

Haken, Lara Child Minding

Livingston

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 February 2025

Service provided by:
Lara Haken

Service provider number:
SP2009010742

Service no:
CS2009236589

About the service

Lara Haken provides a childminding service to a maximum of eight children aged up to 16 years of age, when working together with an assistant. When the childminder or assistant is working alone they may care for a maximum of six children. At the time of inspection, six children were registered to use the service.

The service is based in a quiet residential area in the Bellsquarry area of West Lothian and is close to a school, nursery and green spaces.

The service operates from the childminder's home and children can freely access areas on the ground floor level, including a living room, open plan kitchen and dining area, a sleeping, quiet area and a spacious garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 24 February 2025 from 10:45 until 12:45. 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:

- spoke to children using the service
- gathered feedback from four families
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with the childminder and childminding assistant.

Key messages

- Children and families had positive relationships with both the childminder and assistant.
- Mealtimes were relaxed and enjoyable experiences for children that provided opportunities to develop independence.
- High quality play experiences promoted children's learning and development.
- Creative approaches to community engagement strengthened links between children, families and the local community.
- The service valued parental engagement to develop service provision and experiences 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?	6 - Excellent
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	6 - Excellent
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?

6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent where performance was sector leading with outstandingly high outcomes for children.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children continued to consistently experience warm and nurturing interactions, such as cuddles and conversations. Children asked for a cuddle when needed and the childminder was skilled in giving each child the attention they needed. This let children know that they were cared for and loved. The childminder spoke about the service as an extension of everyone's family. A parent commented: "Lara has not only provided amazing care for both of my children. She has been an excellent role model and friend over the years." Children were aware of each others family members through conversations about older siblings being at nursery and meeting up with other children and their families. This made children and their families feel valued and included.

Settling in for new children was effectively and sensitively planned for in consultation with families and documented within personal plans. Settling in was child led and based around the childminder's excellent knowledge of attachments and relationships, which were then formed between the childminder, children and their families. For example, children and parents were invited to attend the service prior to their placement starting to get to know each other and build relationships. A baby was attending their first full session during the inspection and appeared familiar by giving big smiles and eye contact to the childminder who gave care and interactions that were nurturing. Within personal plans and through discussion with the childminder, other children who required more time to settle were supported and cared for at a pace that was comfortable for them. For example, a child who found separation distressing was given additional time to get to know the childminder, with time spent with the childminder increasing gradually.

High quality effective personal plans continued to be in place for all children and were reviewed with parents in line with current guidance. Children were supported to update their personal plans through recording their likes, dislikes and current interests. This enabled children to contribute to the records that were held about them. A parent commented: "I'm always asked for feedback and kept updated with what they have been doing every day at pick up and drop off." Effective approaches in place were seamless to ensure continuity of care from home to the childminder. All about me forms held information about care routines that the childminder followed, and diaries were used to record children's meals, and personal care routines including when children slept and nappy changes. The childminder picked up on cues from a baby who had a varied feeding pattern, which meant that they fed at different times and volume. The childminder knew the baby well and picked up on these subtle cues to hunger. This meant that systems continued to be in place to support routines, as well as being flexible to ensure that children's needs were paramount and central to the care they received.

Children continued to experience supportive mealtimes that were relaxed, unhurried and provided opportunities to develop independence. For example, children chose their meals from options provided and had the opportunity to prepare their meal. Children chopped their own side salads and were given praise and encouragement. Younger children observed and copied older children and as a result they were learning from their friends. The childminder was knowledgeable about children's eating preferences and was responsive to children who liked to eat little and often and those who liked fuller meals. This meant children's preferences were respected with mealtimes being an enjoyable and positive experience for children.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

There was an excellent range of resources that provided opportunities for children to lead and make decisions about their own play and learning. Core resources were readily available for children including books, role play, mark making and construction. Children were observed using dressing up materials with the addition of bags and hair accessories enabling them to be creative and expressive. Children were able to freely select additional resources including play dough and puzzles. They had fun as they used play dough to recreate familiar meals such as pizza and cupcakes. This enabled children to revisit previous experiences through their play.

There continued to be a track record of effective planning systems in place to record and plan for children's interests and learning based on shared information, consultative and intentional plans. A child had a strong interest in trains and this was detailed in their personal plan and learning journal information from home. Their interest was extended with a ride on the train with their friends. Photographs and comments from children, during the trip, were captured in floor books including discussions about types of trains. This enabled children to reflect individually or in a group as they revisited experiences, consolidated learning and shared positive experiences with friends.

There was a prolonged strong focus from the service for children to have first hand experiences that were authentic and meaningful to their learning and that were memorable moments. This was consistently evident through the records kept and during daily interactions. This included regular visits to the community garden and strengthening relationships with the local community. Children's curiosity and interests were ignited and supported through mindful questions. For example, children wanted to pick fruit and vegetables and were asked what they thought would happen if they did, the childminder then suggested taking them home to observe the changes further. This was supported with factual books and an inviting area to observe the changes in the produce picked over time. A parent commented: "My child made jam for a Christmas present by going outside and collecting the berries and putting it all in jars. There's so many different activities throughout the week that my child loves to get involved in."

Exceptional opportunities had been created for children to learn and have fun in nature. A section of the local woodlands provided the site for regular forest kindergarten sessions. Children had the freedom to explore and set their own limitations outdoors, including all aspects of physical activity. Children shared these experiences with other local childminders and children in their care, and with their own parents during stay and play sessions.

High quality learning journals were in place for all children, and continued to track their development and progress through capturing their learning and enhancing their play and future learning. A child's wellbeing was sensitively supported through an interactive display with inviting props and a book. This provided an opportunity for their feelings to be acknowledged and approaches to be shared to help navigate feelings, including breathing exercises, labelling emotions and creating spaces for calmness and relaxation.

Children's learning and wellbeing continued to benefit from the freedom to look at their learning journals when they wanted and they could share their experiences with their family at home. A child explained that the inspector would not be able to look their journal as it was at home. A parent commented "looking at my little one's folder and seeing where we need to go to help them grow further." As a result, this created daily opportunities for children to reflect and consolidate learning and experiences at their own pace and as often as they wanted.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children with very few areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefited from an environment that was clean, homely and warm. Children had access to a designated play area within the living room. Additional resources were accessible for children to use and put away including play dough which the children enjoyed using. Children had areas to rest and relax in, and the childminder spoke about the benefits of sharing the day with children from high energy activities to quieter restful times.

Play spaces were set up for children arriving including interactive displays on plants growing and emotional literacy throughout the house. Children added to the spaces as they played and had fun together. This gave children a sense that they were valued and important.

Children had frequent access to outdoors throughout their day through a spacious garden with play equipment including balls, planting and growing and imaginative play in the fairy garden. A large tree provided shelter for a story and an opportunity to observe seasonal changes. Children visited their local green spaces including the community garden, that was set up by the childminder for the local area, and regular visits to the forest kindergarten led by the childminder.

The childminder had many years of caring for children and had robust policies and risk assessments in place to ensure the service followed best practice guidance including hand washing and outdoor play. As a result, children had freedom with guidance enabling them to be safe as they played.

Children benefited from high quality facilities outwith the childminder's home and that the childminder had a lead role in establishing and continues to facilitate regular use of. This includes the community garden, the forest kindergarten and the local library book box that children and the community can freely access to share books. This meant that children were developing an understanding of how to contribute and build a community to live in.

How good is our leadership?

6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent where performance was sector leading with outstandingly high outcomes for children.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Vision and values were based on the exceptional knowledge and value based practice of the childminder that was shared with parents and continued to be embedded in daily practice. Comments included: "They [childminder and assistant] know everything about each child and they genuinely help shape and form them into the amazing wee humans that they are. They do this through play, learned experience and connection so the kids love it and go along with it. They also love the whole community."

Children benefited from excellent quality assurance systems that were planned for across the year. Practice documents including the Care Inspectorate's, A quality framework for daycare of children childminding and school-aged childcare were used for self evaluation, to reflect and inform practice and service delivery. As a result, children experienced a service that consistently adhered to current best practice and challenged themselves to continually improve and build on existing practice.

The childminder had comprehensive knowledge of the importance of using views from parents and children to develop the service. A variety of questionnaires and surveys was used to gather parents' views, and well-constructed questions were adopted to measure the impact and value of targeted events. For example, the childminder hosted events on transitions into nursery and primary school, forest kindergartens and making story sacks. The views from parents informed how future events were planned for. Parents' comments included, "meeting other families was a significant highlight as we only see the other children and parents sometimes at drop off and pick up." As a result, events for parents, children and the wider community were regularly held and promoted a shared learning. A parent commented "we are always asked for feedback and welcomed to share our views on the care."

Professional accountability was valued by the childminder and, as a result, training including first aid and child protection were up-to-date for the childminder and assistant. Staff training records were evaluated and planned for before implementing into practice. For example, training on supporting emotional development included allowing children to experience risk and build resilience through play. This was put into daily practice through consistent and predictable boundaries and responses for children. As a result, children were confident to play to their comfortable limits including climbing outdoors and being independent in everyday tasks.

Annual appraisals and supervision were collaborative with constructive feedback and guidance. The childminding assistant was in the process of obtaining their professional qualification and had identified internal training on floor books and observations at their appraisal for the year ahead. This meant that training was achievable in relation to existing commitments and relevant to enhancing children's play as a childminding assistant.

The childminder's exceptional dedication to supporting improvement was extended to the wider sector of childminding. This included facilitating training at a college in partnership with the local authority on forest schools and the benefit of risky play. In addition, weekly childminder sessions were held in the local community that provided an opportunity for sharing practice, professional discussions and training including first aid. This meant that the childminder was leading and role modelling the benefits of a supportive learning community to ensure children consistently receive high quality experiences.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where major strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children with very few areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

The clear vision and approaches to practice set out by the childminder was role modelled through daily interactions with children and to the assistant, and college students when on placement. The childminding assistant described having a values based approach to interacting with children, offering respect to them by asking if they would like help and preparing them before carrying out personal care routines. This meant children experienced consistent care and interactions.

Effective systems were in place for staff deployment with the childminding assistant being present on identified days and times across the week. This provided children and families with a consistent approach to who was caring for children each day and enabled relationships to be formed. Children spoke positively about the assistant and that they were fun to play with. A parent commented: "She is amazing with both of my children. She shares a love of dinosaurs with my oldest and a love of music and dancing with my youngest. It's amazing to see how she develops individual relationships with each child."

Children benefited from the childminding assistant being present during busier times of the day including after lunch and nap times. This meant that children's play was not paused or disrupted as younger children slept. The childminding assistant continued children's play either indoors or outdoors on walks to the local green spaces, and younger children were able to sleep comfortably in the home.

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?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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