

Donaldson, Pauline Child Minding

Montrose

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
29 May 2025

Service provided by:
Pauline Donaldson

Service provider number:
SP2003900491

Service no:
CS2003001869

About the service

Pauline Donaldson provides a childminding service from their property in a residential area in Inverbervie, Aberdeenshire. The childminder is registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age. Overnight care is not provided.

The service is close to parks, a beach, and other amenities. Children can access the kitchen and dining area, play room, and a fully enclosed garden.

At the time of our inspection, seven children were registered with the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 29 May 2025 between 12:45 and 15:45. 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:

- spent time with children using the service
- received three responses to our request for feedback from parents
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice and children's experiences
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy and comfortable in the childminder's care.
- Children took part in experiences which were reflective of their interests and needs.
- Children benefitted from daily access to the outdoors, including walks, trips, and local groups which supported their social development and learning.
- Regular communication with families promoted continuity of care.
- Children and families' feedback was actively encouraged and acted upon.
- The childminder should now consider the impact of developments on outcomes for children to support the cycle of continuous improvement.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - 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 evaluated this key question as **very good**. We identified significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children.

Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children and their families experienced a welcoming and friendly service. Interactions were very kind and caring, which supported children to feel comfortable in the childminder's care. Children appeared confident and relaxed around the childminder, which showed that positive relationships had been developed. Families shared they felt connected to the childminder. One parent commented, "Pauline is very easy to get on with" and another shared that the childminder "Stays in contact well".

Children were very happy in the childminder's care. The childminder responded to children in a nurturing and respectful manner, which supported them to feel safe and secure. They received regular cuddles and closeness, allowing them to feel well supported by the childminder.

Children's wellbeing was supported through the childminder's knowledge of their individual needs. Personal plans were in place for each child and were individual to their needs and preferences. The childminder had gathered information about children's health and routines when they started, through collaboration with families. This information had been discussed and reviewed to gain further insight into children's individual interests. We identified that children could be further involved in reviewing the information within their plan, where suitable. We encouraged the childminder to involve children in reviewing the information to identify agreed strategies of support.

Snacks and mealtimes were sociable and nutritious for children. Lunches and snacks were provided from home and the childminder provided additional fruit snacks. Children were given opportunities to develop their independence skills. For example, they were encouraged to peel their fruit and support was given when required. The childminder sat with the children helping to keep them safe, as well as supporting communication skills and making sure everyone was included. Children were encouraged to drink water regularly, ensuring they were kept hydrated.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported by the childminder promoting opportunities to rest and relax. Children's routines were reflective of their families' wishes as detailed within personal plans. Older children relaxed in the cosy corner with cushions or on the sofa. This ensured children had opportunities to rest when they wanted.

Effective medication systems helped keep children safe. Whilst no children currently needed medication administered, paperwork was in place should it be required. The childminder's understanding and practice was supported by their policy and promoted parents' awareness of their process.

The childminder was knowledgeable in their approach to keeping children safe. They confidently advised of clear procedures which were in place to protect children. Chronologies for each child contained key information, such as significant events in their lives. This further supported children's safety and wellbeing.

Quality Indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children were engaged and having fun in their play. They were able to make individual choices through easy access to toys and resources, which supported them to lead their own play. The range of experiences

available supported children's different interests, ages, and stages of development. Children enjoyed making creations with playdough, reading stories together, and using construction kits. Older children told us when they were at the childminder's house that they liked to play board games and Lego.

Children experienced a balance of spontaneous and planned play. They had regular opportunities to take part in a wide variety of experiences, such as active games and imaginative play. Children also attended weekly music classes with the childminder. Daily updates were shared with parents via photo messages of what children had been doing, which were very welcomed. One parent commented, "I am always informed of the activities that have been undertaken". Another shared that "[The childminder] keeps me updated with everything all the time when [my child] is there". The childminder was knowledgeable of children's interests and planned resources and activities to support these. This meant that they were involved in meaningful play that promoted their interests.

Literacy and numeracy opportunities were embedded throughout children's experiences. They easily accessed a range resources to support this, such as books and writing materials. For example, children spent time using a mat and water pen to trace numbers and letters. The childminder's use of open-ended questions encouraged children to take part in conversations and share their experiences. This helped them grow in confidence and develop their individual skills.

Children were supported to recognise achievements and build on their skills. The childminder recorded children's individual achievements and progress through a development overview, containing photos of experiences they had taken part in. The childminder shared that they used a scrapbook for children to reflect on their experiences. This meant that children were supported to reach their potential.

Children's opportunities for play and learning were enhanced through connections to their wider community. The childminder advised that they go out mostly every day. The use of photos highlighted the different experiences children could access in the local area. These included parks, walks, and community groups. One child commented, "The new park is good fun. We walk there and there's lots to do". These opportunities meant children were given different social experiences within their community which contributed to their sense of belonging.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as **good**. We identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in a welcoming environment. While the childminder's home was currently undergoing renovation, consideration had been given to ensure it was homely and gave children ownership over the area. For example, children's artwork was displayed and resources had been arranged so they were fully accessible. The play room provided space for children to extend their play and learning experiences. A child-sized table and bench provided an area for children to take part in experiences, such as arts and crafts. Sofas, cushions, and floor mats also provided space for children to relax. We observed children using these opportunities, such as spending time sitting on the cushions in the story corner when they arrived. This supported children to be comfortable in the childminder's home.

Children were offered a variety of play resources to support and develop their learning. Toys and games were age-appropriate and reflected current interests. The childminder advised they had recently introduced some new resources, such as magna-tiles, and children had been enjoying using these. Children told us they had

recently taken part in a 'nature hunt' and had made pictures with the items they collected. The childminder described using some natural materials to enrich children's play experiences. We identified that this could be further developed through having open-ended materials readily available to children to use within their play. This would further support children's creativity and imagination.

Daily opportunities to be active contributed to children's wellbeing. This was promoted through regular walks, as well as direct access to a secure garden. One parent shared that "Pauline has a range of outdoor toys in her garden the kids love to play with". A child shared with us that their favourite thing to do was play outside. They commented, "There's loads of things in the shed we use, like bubbles". These opportunities supported children to be fit and healthy.

Children were cared for in a clean and tidy environment. The childminder had some established routines, such as wearing gloves and apron when carrying out nappy changing as well as washing hands after using the toilet. However, children did not wash their hands before eating snack, which meant there was a potential risk for spread of infection. We encouraged the childminder to ensure regular handwashing at key times took place and younger children were supported with this, where required. This would further support children to be kept safe and well.

Risk assessments and safety checks for the home had been carried out. These included potential risks and measures in place to promote a safe environment. The childminder promoted children's awareness and understanding of keeping themselves safe. For example, when out on a walk they encouraged children to stop, look, and listen before crossing the road. We identified that some areas of practice did not fully reflect risk assessments. For example, the indoor risk assessment highlighted that the stair gate should remain closed, which it was not. This created a potential risk for children, as they could access the stairs. We encouraged the childminder to ensure practices followed these accurately to support children's safety.

The childminder protected children's personal information. All records were stored securely to ensure families' privacy and confidentiality.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as **good**. We identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder shared key information about the service with families. This included aims and objectives, policies, and procedures. This helped families to understand what to expect from the service.

The childminder actively sought the views of children and families who used the service. They had provided both adult and children's questionnaires and gathered their feedback which was used to ensure the service met their needs. Parents had highlighted that they felt the photo updates throughout the day were very beneficial. As a result, the childminder ensured these were prioritised to keep parents informed each day. This promoted working together to ensure the needs of children and families were met.

The childminder had started to self evaluate their service, identifying areas of strength and areas that could be further improved using 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding, and school-aged childcare'. They spoke confidently about some developments they had recently made, such as planning resources specifically for the older children. We suggested recording these planned changes and reviewing

the impact they had. This would support the childminder in reflecting on how changes had benefitted outcomes for children and their experiences.

Policies and procedures were in place and reviewed regularly. This supported parents to know what to expect from the service, keeping them up-to-date with relevant information.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as **good**. We identified several strengths, which impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge, and values

The childminder was responsive in their approach with children. They joined in children's play and recognised the importance of making it fun and engaging. Parents advised they valued the experiences the childminder offered. One parent commented that the activities "Gives me ideas for home too". Children described the childminder as "fun" and "really nice".

Children benefitted from the childminder having a clear understanding of their stages of development. Children were given individual support from the childminder, suited to their needs and ages. For example, when getting ready to leave, the childminder role modelled putting on her shoes and coat, then encouraged the child to try. This contributed to children receiving support which was right for them.

The childminder had kept their skills and knowledge up-to-date through completing professional learning. They had accessed core training in child protection, first aid, and food hygiene. They had also recently taken part in training around understanding children's development, specific to school-aged children. They advised that this had supported them in planning activities for this age group to enhance their experiences. The childminder had identified that they were keen to undertake further learning around supporting children of different ages. We signposted the childminder to the Care Inspectorate's 'Growing My Potential' practice note to support them with further learning specific to one and two year olds. To identify further learning opportunities, we discussed evaluating and recording the impact training had on the service and outcomes for children.

The childminder was aware of the Care Inspectorate Hub and received provider updates from the organisation. Regularly accessing resources and best practice documents would help further promote positive outcomes for children.

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?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good

How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	4 - Good

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