

Donald, Karen Child Minding

Alloa

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
31 July 2025

Service provided by:
Donald Karen

Service provider number:
SP2003901630

Service no:
CS2003003286

About the service

Karen Donald provides a childminding service from their property in a residential area of Alloa. The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of seven children at any one time of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Conditions within the service include, on Monday afternoons the numbers of children attending will be a maximum of seven children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom no more than four are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one of under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminder's family.

The service is close to local shops, parks, woodland spaces and other amenities. The children are cared for and make full use of the childminders living room, kitchen and a down stairs bathroom. The children have access to a fully enclosed garden area to the rear of the property.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Thursday 31 July 2025 between 09:30 and 11:50. One inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspecting year.

To inform our evaluations of the service we:

- observed practice and daily life
- spoke with two children using the service
- reviewed documents
- spoke with the childminder
- received completed questionnaires from families.

Key messages

- Children experienced a home from home environment where they were seen to be relaxed and comfortable.
- Children had opportunities to extend their play and learning through their own ideas and interests.
- Children experienced warm and caring interactions with the childminder.
- The childminder knew children and their families well and provided appropriate support if needed.
- Children had daily access to the outdoors which supported their overall wellbeing.
- The childminder was committed to improving the service to ensure it reflected what the children needed and wanted.

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?	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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good as several important strengths taken together, outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, nurturing and caring support from the childminder. Positive relationships had been formed with children and their families. One parent told us, "She is amazing at what she does and has brought my child on loads". One child shared, "I like coming here, Karen makes it fun for us". As a result, children were happy and comfortable while they attended the setting.

Children had individual care plans in place that included important information such as, medical requirements, allergies and emergency contacts. Children's views and thoughts were gathered and documented within these plans. Although these were reviewed in line with current best practice, the childminder agreed it would be beneficial for information gathered to be streamlined. We sign posted the childminder to the document 'Guide For Providers On Personal Planning - Early Learning and Childcare' for support when they reviewed their plans. This would ensure important information is not missed and is easy to identify in an emergency.

Whilst there were no children who required medication at the time of inspection, forms required reviewing and updating. For example, ensuring all information was gathered prior to administering medication. Such as, if the child had the medication before and appropriate signatures. We sign posted the childminder to the document 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services' for support when reviewing forms. This would ensure children were kept safe if they required medication while they attended the service.

Mealtimes were a sociable and relaxed experience for children. Tables and chairs were an appropriate size for the children to sit comfortably. Children were confident to share with the childminder when they were ready to have their snack or breakfast. The childminder was aware of how to keep children safe while they ate. For example, one child shared that before the childminder gave them grapes, they were cut up to make sure they did not choke. As a result, the meal time experience promoted children's independence and knowledge of how to keep themselves safe while they ate.

The childminder completed annual child protection training. They were confident in identifying concerns and where to take these further if required. There were forms available for the childminder to use if they had a concern and any significant events were tracked in a daily diary. This supported the childminder to ensure children were kept safe and protected.

Quality indicator 1.3 Play and learning

Children were having fun while engaged in their play and learning. Children experienced a range of spontaneous and planned activities. They were encouraged to follow their interests. For example, they were interested in 'The little mermaid' which developed into learning about under the sea. On the day of inspection, this developed further into how big animals were and making number lines. The childminder supported the children's interests through providing more and new resources to help them create and develop their ideas further.

This helped children to develop their imagination and creative skills in a way that interested them.

Children's development was supported through high quality play and learning experiences. Children's development was tracked and shared with parents. Older children were involved in identifying their next steps, what they thought they did well and what they could work on. For example, taking turns and problem solving with peers. As a result, children were empowered to extend their learning in a way that was right for them.

Language, literacy and numeracy opportunities were woven throughout children's play environments and daily tasks. For example, children were encouraged to tell the time with support from the childminder. Appropriate resources were available for children to develop these skills independently, such as writing and craft books. This helped children to develop their critical thinking skills.

Children had free flow access to the outdoor space as they wished. They shared their experiences of outdoor play. One child told us, "we played in the mud kitchen all day yesterday, we were so muddy. Our arms and legs were covered in mud, it was so fun". Another child shared, "I did not spend all day outside yesterday because I like to chill out on the sofa too". As a result, daily access to the outdoors promoted children's overall wellbeing.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good as several important strengths taken together, outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from an environment that was warm, bright and homely. They had access to the living room, kitchen and hallway which provided ample space for them to move freely. Play resources were easily accessible and supported children to make choices about their play and learning. Children were excited to show their play environment and what they do in different areas. For example, the play sheds in the garden was one of the children's favourite areas to play. This resulted in children who felt confident and safe while they attended the service.

The childminder had a good understanding of their responsibilities to keep children safe. Risks were assessed with possible hazards identified and risk assessments in place. These were informally reviewed at least annually. We suggested the childminder document when reviews took place with dates and signatures to ensure risk assessments were robust. Additional assessments were in place, for example new activities and resources. The front door was locked at all times and a secure fence surrounded the outdoor space with a double locked gate. This resulted in children's play spaces that were safe for them to explore freely.

Effective systems were in place for safe management of infection prevention and control measures. All areas were clean and well maintained. Children and the childminder washed their hands at appropriate times of the day, for example before eating and children had individual towels to use when drying their hands. This meant that the risk of the spread of infections were minimised.

Policies and procedures were mostly in place that underpinned the service. The childminder was in the process of reviewing these in line with up to date guidance. For example, the medication policy had been recently updated to reflect current best practice. The childminder shared that they planned to streamline the policies to ensure all the information relating to individual policies was easily accessible.

We would encourage the childminder to continue with this planned improvement and to ensure any missing policies were developed.

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

The childminder had aims and objectives in place that reflected the service they provided. For example, "provide a safe, happy and stimulating environment for the children allowing the opportunity to make choices, share and help others". These were reviewed informally with families which helped to create a shared vision of the service.

The childminder shared that they were aware of the document 'A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare' and it was beginning to support them with self-evaluation processes. Improvements identified and made were logged on a calendar and diary. Children and families were consulted on any improvements that were made. One child shared, "we help to decide what toys to have in the sheds, it's the ones we like to play with the most. We can make the shed what we want it to be". We encouraged the childminder to continue with their journey of self-evaluation processes. This will help the childminder embed a culture of continuous improvement and reflection within the service.

Children and families were meaningfully involved in the service. Termly news letters were shared with families that highlighted what children had been interested in, important dates and what the childminder had done to improve the service. For example, the childminder shared new updated policies with families through the newsletter. Questionnaires were also sent out to children and families every term, asking about their ideas and thoughts of the service. One child told us, "we did the questions at home with my mum and told Karen what we wanted to do over the holidays. I said I wanted to write more stories". As a result, children and their families felt valued and respected.

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

The childminder treated children with kindness and respect. They knew children very well and helped them to understand their emotions and resolve conflict. One child shared, "we do lots of fun things together, Karen is nice". One parent told us, "she is amazing with the kids". Children were confident to seek out comfort or reassurance from the childminder if they needed it. This helped children to feel loved and secure.

Children and families benefitted from the childminder's experiences and knowledge. They were confident in identifying individualised support for children and sharing this with families. Planned experiences and resources available reflected the identified next steps for children, in consultation with parents. For example, writing resources, books and planned tasks were available to help children who were not confident in writing.

As a result, children were cared for by a childminder who wanted to help them grow and thrive in a way that was right for them.

The childminder takes part in regular mandatory training, for example child protection, first aid and food hygiene. Additional training was carried out through professional reading and professional discussions with other childminders. The childminder shared that this helped to make sure the service was following best practice. We shared with the childminder 'The Care Inspectorate Bitesize Resources' available online to help support further training opportunities. As a result, children were cared for by a childminder who was committed to improving their experiences and outcomes.

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	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - 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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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

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