

Tommy's Den Child Minding

Livingston

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
2 June 2025

Service provided by:
Karren Allan

Service provider number:
SP2023000311

Service no:
CS2023000389

About the service

Tommy's Den is a childminding service provided by Karren Allan from their home in Livingston, West Lothian. The premises is in the Eliburn area and is close to local amenities and transport links.

The childminder may care for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age:

- of whom no more than six are under 12 years;
- of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and;
- of whom no more than one is under 12 months.

Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household. Minded children can only be cared for by persons named on the certificate. No overnight care will be provided. The childminder must supervise the children while using the front garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 2 June 2025 between the hours of 10:00 and 13:40. 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 registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since registration.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke to and interacted with children using the service
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice, daily routines and children's experiences
- reviewed documents in the service relating to children's care, play and learning
- took into account online feedback we received from four families.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Children were seen as the experts in their own care as they were listened to and responded to with respect and compassion.
- Children played outdoors each day, spending time exploring and learning in natural environments.
- The pace of the day meant that children had continual opportunities to learn during everyday experiences.
- Children were kept safe indoors and outdoors through planned risk assessments and continual vigilance of the childminder.
- Children experienced quality care, play and learning from an experienced, trained and competent early years worker.

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 nurtured and supported through their daily experiences with warm and compassionate interactions. Strong, familiar relationships helped children feel secure and confident that their needs would be met. Children were highly involved in leading their own care as they were listened to and valued with sensitivity and respect. Their wellbeing was supported through praise and recognition of their efforts. The flow of daily routines was dictated by children's individual needs. For example, they could sleep when they needed to, eat when they were hungry and play outdoors when they wanted to. This was respectful of individual children's needs and wishes. A parent confirmed this, saying, "My child likes to get a blanket and cuddle up on the couch in the afternoon which is accommodated at (the childminder's)".

Mealtimes were safe and sociable experiences at a communal table. Children were supervised while eating as the childminder understood the need to reduce choking risks. Mealtimes were a learning experience for children. For example, practising self-feeding skills, making decisions and using cups. This meant they had time and space to practice skills. A parent appreciated the sociable mealtimes, saying, "(The childminder) has managed to get my child to try new fruits that they now ask for at home and supports their understanding of the different nutrients we need to make our body function".

Children's individual wellbeing benefitted from effective use of personal planning. The plans showed detailed information about children's needs, how they were supported and generally how they were progressing. Children's needs and preferences were known by the childminder, who used this information to adapt their approaches accordingly. Strong partnerships with parents meant that children had continuity of care between the service and home. To further develop personal planning, the childminder could simplify and condense the information gathered. This would ensure the plans consistently focus on children's current needs, to support the monitoring of progress.

Children's health and medication needs were met as they were managed according to best practice guidance. Medication was stored safely and was easily accessed when needed. Detailed information guided the childminder in their care and treatment of health needs so children got the care they needed at the right time.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children had fun through a range of planned and spontaneous play opportunities. The pace and content of each day reflected children's stage of development. Their involvement in everyday routines meant that learning took place continually. The childminder was mindful in their practice to ensure children had time and space to explore, consider and solve problems in their own time, with support and encouragement. Children's thinking skills were developing through the childminder's skilled questioning. For example, children's topics of conversation were used to help them explore different perspectives of a situation. Children were gaining new knowledge, expanding their vocabulary and recalling information through quality interactions. A large selection of loose parts and real items gave opportunities for children to be creative in their endless possibilities for play. These provided provocation and invitations into play.

Available resources were stage appropriate and reflected children's interests. As a result, children's natural curiosity was engaged and leading to learning conversations and quality play.

Spending time outdoors was a daily activity, as the childminder was committed to children getting fresh air and engaging with natural environments. This offered children opportunities to assess risks in different environments. A child said, "(The childminder) plays games with me and takes me lovely places where I can explore and climb trees". A range of community-based services and settings offered variety and different experiences to children. For example, toddler groups, library, parks, local walks and farms. A parent said, "My child gets to go to play groups and excursions with (The childminder) where we don't often have time to do so".

Children were progressing in their learning as the childminder understood where they could be supported and how. By observing children's play and thinking about their age and stage, the childminder planned quality experiences which would be engaging for children. The childminder could simplify the planning for play process to ensure individual children's needs were consistently identified and met. This would also make the process easier to maintain for sharing with parents. In addition, next steps in learning for children could be identified to support further planning which is responsive and needs-led.

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

Children were cared for in a comfortable, home from home environment. They were relaxed, familiar with the spaces and confident moving around. They had space for their belongings and had areas to rest and play. Children were given a strong message that their comfort mattered.

The setting and resources were safe, secure and well-maintained. Resources were available to keep children safe, such as a double buggy with straps, booster seats at table and stair gates. In addition, areas around the indoor and outdoor setting were risk assessed and monitored daily in response to children. When outdoors, risks were considered and addressed to maximise children's experiences. Children were actively involved in assessing risks which developed their skills for the future.

Infection prevention and control measures were in place to reduce the risk of infection spread among children. For example, handwashing at appropriate times. A parent said, "Karren is always reinforcing safety and cleanliness and it's been much easier to get my child to wash their hands since they started going to Karren's as she makes it fun". To further ensure health risks are minimised for children, the childminder could enhance measures when spending time outdoors. For example, using hand wipes or gel as a temporary measure until handwashing facilities are available.

Children had access to spaces which were beneficial for their stage of development. The livingroom was used indoors for play. Resources were set out attractively for children. This sparked their natural curiosity and invited them into play. For example, role play, figures, clay, sensory bottles and books. A small playhouse was available for children to play in. Children knew they could request other resources and did so during the inspection. To further improve children's access to resources, the childminder could create a visual list of what is available.

The local community was explored by children daily and local services were used. Natural spaces provided space to move and explore while the local library offered story sessions to support literacy and a love of books. A parent said, "My child really enjoys playing in the garden with a variety of activities including a kitchen sink, water table, and water walls. Karren also takes them on outings to the park and reservoir regularly which they enjoy".

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 and improvement are led well

Strong partnerships with parents meant that children experienced continuity of care through the sharing of information and progress. Parents were welcomed into the setting to watch children at play or to join in with activities. This supported relationships and involved parents in their children's play and learning. Parents could offer feedback about the service in various ways, such as through an anonymous post box and questionnaires. The childminder gave examples of when feedback has been used to improve aspects of the service. A parent said, "(The childminder) is always seeking feedback from parents and is keen to adjust and improve her service".

Children were heavily involved in planning their daily and weekly activities in the service, through decision-making, consultation and responsive practice. Children's involvement could be seen in a floorbook as they reflected on experiences and planned ahead. For example, children gave their feedback and ideas about the breakfast options and this was used to plan menus.

A range of tools were used to help the childminder reflect on and self-evaluate aspects of the service. This showed capacity and willingness to assure quality and aim for continuous improvements. Future developments had been identified, such as improving the garden and enhancing literacy resources. The childminder was motivated to try new approaches in self-evaluation and improvement planning and so we referred them to the resources on the Care Inspectorate's website The Hub.

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

Children benefited from the childminder's enthusiasm, genuine interest in them and commitment to provide quality experiences and outcomes. This was reflected in quality interactions and planning for meeting children's care, play and learning needs. Strong relationships had been built between the children, families and the childminder, which were instrumental in supporting children's wellbeing. Parents appreciated these relationships, with one parent saying, "It's a home from home, supportive and caring environment for my child with someone who cares for them like family".

Families benefited from a skilled and competent childminder who aimed for continual professional development. The childminder demonstrated their early years knowledge and experience through nurturing care, effective interactions for learning and stimulating spaces. A parent said, "(The childminder) is friendly, professional, knowledgeable; always encourages active learning, offers a safe and nurturing setting for our child". Commitment to continual professional development was demonstrated through ongoing training and practice reflection in different aspects of the service. The childminder reflected on their training to identify learning and use it to benefit children. An example of this was recent reading about slow pedagogy and the impact this had on children's daily experiences.

A parent summarised the ethos of the service, saying, "The fact that sometimes my child doesn't want to leave when we pick them up from the childminder's shows that my child enjoys being there and that is the most important thing".

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
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good

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