

Howie, Lyn Child Minding

Falkirk

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
15 November 2024

Service provided by:
Lyn Howie

Service provider number:
SP2007965181

Service no:
CS2007151829

About the service

This service was registered on 23 July 2014. Lyn Howie, referred to as 'the childminder' in this report, 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.

The childminder has 13 assistants working with her at different times to allow her to care for a maximum of 54 children under the age of 16 at any one time of whom no more than 27 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than 9 are under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminder and assistants. Further information about how this is managed can be found on the service's registration certificate.

Minded children cannot be cared for by persons other than those named on the certificate.

No overnight care can be provided.

Stuart Howie, Amy Tyler, Carolanne Latta, Joyce Stanton, Catherine Ann Forrest, Wendy Bowes, Robyn Paris, Emily Royer, Natassja McCulloch, Miya-Louise Peggy Gray, Grace Hardie, Rebecca Valentine and Chloe Valentine are named assistants.

Stuart Howie and/or Amy Tyler and/or Carolanne Latta will act as manager in the service in the absence of the childminder.

The service is provided from the childminder's home in a residential area in Armadale, Bathgate. Children have access to a large enclosed garden area, a cabin with kitchen and toilet facilities, a large barn with a smaller 'chalet' inside for colder weather. There are individual huts with outdoor toilet facilities and a handwashing station at the entrance to the barn. Children spend the majority of their time out of doors in the large garden area. The children access indoor facilities during colder and darker periods. The service is close to local schools, shops and public transport routes.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 11 November 2024 between 10:00 and 18:00 and on Tuesday 12 November 2024 between 08:50 and 17:00. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. We gave feedback to the service on Friday 15 November 2024 at 09:30.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information and information submitted by the service.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children in the service over two days
- reviewed feedback from the families who responded to our questionnaires
- spoke with the childminder and her assistants
- observed practice and interactions with children
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were busy enjoying a rich variety of play in the service which was supporting them to learn new skills and develop as individuals.
- Personal planning helped to keep children safe and celebrate their achievements, the childminder planned to further develop this to support children's individual learning journeys.
- Children were supported to understand and manage risks. These were well managed in the setting helping to keep children safe.
- The childminder planned to review lunches, Infection control and safe sleep polices in line with new best practice guidance to help to keep children healthy and safe.
- The childminder had worked hard to build positive relationships with the children, families and staff team.
- The childminder and assistants were committed to developing their professional practice to continue to improve the quality of care, play and learning children experienced.

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 were cared for by a warm, caring and nurturing staff team. Relationships were very important to all staff within the setting, and they worked hard to form strong partnerships with families. Staff shared information effectively with each other, with families and other settings appropriately to ensure children had consistent care and support. In addition to daily conversations, they made use of technology and apps to ensure that everyone had the information they needed at the right time. This meant that they knew the children very well, were sensitive to their needs and interests and ensured that children received the support they needed. One parent commented: "I felt welcome immediately and the whole staff team has a strong 'family' feel to it." another said the service were in "Constant contact through what's app, emails and Facebook".

Staff knew the children well and this helped them to be tuned into how children were feeling and able to understand what they needed. There were some children with communication needs and staff used aids, like communication cards, to support children to express their feelings. Parents confirmed that this had supported their children to communicate. Children were learning about their emotions and building language skills around this. They had built their own emotions 'first aid kits' which helped them learn how to regulate their own emotions. For example children told us that if they needed a hug, they could select the teddy bear to help others understand what they needed.

All children had a personal plan folder which contained key information about children and their needs. We discussed the benefits of recording significant changes as they happen so that staff develop and shape individual support strategies consistently. Staff observe children's development and progress routinely and share this information with parents, both online, and by talking at handover times and consultation meetings. The childminder had identified staff skills at recording significant observations for the children as an area for improvement. Staff were being supported to access additional training on this to help them develop their skills further. We suggested that the childminder review how information is shared with the families of school aged children to ensure that they are fully involved in the life of the setting.

Lunchtime was a calm and sociable experience for all children. Staff ate their lunch with the children, talked with them and encouraged conversations helping to make these positive sociable experiences. Children ate well and were supported to be independent and develop self-help skills. The service and families provided children's meals and snacks. We advised that the service review policies and procedures to show that they will only be able to provide children with food from home following environmental health guidance. For example, when serving hot foods these must always be heated to the correct temperature to ensure food safety.

Staff were aware of children's allergies and dietary preferences and ensured that mealtimes were safe for children. Both parents and the setting provided meals and snacks. Staff were aware of good practice guidelines and planned to review menus in line with the latest guidance to ensure that all children experience a variety of nutritious foods.

Children slept outside most of the year. Children now slept in sleep pods and on sleep mats with blankets and comforters and staff knew how to check that children were warm enough. Staff knew children's individual routines and supported them to sleep using strategies which families shared with them. During colder months children slept inside using the sleep mats and pods. The childminder should now review and update her safe sleep policy to show how sleeps are managed to keep children safe and warm.

Medication records were kept appropriately for children who required them. These could be further developed to ensure that it is always clear when to administer 'as and when required' medications, for example clear signs and symptoms detailed for staff. They should also show when they have been reviewed to ensure that information is accurate and easy to follow.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were having fun enjoying their play. Children were offered a wide variety of play and learning opportunities throughout the day. They enjoyed developing skills like balancing and climbing and were supported by staff to develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Children were able to play by themselves or in groups and chose where they wanted to play. Natural small group activities happened with staff leading aspects which developed learning further. For example, children went on a bear hunt which developed into a spider and worm hunt and this gave children the opportunity explore and be curious about nature.

Children were being physically active and spent most of the day in the outdoors exploring. This was helping them to be healthy and learn about nature. Children led their own learning, and staff used their knowledge of children's interests to develop the learning further. Parents commented: "There are a variety of purposeful play opportunities set up along with the opportunity for more natural, organic play in the outdoors" and "Having opportunities to play outdoors in all weathers has helped my children to develop their resilience, confidence and gross motor skills". The childminder could further develop opportunities for mark making to support children to enjoy this in all outdoor areas.

Children had further opportunities to enjoy their play and learning indoors. Children enjoyed looking at books, role play in the home corner, building train sets and playing games together. Staff were responsive to children's interests and opinions and were invited into children's play. Staff used songs and narration of children's experiences and learning well helping to build children's language skills. Staff used questioning to find out what children already knew, they could further develop this to support children's problem-solving skills. School aged children enjoyed using their imaginations in play during the inspection. For example, when acting out scenarios, creating models from everyday items and in the mud kitchen. They played together well and were confident that they would be listened to and their opinions respected by the staff team and other children. The childminder could continue to develop the ways children can choose resources which are not always visible in the service.

Staff throughout the setting used floor books as a way of recording and evaluating children's experiences and learning. The developments and achievements of younger children were also gathered and shared with parents on a digital platform. These showed how children's voices were taken into account and respected when planning for their next steps. A document to share children's progress had been developed, we made some suggestions about how to develop these further, so that they told the story of children's learning more clearly.

Children had regular opportunities to learn about their local community. For example, through visits to a local farm, which meant that the children had the opportunity to learn about animals and farming. Another

recent topic had been 'people who help us' and the children had enjoyed the police visiting the service to support this learning.

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 and her staff team had created a warm, welcoming and safe environment for the children and their families. Family photos displayed in the setting helped children feel connected to their family during their time at the childminders. Furniture in the main room of the cabin was homely and comfortable. The furniture throughout the setting was developmentally appropriate for the ages and stages of the children. This supported children to develop independence and make choices.

Staff were well informed about how to keep children safe both indoors and outside. For example, the arrangements collecting children from and returning them to families ensured that children arrived and left safely. Parents were able to see some areas of the setting at collection times. However, their opportunities to make comments on aspects of the setting were limited because they could not see all of the areas at drop off and collection times. The service had arranged events to support families to experience different aspects of the service, however not all families could attend.

Staff told us that they identified risks through daily checks and reported these so that action would be taken. This should be recorded each time to show how this is monitored by the childminder, setting out any actions that had been taken, to show how she ensures children's safety in the setting.

Children had opportunities to be involved in assessing risk for themselves throughout their play. For example, staff took the time to discuss how to stay safe around fires before they started an activity around the fire pit. This helped the children understand the risks and make good decisions. Children told us how to stay safe: "we stay way back here" and "when we put the fire out there is a lot of smoke". Children also told us that they should not leave a fire unattended.

We observed that some children appeared to be cold in the barn at the end of the day and were not using the heated areas provided. The childminder could further develop policies to support the children's awareness of keeping themselves warm in colder months. For example, including practical guidance about actions to take at different temperatures. Including children in developing these, and using pictorial support, could help children to develop further learning around temperatures and science, supporting them to make choices and build life skills.

Staff enabled children to follow good practice to prevent the spread of infection. Children knew when to wash their hands and were encouraged to catch their coughs. Whilst staff did know about good practice, we did observe some aspects of infection control which could be reviewed. For example, when to wear gloves for food preparation and the storage of packed lunch boxes. There was a separate room for changing nappies, most items were stored in sealed boxes helping to prevent the spread of infection. This should be reviewed to ensure that all items are safely stored.

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 is led well

The service had a clear vision of how children would learn and develop through play and be supported by staff. Parents commented: "(They) are more than amazing. They always keep you updated and do everything to help my child feel included, have fun and learn new stuff." and "they always take time to share something positive about my child's day. They are supportive, encouraging and I can see that they genuinely care about my child and (their) wellbeing."

Feedback from children, their families and staff was valued and used to shape how the childminder planned for improvement. Parents told us that they had a strong connection to the childminder and her assistants and that they and their children were meaningfully involved in developing the service. One parent commented: "Parents views are sought on a regular basis by the childminder".

Staff were actively encouraged to reflect on their practice and contribute to the improvement plan. They were confident about using best practice guidance to review what they were doing to develop their practice and provide positive experiences for children. The improvement plan was displayed and staff recorded thoughts and suggestions as they occurred. Regular team meetings provided staff with the opportunity to discuss their plans and to evaluate the setting. This helped to drive improvement in the service. The childminder could further develop how she measures progress in the setting. We shared resources available on line to support the childminder with this.

Staff had been safely recruited into the service in line with current best practice guidance helping to keep children safe. The childminder monitored staff practice and gave feedback to assistants in their one to one support sessions. Staff valued this time with the childminder and told us that they found it helpful. The childminder could further develop these meetings to show how staff practice is progressing at the service to further develop the service and experiences for children.

School-aged children were consulted regularly, both about what they wanted to do and how they thought the service could improve, for example they had been involved in improving the mud kitchen and experimenting area. Younger children were consulted about their time at the service. The childminder could continue to develop how children who are not communicating verbally are consulted with, to share how their views influence the service. For example, we discussed the use of hand signing which the staff team were keen to take forward.

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 4.3: Staff deployment

The service worked to their conditions of registration which meant that there was always enough staff available for children to meet their needs. Children had support in each of the play areas and staff were deployed to ensure that someone was always available to support children to access the outdoor toilets safely and hygienically. Staff communicated well with one another throughout the session about where children were when they moved between areas or needed support at the toilet and with handwashing.

Children were consequently able to move around freely and access all outdoor areas.

Staff knew all children in the service well and this helped children to feel safe and respected as staff used their names and chatted to them about their families and about topics they were interested in.

Staff worked well as a team supporting children to have positive experiences. When staff were unable to complete duties, they were deployed for, they communicated effectively with their colleagues to ensure that children's needs were still met. Staff communicated respectfully with one another, and this helped children to feel safe and see positive relationships being modelled.

All staff had accessed Child protection training, most of the staff team had childcare qualifications, had completed first aid and food hygiene training, this helped to keep children safe and well cared for in the setting. The staff team were also supported to access training which furthered developed their understanding of care, play and learning to develop their practice and support improvement in the service. Newer staff were supported by the childminder to identify appropriate development opportunities to build their confidence in the setting.

Staff felt well supported and enjoyed their work. The childminder had put in place arrangements which ensured that staff wellbeing was well supported. These included mentoring arrangements to support new staff and staff working through qualifications. Staff were confident about whistleblowing, which would help to keep children safe.

Staff were professional in their approach and displayed a strong commitment to their work, the children and their families. They worked well together and had opportunities to work with different colleagues across the year, helping them to share skills and knowledge. We discussed using a rota for breaks to ensure the wellbeing of staff.

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?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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