

Nelson, Catherine & David Child Minding

Edinburgh

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
21 May 2025

Service provided by:
Nelson, Mrs Catherine And Mr David
Nelson, Mrs Catherine And Mr David

Service provider number:
SP2003906583

Service no:
CS2003012864

About the service

Catherine and David Nelson (referred to the childminders in this report) provide a childminding service from their property in a quiet residential area of Edinburgh. The childminders are registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 6 children under 12 years, of whom no more than 3 are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than 1 is under 1 year.

The service is close to local primary schools, parks and other amenities. The children are cared for in the living room, dining area, conservatory and downstairs toilet. The enclosed rear garden is accessed through the kitchen.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Wednesday 21 May 2025 between the times of 09:10 and 11:00. 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 with three children during the inspection
- received three on-line questionnaires from families
- observed practice and the setting
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- The childminders created a warm, welcoming environment where children felt safe, happy and valued through nurturing relationships and responsive care.
- Families told us they felt their children were safe, happy and nurtured in a homely, well-resourced environment, with effective communication and meaningful relationships at the heart of the service.
- Improvements had been made to the play experiences on offer, with increased access to outdoor play enriching children's daily routines. These could be further enhanced by introducing more natural, open-ended play materials.
- The childminders demonstrated a positive attitude to improvement, welcomed the inspection process and had taken proactive steps, such as attending training to enhance children's experiences.

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?	4 - 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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing Care and Support.

The childminders had a wealth of childminding experience and had built long-standing, trusting relationships with families. They spoke with genuine warmth about the bonds they had formed and took pride in creating a home from home environment where children and their families felt valued. This was echoed in family feedback, with one telling us, "Very informative with my child's day. Cares about our family life and each of the kids she looks after with such passion." Another shared, "Cathy and David communicate with us well and let us know how our child gets on each day and anything we should know about. They speak positively about our child and let us know how they are developing." These comments highlighted the nurturing and respectful relationships the childminders had established with children and families.

The childminders kept families informed through regular daily messages, outlining routines such as meals, sleep and nappy changes. These were often accompanied by photos or short videos of the children engaged in play and learning, which helped families feel connected to their child's day. One family told us, "Cathy discusses what they do each day, sends photos and updates. Any development changes, like potty training, she is encouraging and supportive." This level of communication supported strong partnership working and helped families feel confident and reassured that their child was safe, well cared for and enjoying their day.

Families consistently told us they felt fully involved in their child's care. One family noted, "We have been given the personal plan to develop and review, as well as discussing our child's development with Cathy more informally in person on an ongoing basis." At the previous inspection, it had been identified that the childminders did not keep sufficient written records beyond initial contractual information. This posed a potential risk to supporting children's holistic wellbeing. However, during this visit, we found that improvements had been made. The childminders had updated their knowledge around personal plans and had begun developing them in collaboration with families. As a result, the requirement made at the last inspection had been met.

Children's health and wellbeing were also promoted through nutritious, home cooked meals. All families confirmed their child was offered a variety of healthy options that respected individual dietary or cultural needs. One commented, "Our child is offered a variety of foods, including plenty of fruit and vegetables and a cooked meal for lunch. My child seems to eat well there." Another shared, "Different healthy balanced food and snacks provided." Mealtimes were relaxed and sociable with children sitting together at the table. This supported the development of positive eating habits and social interaction.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning.

Since the last inspection, the environment had improved noticeably, with a clear reduction in plastic, single-purpose toys. This created a calmer, less cluttered space where children could move more freely and access resources more easily. It also made play feel more purposeful and inviting. During our visit, we saw the childminders using play to naturally weave in early learning - helping children explore colours, count objects, and name shapes in a relaxed, engaging way. These small, meaningful interactions supported early numeracy and thinking skills.

Families were positive about the learning opportunities their children experienced. One shared, "Lots of different play, story time, music time etc," while another said, "My child is learning numbers and colours and starting toilet training." One child proudly told us, "I like playing with cars, seeing my friends, going to play group, seeing Davy and Cathy and the cat Molly and learning new things all the time." These comments reflected the rich variety of experiences on offer, as well as the warm, trusting relationships children had built with the childminders.

However, there were still limited natural and open-ended materials available for children to explore, such as fabric, baskets, cardboard tubes, or real-life household items. These kinds of resources offer important opportunities for imaginative and creative play. Introducing more of these, alongside the continued reduction of plastic toys, would enrich children's play and support deeper exploration and learning. This remains an area for improvement and we will follow up on progress at the next inspection. (See Area for Improvement 1).

One of the most encouraging changes since the last visit was the introduction of written observations to help track children's learning and development. The childminders had begun to identify next steps and tailor experiences to children's individual interests and needs. This helped ensure experiences were meaningful and supported continuity in children's play, learning, and care.

Children benefited from regular outings and opportunities to be part of their local community. They attended Bookbug sessions, playgroups, the library, and swimming lessons. One parent told us, "Our child is regularly taken to Bookbugs, the library, playgroup, and the park, giving them lots of opportunities to be out and about in society." These experiences supported children's confidence, independence and helped build important social skills.

At the previous inspection, we noted that outdoor play was mostly limited to the summer months. This had now improved. The childminders told us that children now played outside most days after morning outings and lunch. Daily diaries confirmed regular garden play. This gave children frequent access to fresh air and physical activity, supporting their health and wellbeing. Families told us, "They are regularly taken to play in the garden with toys, or taken to nearby parks," and "Loves to be outdoors so goes to a group 3 times a week and plays in the garden, weather permitting." Although our visit took place during warmer weather, the childminders recognised the importance of outdoor play all year round and told us they aimed to make this part of children's routine, whatever the season.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's opportunities for play and learning the childminders should continue to organise play spaces with age-appropriate resources and materials. This could be achieved by reducing the amount of toys and resources overall and increasing the use of loose parts and real-life objects. This would increase the opportunity for meaningful, personalised and developmentally appropriate spaces, experiences and interactions.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity.' (HSCS 2.27).

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities.

The childminders had created a welcoming, home-from-home environment where children felt safe, relaxed and comfortable. The ground floor of the house was used for childminding, with children having access to the living room, dining area and a bright conservatory. These open, connected spaces meant children could move around freely and choose where they wanted to play.

Toilet and kitchen areas were close to the main play spaces, which made them easy for children to access with just the right amount of support. This setup helped encourage children's independence, for example when using the toilet or washing their hands, while also making sure the childminders could stay nearby to offer gentle reminders or reassurance.

The home itself felt calm and nurturing. It was warmly decorated, with soft furnishings like rugs and cushions that made play spaces cosy and comfortable. We saw children choosing to play on the floor or sitting at the table to enjoy books, showing they felt at home and secure in their surroundings.

Since the last inspection, the childminders had made positive changes to reduce clutter in the main areas, especially the living room. This had made a real difference, creating a calmer, more organised space where children could focus more easily on their play. We saw that children were able to find and choose resources independently, supporting their confidence and decision-making skills. While these improvements were clear, there were still a few items on one of the sofas when we arrived, which reduced the space for children to sit. This was addressed quickly, showing the childminders were aware of the importance of keeping the environment tidy and welcoming. Continuing to monitor how resources are stored and displayed will help maintain a sense of order and support children to fully enjoy their time in the space.

Good hygiene and infection prevention practices were also in place. Children were reminded to wash their hands regularly, particularly before eating or after using the toilet. We saw that surfaces were clean, and appropriate cleaning routines were followed throughout the day. These simple but important routines helped keep everyone healthy and supported children to develop good hygiene habits.

Overall, the environment provided by the childminders supported children's safety, comfort and development. Improvements since the last inspection had enhanced the quality of the space, and children were clearly relaxed and happy within the setting. Continuing to monitor the use and storage of resources will help ensure that all areas remain functional and free from unnecessary clutter, enabling children to benefit fully from the play and rest spaces available to them.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The childminders had built warm, trusting relationships with families, which meant communication was open and respectful.

They used regular, informal chats with children and families to reflect on how things were going and make any changes needed. Although they didn't use formal self-evaluation tools, this ongoing dialogue helped them keep things running smoothly and responsively.

Families told us they felt their children were safe, happy and well cared for. They really appreciated the strong relationships their children had formed and the open, regular communication. One family said, "My child is happy, is cared for, healthy and safe which is most important to me as a mother." Another noted how the smaller group size allowed "much more focused care," while others spoke about the homely feel of the setting and how their children had "plenty to do." Families also valued the regular outings and social opportunities.

Since the last inspection, the childminders had updated their policies and procedures, which helped improve communication and support a safe and well-managed service. They welcomed the inspection and used it as a chance to reflect on their practice. They were open to feedback and eager to improve. For instance, one childminder attended training on play after our visit to strengthen their understanding and was already thinking about how to use what they'd learned to improve children's experiences.

Overall, the childminders had made encouraging progress since the last inspection. They had enhanced children's opportunities for play and learning through improvements to the environment, more purposeful interactions and by beginning to record and reflect on children's development. Continued focus on further developing the play spaces will support even richer learning experiences moving forward.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values.

The childminders were calm, kind and genuinely cared about the children they looked after. Their warm approach helped children feel safe, settled and confident. We saw them offering cuddles, encouragement and praise, helping children feel valued and understood. Interactions were relaxed and fun, with the childminders getting down to the children's level and joining in their play. One child told us, "Cathy is the best. She makes me happy, she helps me, she plays with the toys and we do lots of different things which makes me happy when I am with Cathy." This lovely comment captured the secure, caring relationship they had built.

Strong, trusting relationships with families were also clear. Families said they felt well informed about their child's day, development and wellbeing. One family said, "Cathy is fantastic. My child raves about her and looks forward to their days with her." Another commented, "Cathy is amazing. I'm so lucky to have found her, she's been the best for our child, their growth and development." These kinds of comments showed just how much families appreciated the care and support their children received.

One of the childminders showed a clear commitment to learning and improving. Following the inspection, they completed an online course on child development and shared what they'd learned. They spoke about involving children more in daily routines, such as setting the table or helping with small tasks, to support their independence and confidence. This showed a positive and reflective approach to practice.

Although there wasn't yet a formal system for evaluating practice or planning professional learning, the childminders were open to feedback and acted quickly on advice. We encouraged them to continue thinking about how learning links to children's everyday experiences, and to develop more regular ways to reflect on their work.

Overall, the childminders' kind and respectful approach, their positive relationships with children and families, and their willingness to learn contributed to a good quality of care. Continuing to develop their reflective practice and professional learning would help strengthen their work and ensure even better outcomes for children.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 1 July 2024, the childminders must ensure children's wellbeing and development is effectively supported. The childminders must ensure that all children have a personal plan that includes up-to-date and meaningful information about how children's care and needs will be met. They must ensure planned review dates are carried out at least once every six months in consultation with parents or sooner if a child's support needs change.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) and Regulation 5(1)(2) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices.' (HSCS 1.15).

This requirement was made on 19 April 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

Each child now had a personal plan folder that was individual to them, with their photo displayed on the front, supporting a sense of ownership and belonging. Personal plans contained up-to-date and meaningful information and had been developed in consultation with families. These included essential details such as emergency contacts and GP information, as well as updates on each child's stage of development, interests and preferences.

Plans also identified appropriate next steps for each child and outlined how these would be supported, with clear records of the outcomes. This ensured that children's wellbeing, development and individual needs were being effectively planned for and met.

Moving forward, the childminders should continue to reinforce with families the importance of reviewing personal plans at least every six months, or sooner if a child's needs change. This will help ensure families remain engaged in the process and that plans continue to reflect children's current needs.

Met - within timescales

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To support children's opportunities for play and learning the childminders should continue to organise play spaces with age-appropriate resources and materials. This could be achieved by reducing the amount of toys and resources overall and increasing the use of loose parts and real-life objects. This would increase the opportunity for meaningful, personalised and developmentally appropriate spaces, experiences and interactions.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

This area for improvement was made on 19 April 2024.

Action taken since then

The childminders had taken positive steps to improve the quality of the play environment. They had removed a large quantity of plastic toys and were beginning to create more defined and purposeful play spaces. As a result, we observed children engaging in a wider range of meaningful play experiences. For example, children were seen building with blocks, making cups of tea in imaginative role play, reading books and exploring mark-making materials. These experiences supported key aspects of children's development, including creativity, communication, and early literacy and numeracy.

To further enhance children's play and learning experiences, we will continue the area for improvement. This will support the childminders to develop their use of natural, open-ended materials. Embedding these resources more consistently will help to enrich play opportunities and deepen children's curiosity, problem-solving and sustained engagement, leading to improved learning outcomes. (See Area for Improvement 1 in Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning).

Previous area for improvement 2

To promote children's overall wellbeing and play experiences, the childminders should ensure that children have regular access to outdoor play.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'As a child, I play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural environment' (HSCS 1.32).

This area for improvement was made on 19 April 2024.

Action taken since then

Children now had access to outdoor play on a daily basis, which supported their physical health, wellbeing and opportunities for exploration and learning in the natural environment.

This area for improvement had been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To give children a strong message that they matter, the environment in the childminder's home should be free of unnecessary clutter to offer children ample space for their needs. This would provide children with inviting, safe and easy to clean play spaces.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have enough physical space to meet my needs and wishes' (HSCS 5.20).

This area for improvement was made on 19 April 2024.

Action taken since then

The childminders had made positive changes to the organisation of the home. Living areas were now more thoughtfully arranged, with a noticeable reduction in unnecessary items. This contributed to a calmer and more inviting space where children could play, rest and engage meaningfully with their environment. The improved layout also made it easier for children to access resources independently, promoting choice and encouraging decision-making.

Although a small amount of clutter was observed on arrival, this was addressed promptly. This responsiveness demonstrated the childminders' growing awareness of the importance of maintaining a tidy, child-friendly environment. Given the progress made and the overall improvement in the quality of the play space, this area for improvement has now been met. The childminders should continue to reflect on the use of space and storage to ensure the environment remains well-organised and conducive to children's wellbeing.

This area for improvement had been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To promote better outcomes for children, the childminders should update their policies to ensure their practices align with current best practice and effectively meets the needs of children in their care.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

This area for improvement was made on 19 April 2024.

Action taken since then

The childminders had taken positive steps to review and update key policies, including those relating to medication and health and safety. This supported a more consistent and informed approach to children's care. However, not all policies made clear reference to current Scottish legislation and national best practice guidance. We discussed this with the childminders, who agreed to address this immediately. We have recognised the progress made and their commitment to further improving the accuracy of their policies.

This area for improvement had been met.

Previous area for improvement 5

Outcomes for children should be improved through ongoing effective self-evaluation and professional development. The childminders should ensure that new skills and knowledge acquired is translated into practice and has a positive impact on outcomes for children within the home environment.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 19 April 2024.

Action taken since then

The improvements made to the service had prompted the childminders to reflect more deeply on their practice and evaluate the impact of recent changes. In response to this, one of the childminders had completed a course in child development to enhance their understanding and delivery of high-quality play experiences. Following the training, the childminder shared thoughtful reflections on their learning and how it would be applied to their practice in an email to us. This demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and using new knowledge to inform practice.

This area for improvement had been met.

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?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - 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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