

Muirhead, Elaine

Child Minding

Glasgow

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
5 May 2025

Service provided by:
Elaine Muirhead

Service provider number:
SP2003901912

Service no:
CS2003003629

About the service

Elaine Muirhead is registered to provide care for a maximum of 6 children under the age of 16, of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one child is less than twelve months old.

The childminder operated her childminding business from the family home in Kirkintilloch, East Dunbartonshire. The property is close to local parks, schools and nurseries. The childminder has a semi detached house with a lounge and dining kitchen used for childminding purposes. There is also a safely enclosed garden which is suitable for outdoor play. The childminder uses parks and walks and regularly travels further afield to ensure that children have daily access to outdoor learning, fresh air and exercise.

About the inspection

This was a full inspection which took place on 28 April 2025. 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:

- looked at the feedback survey returned by parents;
- spoke with the childminder;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy and settled in the childminder's home.
- The childminder had developed very positive relationships with parents to support children's needs and ensure positive outcomes for children.
- Children enjoyed very positive experiences in the care of the childminder.
- Personal plans were organised to help support children's needs.
- The childminder should explore training opportunities and best practice guidance in early learning and childcare to support reflective practice and self evaluation.

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.

1.1. Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, settled and relaxed in the childminder's care. The childminder was very responsive to children and we observed caring interactions, for example, giving cuddles and assistance with activities. It was obvious that good attachments had been formed and children felt loved and secure in the childminder's home. The childminder had developed very strong relationships with the families she provided care for and she worked hard to build supportive partnerships with the parents by being open and approachable.

The childminder encouraged children to be friendly and respectful to each other. She modelled positive behaviour, actively listening to children and giving praise.

This practice was reflected in a comment from parents:

"She has a great love for her job and that is clear from the care she gives and activities she does with them. My children respect her and have a very good, special relationship that I know they always remember".

We sampled children's personal plans and found that the childminder had completed these in partnership with parents. Plans had been updated recently but we reminded the childminder that plans must be updated at least every six months, to ensure that they reflect children's individual needs and preferences. The childminder had previously used a child friendly questionnaire to consult with children. This contributed to children feeling respected and included.

The childminder maintained records of children's learning and development and provided progress reports to parents. Parents told us they welcomed the daily Whatsapp messages with details about their child's day and photographs showing children enjoying a range of activities.

Parents commented:

"Elaine is a friendly and approachable childminder. She sends us plenty of photos of what our son has been up to and gives us a thorough update at the end of each day".

"Elaine will contact me to discuss each child's progress and anything either of us need to do is agreed together and personal plans are always updated".

The childminder explained how they provided continuity in children's homely routines such as changes to nap times, in keeping with parents' wishes.

Children brought their own lunches and snacks to the service. Healthy choices were encouraged. Children's allergens were recorded, and children were supervised while eating, which helped keep them safe. Meal times took place either in the living room or dining kitchen, depending on children's age and ability. During warmer weather children enjoyed packed lunches when visiting outdoor spaces. The childminder chatted to the children and offered support when needed. Children were given plenty time to eat their lunch which ensured that the lunch experience was relaxed, sociable and unhurried.

No children had special diets or required medication at the time of inspection. The childminder had medication forms and a policy in place should they be asked to administer children's medication. This contributed to children's wellbeing and safety. We asked the childminder to review her policy and procedures in accordance with current guidance on administration of medication. (Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services; Care Inspectorate published December 2024).

The childminder had participated in child protection training in April 2024 and was aware of her role and responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe. This meant that children were kept safe and enabled the childminder to respond to any concerns in a timely and sensitive manner.

1.3 Play and learning

Children were supported to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills. This was supported by daily outdoor play and learning and visits to a wide range of play activities and spaces, for example, Mugdock Country Park, Cuningar Loop and Palacerigg Country Park.

Children were empowered to make decisions about their play through the skilled interactions of the childminder. The childminder had carefully selected toys that reflected children's interests and children knew where to find additional resources. We saw children playing with a play kitchen, cars and garage, paw patrol resources.

Children's play and learning was supported by the childminder's knowledge of child development and the benefits of outdoor learning. The childminder was familiar with current national guidance on outdoor play and shaped children's experiences in accordance with this.

She visited outdoor areas where children's natural curiosity was promoted, for example, library, woodland walks and nature trails.

Children could make independent choices about where they wanted to play and what they wanted to play with. This was supported by an environment which contained a wide range of toys, games, books and craft materials.

Children's play was enhanced by the range of toys and activities on offer and there was a good balance of children's choice and adult led activities. For example, the childminder had 'loose parts' play materials which are natural, open-ended materials that support children to develop their curiosity, imagination and problem-solving skills. The childminder often visited outdoor venues with another childminder and children she cared for. Children enjoyed the interaction with other children and benefitted from the friendships they had made.

One parent commented:

"Elaine provides lots of opportunities in the community, and access to explore parks/ green spaces etc. I like that my child also has the opportunity to meet other children with other childminders".

Parents who responded to our survey strongly agreed that children had opportunities to be involved in meaningful, interesting and fun play experiences.

Parents' comments included:

"Our son is at a new location every time he is with Elaine. We can see from photos and videos that he is having a great time, learning new skills and experiencing age appropriate opportunities. We love to see that he's growing in confidence in new surroundings with new friends and having a great time!"

"Elaine ensures a range of activities are packed into their day and this changes weekly basis. She encourages independent play, arts and craft to help motor skills and out door activities. She's always

engaging and communicating with them as my son loves to tell lots of stories which built his confidence with his speech and how to hold conversations. He also gets to interact with other children who he has grown very close to".

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.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in a warm, comfortable and homely environment which helped them feel welcome, safe and secure. Play spaces were clean, bright and well ventilated. They had been carefully planned to meet children's needs and help them to feel included.

The childminder's setting was homely, as the main areas used by children were the lounge and dining kitchen. These rooms had plenty of soft furnishings and natural light. This contributed to children feeling welcomed, settled and safe.

Children benefitted from accessing a variety of toys such as books, puzzles, games and imaginary play. Toys and resources were well organised and stored and were easily accessible to children. We observed children independently choosing toys that interested them. The toys available helped develop the children's imagination and fine motor skills. The childminder was aware of children's interests and toys were changed to meet their needs or choices. We saw children having lots of fun as they played imaginatively.

Children also enjoyed a range of play and learning opportunities in the local community. This positively contributed to children's physical and emotional wellbeing.

Parents who responded to our survey strongly agreed that their children had access to a good range of quality toys and play materials. They believed their children were safe within the childminding setting.

Comments included:

"Elaine has always welcomed us into her home to see how safe and secure it is for ourselves. Any toddler groups she takes him to have staff with the relevant PVG certification or is run by fellow registered childminders. When Elaine takes the children out to public spaces she is almost always with at least one other childminder with their children and they go to places they have already checked and know are safe and age appropriate for all the children in their care that day".

The childminder explained how they made sure their home was fit for the care of children through day-to-day cleaning and children's personal hygiene routines. The childminder understood the importance of wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent the spread of infection when changing children's nappies. Handwashing facilities with liquid soap and individual towels were available for children in the toilet. This prevented the risk of cross infection and kept children healthy and safe.

The childminder's house was very well maintained. Risk assessments were in place to identify hazards and put appropriate measures in place to reduce risks. Written permission had been sought for activities such as travel by car and visits to community facilities.

The childminder could tell us about other risks they had identified for children within their setting and outdoors and actions they had taken to minimise these, for example, surveying woodland areas to ensure safety for play.

The childminder had recently completed first aid training so that they were able to respond appropriately to accidents involving children, which supported children's health and wellbeing. The childminder recorded accidents/incidents and ensured that correct information was exchanged with parents and there could be continuity in children's care.

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.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are well led

The childminder was committed and passionate about her role. She communicated well with families to ensure positive outcomes for children. A welcome handbook was given to parents/carers before starting to ensure they knew what to expect. Families were given regular updates about their child's development through daily conversations, progress reports and regular reviews of children's care and learning plans.

Families valued the relationships that the childminder had built with them. They strongly agreed that the setting was well managed and that they were involved in a meaningful way to develop the setting.

The childminder had organised information about their service to help families understand how it was regulated and that their children would be kept safe. For example the childminder's registration certificate, public liability and car insurance were presented in an easily accessible folder. The childminder had service aims and policies available for parents.

The childminder demonstrated a positive commitment to improving her service; she regularly sought the views of the children and families, for example, through questionnaires and informal discussions with parents. This helped the childminder identify areas for improvement and helped parents to be meaningfully involved in the service and influence change.

Parents commented:

"Elaine regularly checks in with us and takes on all feedback".

"We are asked our opinions and encouraged to give feedback".

We could see from parents' survey responses that they were very happy with the overall quality of the service provided and transparent communication ensured there was continuity in their children's care. The childminder had distributed questionnaires to parents in the past to seek their views on how the service could be improved. This contributed to parents feeling their involvement was valued and respected.

The childminder took opportunities to reflect on her practice. She networked with other childminders through the local childminder's group and toddler groups.

During our inspection visit the childminder was open to ideas for how they could develop their practice, therefore ensuring that they contributed to positive outcomes for children. We encouraged the childminder to look at Care Inspectorate guidance 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare' to assist them in evaluating their service. The tool is children's rights and play based. As such, it could help the childminder gather evidence as well as formulating more focussed questions to gain constructive feedback from families.

When parents were asked what they thought were the most positive aspects of their children's experiences in the childminding setting they responded:

"Elaine is a kind, patient, and nurturing presence in our son's life. He is always happy and eager to go to Elaine's care and it is so clear how much he loves to spend time with her. Our son has been in her care for almost 6 months and his confidence, independence, and skills are developing every week. We love to see the variety of places they visit and activities they do together".

"Mingling with different kids at all different age ranges. Their development progressing".

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.

4.1 Staff skills, knowledge, and values

The childminder's values were evident in the sensitive interactions we observed with children throughout the inspection. She had built nurturing relationships with children, which contributed to children's emotional wellbeing. The childminder was warm, kind and caring towards children which meant that they felt happy, safe and secure in her care. She was experienced and confident in her role and had developed a range of skills and knowledge that enabled her to support children's individual needs.

Parents who responded to our survey strongly agreed they were confident that the childminder had the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to care for their children and support their learning.

The childminder regularly met with other childminders in the area for shared activities with children. This also provided an opportunity for professional discussions in which the childminders shared their skills, knowledge and values around quality experiences for children.

The childminder was committed and motivated to learn and improve her practice, whilst promoting positive outcomes for children. She had completed training on Child Protection and First Aid. She often accessed the Care Inspectorate Hub, an online resource library of best practice guidance, as a means of keeping up to date with best practice. We discussed how keeping records of professional development activities and evaluating training, personal reading and research would assist with identifying improvement in practice and could be included in the service self evaluation. The childminder was motivated to explore this.

The childminder had a very good understanding of her professional responsibilities. She worked within her conditions of registration and had appropriate policies and procedures in place to support her practice. As a result, children received a very good level of care.

Parents commented:

"Elaine takes my child somewhere everyday! I love the effort she puts into caring for my child. She's great at noticing things and genuinely cares about my child".

"Since starting with Elaine, she has been there to offer advice and give hints and tips if I need them. She is friendly and approachable".

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

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| 1.3 Play and learning | 5 - Very Good |

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| How good is our setting? | 5 - Very Good |
| 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities | 5 - Very Good |

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| How good is our leadership? | 5 - Very Good |
| 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well | 5 - Very Good |

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

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