistently practiced by both the childminder and the

children at appropriate times. Overall, the home was clean and tidy, combining a sense of homeliness with effective safety measures to enhance the children's health, wellbeing and safety.

With a strong commitment to reducing waste and minimising the impact on the wider community, children were actively engaged in making plastic-free choices within the setting. By engaging the children in environmentally conscious decisions, the childminder not only fostered an understanding of sustainability but also empowered the children to take responsibility for the environment. As a result, children were introduced to sustainable values and concepts that fostered a sense of responsibility and empathy towards the environment. Children were encouraged to be active global citizens, capable of making informed decisions that impacted on the world around them. The childminder and children had won awards for their efforts, highlighting the significant positive impact of their actions.

How good is our leadership?

6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent, where performance was innovative and sector leading.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Both children and families were empowered to provide feedback, which was used constructively by the childminder to build effective and professional relationships where every voice was valued. Family engagement was encouraged through enjoyable events, such as World Book Day and Christmas craft day, where feedback was gathered in a relaxed, interactive setting. By actively involving children and families in the system of quality assurance, the childminder enhanced outcomes for children. One parent provided a detailed account of how this system worked, explaining, "Fiona always asks for our opinions through surveys or polls online or sending something home in my child's bag for us to fill in when we get the chance. She also hosts parents events very regularly and uses post it notes to describe where she thinks she is and with what evidence and we add our own post it notes in a different colour to what else we think is going well and any suggestions. The big kids are involved in this too". Another said the childminder was "always keen for feedback and looks for both mine and my child's input on what she could do better". This innovative approach not only enhanced the quality of care, play and learning but also ensured continuous improvements, leading to a highly responsive and inclusive environment for both children and families.

The childminder's unique and innovative approach to quality assurance, self-evaluation, and monitoring the impact of training on children's outcomes served as a model for other childcare providers, as highlighted on the local authority Early Years Hub. The childminder had continued to enhance their leadership skills through contributing to various early years events within their own local authority and beyond into other local authorities. This collaborative approach had enabled the childminder to share their skills, knowledge and experience with a wider audience. These had provided the opportunity to network, build positive working relationships and further enhance the quality of the service.

Daily conversations between the childminder and parents as well as two-way daily diaries and messaging maintained respectful relationships and facilitated ongoing feedback about children's experiences and progress. This open communication allowed the childminder to address any concerns promptly, tailor care to individual needs, and continually improve the quality of the setting. As a result, this consistent feedback loop contributed to high standards of care and ensured that the environment remained responsive to both children's and families needs.

When we asked what the childminder could improve upon, parents and children responded by simply noting "Nothing", while others expanding on this saying, "Absolutely nothing. She is amazing" and "There is

absolutely nothing I could possibly ask Fiona to improve about her service. She goes above and beyond for each and every child in her care. Treating them as absolute individuals but also as part of her family. She is second to none, one in a million". This unanimous approval reflected the childminder's outstanding ability to meet and exceed expectations in creating a nurturing and effective environment for all.

The childminder was driven and motivated to continue to develop and improve her service. Photographs and reflections of changes made in the setting supported the childminder's professional development by providing a record of progress and areas for further improvement. This documentation benefited the setting by highlighting successful practices and guiding future improvements, while also keeping families informed about their children's experiences and development. This fostered a continuous improvement process, ensuring the environment remained responsive to the needs of children and families.

How good is our staff team?

6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent, where performance was innovative and sector leading.

Quality Indicator 4.1: staff skills, knowledge and values

Independent of external scrutiny, there was a demonstrable track record of innovation and high-quality performance through a wider range of activities that supported children's wellbeing. These varied from activities focused on children's physical development and health to their global citizenship. Children benefited greatly from the childminder's passion and commitment to high-quality care, play, and learning.

Compassionate and responsive care from the childminder created an environment where children felt genuinely valued, loved, and secure. This approach fostered a warm, respectful atmosphere where everyone was courteous and attentive. To explain the caring and empathetic atmosphere, children told us they "were kind and, we share things", "We hold hands of the little ones" and "We all help each other". During our video call with the children we saw this first hand as the older children helped a younger child sit on their knee to participate, including them with gentle encouragement to speak and cuddles.

The childminder knew the significance of actively listening to babies and pre-verbal children and their role in interpreting children's needs and emotions to foster strong responsive care. By taking the time to support, speak with, and truly listen to each child, the childminder ensured that each child's needs were met with empathy and understanding. The children affectionately shared their feelings, with comments such as "She's amazing", "She supports us", and "We chat about anything". They expressed their deep appreciation by saying, "she's awesome" and "I sometimes tell her I love her". Many even called her "Aunty Nona" and declared, "She is the best childminder in the world". A parent told us, "I can't stress enough just how thankful we are to have had Fiona help us to bring up our children. We see her as another Mum and they do too. They love her to bits and they love going to Fiona's house as every day is a new adventure". This heartfelt feedback highlighted how the childminder's approach not only enhanced the children's sense of belonging but also ensured that each child's emotional and developmental needs were met, resulting in outstanding outcomes in their wellbeing and learning.

The childminder had a strong commitment to professional development and continuous improvement. The childminder actively shared learning with other early learning and childcare settings and professionals, fostering a collaborative and supportive network. This approach not only benefited the childminder's own practice but also contributed to a broader culture of knowledge sharing and innovation within the sector. By learning from others, the childminder was able to stay up-to-date with best practices, ensuring that the children in her care received the highest quality care and learning experience.

Records of training and professional development activities were kept, prompting ongoing improvements to the childminder's practice. Documenting these experiences was important as it enabled the childminder to reflect and implement their learning to improve practice by integrating new knowledge and skills effectively. This approach enhanced the quality of the setting by promoting continuous improvement and ensured that children benefited from the latest best practices in early learning and childcare. For children, this led to a rich, responsive learning environment that centred on improving outcomes.

The childminder's aspirational and enabling attitude significantly enhanced the experiences and outcomes for children, setting a sector leading standard of outstanding quality. With a clear understanding of how children develop and learn, the childminder supported children's wellbeing exceptionally well. By using skilled questioning and engaging in sensitive, responsive, and stimulating interactions, the childminder fostered curiosity, independence, and confidence. Recognising the crucial role of fun in play, they effectively supported children's learning and development, ensuring that each child could achieve their full potential in an enriching and supportive environment.

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?	6 - Excellent
1.1 Nurturing care and support	6 - Excellent
1.3 Play and learning	6 - Excellent
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	6 - Excellent
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	6 - Excellent
How good is our staff team?	6 - Excellent
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	6 - Excellent

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