

Lou's Little Stars Child Minding

West Linton

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
26 August 2021

Service provided by:
Louise MacGregor

Service provider number:
SP2015987197

Service no:
CS2015339547

About the service

Louise MacGregor provides her service under the name Lou's Little Stars. We refer to her as the childminder in this report.

The childminding service is registered with the following conditions:

- The childminder may care for a maximum of 8 children at any time up to 16 years of age: of whom no more than 7 are under 12 years, of whom no more than 3 are not yet of an age to attend primary school and; of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months. Numbers include children of the childminder's family/household.
- From 21 July 2021 to 31 August 2022 (or before if a child leaves the service) as identified in the variation request dated 14 June 2021 on a Monday Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday the childminder may care for a maximum of 8 children at any one time up to 16 years of age: of whom no more than 4 are not yet attending primary school and; of whom no more than 1 is under 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.
- Minded children cannot be cared for by persons other than those named on the certificate.
- Gregor MacGregor is employed as an assistant.
- No overnight care can be provided.

The childminder provides the service from her family home in the rural village of West Linton in the Scottish Borders. The detached home has large front and rear gardens. The childminder uses her kitchen and two additional spaces in the home for children's care and play. One of the spaces is adapted to a playroom when children are present.

Aims and objectives for the service have been developed and are shared with parents and children. These include:

'I aim to provide a safe, caring home environment. I will offer a range of activities and resources to ensure choice and encourage creative and imaginative play with a range of toys suitable for all ages and stages.'

We are testing our new ELC quality framework for day care of children, childminding and school aged childcare. This inspection was included as part of the test. We have evaluated the service based on key questions and quality indicators linked to the framework. As this was a test, we will not be publishing the evaluations. More information about the quality framework and methodology can be found on our website www.careinspectorate.com.

What people told us

We chatted to children during our visit. The three young minded children were unable to give formal views. We observed children with the childminder and assessed that children were very relaxed and comfortable in the childminder's care.

To gain the views of parents we asked the childminder to issue an e-mail to parents asking them to contact us with any comments they may have. Four parents e-mailed us to share their views. Parents were very positive about the service provided by the childminder and her assistant. Comments included:

'We love sending our child to (the childminder and her assistant) , she just feels like part of the family. Although this last year has been hard (the childminder) has made everything feel as normal as possible at the same time keeping my child safe. She enjoys her day on a Monday and enjoys all the experiences especially the outdoor activities!

I asked her what she thought about the (childminder and her assistant.)

Childminder "She is happy"

Assistant "I like him as well"

We are really pleased with the care we receive.'

'I have nothing but good things to say - the childminder, her assistant and all her family are absolutely lovely and I feel so happy to leave (my child) in their care. She gets lots of stimulation and lots of different activities every day. I love getting photos to see what she has been up to and (the childminder) always has time to update me with what she is doing and how she is getting on. My child really enjoys her time there and gets lots of care and attention. I would (and have!) highly recommended Louise to other people.'

'Children very happy to attend. Lots of activities on offer. Variety of nutritious snacks. Lovely outdoor space. Helpful feedback at pick up. Children love active play with the childminding assistant.'

'Having never used a childminder before, using this service was our first experience out with a nursery setting. We are absolutely delighted with the care our little one has been given and she has thrived within this nurturing and warm environment. Not only do we feel they have a great set up within their home and garden, but the activities and engagement with the children has been excellent. We also felt very well informed and kept up to date with her progress. Throughout the pandemic, we have also felt very comfortable with the protocols and procedures put in place to keep both the children and parents safe.'

How good is our care and learning?

1.1: Nurturing care and support

We reviewed children's personal plans. These are documents which help the childminder, and her assistant, meet the individual needs of children. A wide range of meaningful and up to date information had been gathered about each child. Information had been provided by parents and views and additional comments had been provided by children. The childminder used the information to follow children's routines, track their development and provide experiences to meet their interests. This gave the childminder and her assistant a thorough understanding of each child, which helped to achieve positive outcomes for them.

Children had formed warm and positive relationships with the childminder. We observed that they went easily to her for assistance and to seek reassurance. The childminder's interactions with children were very warm, calm and nurturing. The childminder supported children to be independent through their play and encouraging a wide range of self-help skills.

Children chatted to us and each other during their snack. We could see that they were used to the daily routines of being with the childminder. They understood that they washed their hands prior to snack, and then came to sit at the table. Snack was unhurried and good hydration and nutritional guidance was followed. The childminder evidenced an understanding of the value of meal times as a social experience and meals and snacks were eaten at the table whether that was indoors or outside in the garden.

1.2: Children are safe and protected

The childminder had a very clear understanding of her responsibilities to keep children safe and protected. Through an additional professional role, an extensive amount of child protection training and professional discussion had been undertaken to underpin the childminders practice in this area.

To enhance children's safety a range of risk assessment procedures had been developed. These were regularly updated. To help children keep themselves safe there were house rules, support for behaviour procedures and regular discussion and activities with children about road safety and stranger danger. The childminder provided an environment where children could assess risk in their play for themselves. Showing children how to use tools such as scissors or knives when helping prepare snack. Climbing trees and making dens with the loose part resources, enabled children to test out what was safe and what they could achieve.

1.3: Play and Learning

The childminder held a childcare qualification. She had used this knowledge and experience to provide exciting and engaging opportunities for children's play and learning. This was achieved through the wide range of indoor and outdoor resources and the childminders understanding of child development and stages of play. This included schematic play, where a child learns through repetition, which was very well supported. Resources were appropriate for the wide age range of children who attended the service. Physical and outdoor play opportunities were provided for all age groups for significant parts of the day.

During our visit children were very busy and actively engaged in their play. They played for significant periods without the need for adult intervention, but were given support if they requested help or when the childminder observed assistance would further support learning.

Areas for improvement

How good is our staff team?

4.1: Staff skills, knowledge and values

Throughout our visit the childminder provided warm and nurturing care. She understood the importance of consistent approaches to care and worked with parents to ensure that routines from home were continued in the childminding setting. She ensured that principles that make up a nurturing environment were part of her practice. She provided opportunities for learning, good nutrition, supported children's health, provided a safe environment and responsive care. Children responded to this care by being engaged in their play, confident and relaxed. Children present had formed very positive attachments to the childminder.

To help her meet the changing needs of children and further develop her service the childminder took a proactive approach to her professional development. She was reflective of her own practice and looked critically at the service which she provided. She asked parents to comment on the quality of service and consulted with children about the service they received, in terms of activities and the environment. This helped to ensure that the care provided to children was based on current good practice guidance and evolved to meet the needs of children in a changing society.

4.3: Staff deployment

The childminder's husband was the childminding assistant. Parents commented very positively on his involvement in the service. One parent said that the assistant brought a different gender dimension to the service which her child really enjoyed. Minded children could tell us who the assistant was and what they did when they played with him. This helped to evidence that children knew who looked after them in the childminding setting.

The assistant's role in the childminding service was clearly laid out for parents in the childminding information and in the welcome pack. To ensure that he had the skills to carry out his role he had completed training in child protection, first aid and additional childcare training as part of another social care role.

The assistant did not work with the childminder on a daily basis. The involvement in the service was planned and clearly communicated in advance to parents and children. This helped children to feel secure as they knew what to expect and who was caring for them on prearranged occasions.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

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