

Almost Home Childcare Child Minding

Airdrie

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
21 January 2026

Service provided by:
Heather Paterson

Service provider number:
SP2011982448

Service no:
CS2011288883

About the service

Almost Home Childcare provides a childminding service from their property in a quiet residential area in Airdrie. 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. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminder's family.

The service is close to local primary schools, shops, parks and other amenities. Children were cared for in the living room area and had access to nearby toilet and handwashing facilities. They also had access to a large and well-equipped garden area and had access to a large green space which had been developed as a children's play area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced which took place on 20 January between 13:30 and 17:15. 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 four children attending the service
- spoke with the childminder
- received feedback from six families
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- The childminder was committed to professional development and their extensive knowledge of best practice and passion for learning impacted positively, improving outcomes for children.
- Children's choices were supported through the provision of a wide variety of high-quality stimulating and interesting play materials.
- Children benefited from extensive and well-designed use of outdoor space, which promoted their play, learning and development. Opportunities for daily outdoor experiences was a strength of the setting.
- Children experienced warm, caring and nurturing interactions that helped them feel safe, secure and loved.
- Children's learning and development was significantly supported through effective personal planning. This focused on children's interests and preferences, which meant experiences were individually tailored to suit each child.

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

Leadership	6 - Excellent
Children play and learn	6 - Excellent
Children are supported to achieve	6 - Excellent

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 6 - Excellent

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources.

We evaluated this quality indicator as excellent, where aspects of performance were outstanding and sector leading.

The childminder had created an exceptional service where children experienced a warm, nurturing and welcoming environment. This contributed to children feeling valued, included and secure. The childminder demonstrated a strong commitment to ongoing professional learning and their extensive knowledge of best practice had a significant and positive impact on improving outcomes for children.

A clear vision was in place for the setting which had been reviewed to ensure this met the needs of children and families. This reflected children's rights, including to be safe, to learn, to grow and have fun, which was fully embedded in practice. Play was at the heart of the childminders approach, with outdoor play opportunities being a particular strength of the service.

The childminder had developed meaningful, trusting relationships with families. They communicated well about children's experiences, progress and any changes within the service. A range of methods were used, including social media platforms, digital apps and daily conversations, supporting families to feel included and involved. Parents told us "I am always welcomed into [the childminder's] home to discuss anything at any time" and said they are "always welcome to come in and be part of the day's plans."

The childminder demonstrated a strong ethos of continuous improvement. Highly effective use of self-evaluation and reflecting on practice helped enhance the quality of the service. They actively sought views from children and families to help influence decisions. This was through face-to-face discussions, questionnaires and observations of children. High-quality care and play was at the heart of improvement plans, which supported them to make changes based on best practice to help develop the service. Moving forward, we discussed where small changes could be made to wording in some policies and procedures and signposted to relevant guidance to support with this.

The childminder had engaged in professional reading and research around the updated 'setting the table' guidance. As a result, children had been introduced to a wider variety of healthy snack options and were enjoying opportunities to explore new foods. In addition, the childminder promoted connections through social media to share this learning more widely, supporting other childminders to develop healthy food menus for children and babies.

The childminder was a member of the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and valued opportunities to connect with other childminders. They regularly shared ideas and best practice, including mentoring other childminders and organising training events such as paediatric first aid. By welcoming other childminders and local families into the setting, they helped promote high quality play experiences more widely. The well equipped, stimulating and challenging play spaces benefitted not only children attending the service but also those visiting from the wider community. One parent told us "[the childminder]" ensures their home and garden are maintained to the highest standard. They are so knowledgeable and on top of everything, I don't know how [they] find the time or energy, but [they are] always training/studying to be able to provide the families in her care with the best."

Children play and learn 6 - Excellent

Quality indicator: Playing, learning and developing.

We evaluated this quality indicator as excellent, where aspects of performance were outstanding and sector leading.

Children benefited from extensive and well-designed use of outdoor space, which promoted their play, learning and development. Opportunities for daily outdoor experiences was a strength of the setting. Children had fun as they explored the garden, which helped to improve their wellbeing, resilience and confidence. They had opportunities to grow plants and vegetables, helping them understand where food comes from. In addition, they knew they had choices and could return indoors if they wished, with their preferences being respected.

The childminder had made extremely good use of a dedicated local greenspace behind their garden to enhance children's learning, known as 'Muddy boots.' This was easily accessible and provided safe, nurturing and inspiring outdoor learning experiences that fostered a love for the natural environment. A wide range of materials supported children's physical and imaginative play, including resources for climbing and balancing, bikes, sand and water play, and a well resourced mud kitchen. Parents told us "the outdoor provision speaks for itself and my [child] engages in some form of outdoor activity every day" and "[the childminder] has the most amazing outdoor play area for my child to explore and play in. This is [their] absolute favourite as there are so many opportunities for them to create and explore."

The childminder used their professional knowledge to plan rich and meaningful experiences that promoted children's skills and development. They recognised each child's stage of development and ensured that experiences matched their needs and interests. Materials were well organised for children to lead their play and make independent choices. For example, imaginative play, sensory play with sand and using small animals to explore in mud and soil. The breadth of opportunities helped ensure it met individual choices and preferences, supporting their overall learning. All parents that provided feedback told us their child could access a range of experiences that supported their development. One parent told us the childminder "offers my child lots of different activities to aid their development. [They have] a great imagination, creating fabulous activities for my child to be involved in."

Children benefitted from experiences that promoted numeracy and language development. Loose parts materials such as fir cones, pebbles, and everyday items, supported counting, weighing and sorting. The childminder was trained in delivering 'Bookbug' sessions, which provided valuable opportunities for sharing stories, songs and rhymes. There were plentiful opportunities for discussion, with the childminder repeating key words and phrases to build children's vocabulary. As a result, children were highly engaged and clearly enjoying their play.

The childminder joined in with children's play and used observations to plan and adapt play experiences. Children's learning was recorded through written observations, photographs and online platforms which was shared with families. This enabled the childminder to identify meaningful next steps, plan for each child's learning journey and celebrate their achievements.

Children had recently been introduced to 'Makaton', which is a communication programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to promote inclusion and communication. Children were proud to show us familiar signs for colours and their name.

Children are supported to achieve 6 - Excellent

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support.

We evaluated this quality indicator as excellent, where aspects of performance were outstanding and sector leading.

Children received warm and nurturing interactions that helped them feel loved, safe and secure. The childminder knew children well and provided responsive and consistent care to meet their individual needs. One child described the childminder as "fun, helping and caring." The childminder recognised children's cues and non-verbal communication and responded appropriately. One parent told us "[the childminder] is amazing! I have so much confidence in [them] looking after and keeping my child safe in [their] care. I also know that the opportunities [they] create for my child will have a positive impact on my child's development."

The childminder understood the importance of well-planned transitions. New children were supported by individual settling visits and short periods of play sessions, helping ensure this was right for each child. Children were able to access comforters and familiar objects from home such as blankets and soft toys, which contributed positively to their wellbeing.

The childminder skilfully supported children to develop their social skills by offering opportunities to mix in both small and larger groups. For example, in quieter groups at the home and garden and also when attending busier toddler groups. Children who wished to play on their own could do so. Some children were in the very early stages of learning to share resources and the childminder sensitivity supported them with minor conflicts. Strategies such as role modelling, playing alongside children and offering additional materials helped them feel understood and reassured.

Children were offered healthy snack options and some families preferred to bring their own lunches to meet their individual needs and preferences. The childminder ensured that snacks were healthy options and used best practice guidance 'Setting the table' to introduce new foods and promote healthy eating. As a result, children were beginning to enjoy a wider variety of foods, including different types of fruit.

The childminder supported children's overall wellbeing through well-developed approaches to personal planning. They gathered detailed information about children's individual routines, likes and interest, and adapted care to meet their needs. Children's progress was recorded and used to plan to meet their wishes, preferences and next steps in learning and development. Strong relationships with families were valued and daily communication ensured parents were well informed about their children's achievements and experiences. Parents told us "[the childminder] is a lovely approachable person , great childminder. My child always is valued, feels safe and happy in [their] company and that is the most important thing" and "[the childminder] has such a personal relationship with my [child] and really knows them. They are happy going in the mornings and it puts my mind at ease."

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

Leadership	6 - Excellent
Leadership and management of staff and resources	6 - Excellent
Children play and learn	6 - Excellent
Playing, learning and developing	6 - Excellent
Children are supported to achieve	6 - Excellent
Nurturing care and support	6 - Excellent

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