

Hygge Avenue Childminding Child Minding

Ellon

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
24 August 2026

Service provided by:
Hannah Smith

Service provider number:
SP2024001034

Service no:
CS2025000138

About the service

Hygge Avenue Childminding provides a childminding service from their property in a residential area of Tarves, Aberdeenshire. They are registered to provide a care service for a maximum of six children at any one time up to 16 years of age: of whom no more than six are under 12 years; of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and; of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers include the children of the childminder's family/household.

The service is close to the local primary school, parks, shops and green spaces. Children have access to the kitchen, living/dining room, toilet and a fully enclosed garden.

Three children were present at the time of the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 24 August 2026 between 09:40 and 14:10. The inspection was carried out by an inspector from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included registration information, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

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

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing relationships and felt safe, secure and valued in the childminder's care.
- The childminder provided a welcoming home-from-home environment that supported children's wellbeing, independence and sense of belonging.
- Children benefited from high-quality play and learning experiences that reflected their interests and supported their development.
- Strong partnerships with families ensured parents were involved, informed and able to contribute to their children's care and learning.
- The childminder used self-evaluation effectively to support continuous improvement and positive outcomes for children.
- Robust policies, procedures and quality assurance systems helped promote children's safety, health and wellbeing.

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	5 - Very Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

The childminder had a clear vision, values and aims in place which focused on keeping children safe and providing a secure, relaxed, warm and friendly environment. These values were evident throughout the inspection in the welcoming atmosphere and positive relationships observed. The childminder had involved children and families in developing the service vision, helping everyone feel included and valued. They had also worked hard to make these meaningful in everyday practice. For example, a "word of the month" initiative encouraged children to explore values through daily experiences. One child chose "fun," explaining they always had fun at the setting, while another chose "welcome" and spoke about how happy they felt when friends greeted them each morning. This helped children understand and reflect on the values promoted within the service. The vision, values and aims were well embedded and had a positive impact on children's experiences.

The childminder actively sought and valued the views of children and families. Daily conversations with parents, WhatsApp updates throughout the day and a closed Facebook page helped keep families informed about children's experiences. Children were involved in decisions about the service through regular discussions, including choosing snack options for the following week. These choices were shared with families, demonstrating that children's views were listened to and acted upon. The childminder also gathered feedback through online surveys and sought the views of fellow childminders they worked alongside. Feedback from families was consistently positive, highlighting open communication, flexibility and the home-from-home nature of the service. Parents told us they felt involved in meaningful ways and had confidence that their views would be heard. The childminder demonstrated a strong commitment to partnership working and ensuring the views of others influenced practice.

As a relatively new childminder, they had embraced opportunities to reflect on and improve their practice. They had participated in the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) mentoring programme and described how support from an experienced childminder had increased their confidence and strengthened their knowledge. The childminder had also recently joined the SCMA Childminder Practitioner Programme, giving them dedicated time for professional learning and reflection. They had engaged positively with the Quality Improvement Framework for Childminding and used quality indicators and appropriate questions to identify priorities for development. This had led to initiatives such as the "word of the month," which the childminder felt had encouraged kinder language and more considerate behaviour from children. Parents had also commented positively on how children talked about these values at home. The childminder had identified further priorities around promoting independence and increasing children's ownership of their environment and routines. Self-evaluation was meaningful and was contributing to improved outcomes for children and families.

Robust quality assurance arrangements were in place to support the effective running of the service. Policies and procedures were reviewed regularly, shared with families and reflected current practice. The childminder demonstrated a commitment to professional learning and had begun working towards a relevant qualification while ensuring mandatory training remained up to date. They spoke confidently about how training had improved the experiences they provided for children and supported them to reflect on their practice. The childminder was also aware of current best practice guidance and used this to inform decision-making within the setting. For example, guidance such as Setting the Table had influenced approaches to providing safe, healthy and nutritious meals and snacks. Quality assurance processes were effective and supported a culture of continuous improvement within the service.

Children thrive and develop in quality spaces 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Children experience high quality spaces

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

The childminder provided a very welcoming, cosy and homely environment where children appeared happy, relaxed and secure. The main living and dining area was used effectively to support children's play, learning and daily routines. Children had access to a large sofa for relaxation, while rugs and floor mats created comfortable spaces for floor play. Parents described the setting as a "great homely, fun and safe environment," and children spoke positively about their experiences, with one child commenting that the childminder "is kind and has a cool garden." Children also had access to a toilet and an enclosed garden, supporting their independence and wellbeing. The physical environment provided a safe, nurturing space where children felt comfortable and valued.

Children were able to influence their experiences and make independent choices throughout the day. They had plenty of space to move around and confidently accessed resources stored on low shelves and in labelled boxes. Even younger children were able to independently select toys that interested them, supporting choice and autonomy. Children were encouraged to lead their own play and were supported to take responsibility for their environment through activities such as tidying away resources. The childminder followed children's interests and allowed them to direct the flow of play, creating a relaxed and child-centred atmosphere. Children were empowered to make choices and take an active role in their environment.

Although the children did not spend time in the garden during the inspection, they did enjoy going outside to watch the bin lorry collect the rubbish bins, reflecting their interest in vehicles. The childminder and parents told us that children accessed outdoor experiences every day, making good use of both the garden and wider community. Children regularly visited local parks and outdoor spaces, providing opportunities for fresh air, exercise and exploration. They were also involved in community initiatives such as the Tarves Trowel Team, helping to maintain village planters, taking part in litter picks and entering local competitions. These experiences helped children develop a strong sense of belonging within their community while providing opportunities for challenge and achievement.

Appropriate measures were in place to support children's safety and wellbeing. Risk assessments had been completed and reviewed regularly, helping the childminder identify and manage potential hazards. The Care Inspectorate's SIMOA safety campaign was promoted within the setting through the display of a safety poster and the use of "Sally Safe Elephant," who accompanied children on outings and encouraged discussions about keeping safe. The childminder used everyday interactions to help children understand risk. For example, when a child threw a toy, they calmly asked if this was safe and explained why it could hurt someone. We discussed using benefit-risk assessments to further develop children's understanding of managing risk safely. The childminder promoted a positive approach to safety while supporting children to develop awareness of risk.

The childminder maintained a clean, safe and well-organised environment. Safe sleep practices were followed, with a child sleeping in a travel cot and familiar routines from home being respected through the use of a sleep bag and white noise. Nappy changing was carried out in a respectful manner, with appropriate use of personal protective equipment and handwashing procedures. Accident and incident records were completed appropriately and signed by parents. We discussed strengthening infection prevention practices by ensuring children consistently washed their hands with soap and running water before and after meals. Overall, children experienced a high-quality, safe environment which supported their health, wellbeing and development.

Children play and learn 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Play, learning and developing

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

The childminder had undertaken relevant training and had started working towards a qualification to strengthen their understanding of child development. They spoke confidently about how this learning had influenced their practice, particularly in supporting children's emotional development and following their interests. The childminder demonstrated a good understanding of how children learn through play and used this knowledge to provide experiences that reflected children's ages, stages and individual needs.

Children were highly engaged in play throughout the inspection. Young children played alongside each other and the childminder, who regularly joined them at their level and showed genuine interest in their play. Children enjoyed cause-and-effect games, laughing as they played peek-a-boo with pieces of organza fabric and then copying the game with one another. Musical instruments, old phones, keyboards and a toy stethoscope encouraged exploration, imagination and curiosity. The childminder supported children to access a range of open-ended resources which reflected their interests. Children experienced engaging and meaningful play opportunities that supported their development.

Language, literacy and numeracy were promoted well through daily experiences and interactions. A variety of books, games and mark-making materials were available and regularly used by children. During the inspection, children frequently brought books to the childminder to share, particularly enjoying lift-the-flap stories. The childminder naturally introduced counting, colours and descriptive language during play. For example, children counted parts of musical instruments and discussed colours while exploring resources. Songs, rhymes and conversations were used throughout the day to encourage communication and develop vocabulary. Children's language, literacy and numeracy skills were effectively supported through play and everyday experiences.

The childminder's interactions were warm, responsive and supportive of learning. They commented on children's play, modelled new skills and encouraged children to think about what they were doing. For example, while a child was stacking hoops, the childminder talked about colours and sizes, encouraging the child to problem solve. When children explored musical instruments, the childminder demonstrated how they worked before encouraging children to try for themselves. Children responded positively to this support and were motivated to continue exploring and learning. Interactions extended children's play and helped develop their skills and confidence.

Planning was both responsive and intentional. The childminder followed children's interests while also considering their developmental needs. This was evident in the experiences linked to children's interests in vehicles. A floor book was used to record experiences and achievements, and children enjoyed looking back at photographs and recognising themselves. Children's views were gathered through discussions and used to help plan future experiences. Planning was child-centred and supported meaningful learning opportunities.

Observations and reviews showed that the childminder knew children well and monitored their progress appropriately. Reviews were shared with parents every three to six months and included children's achievements and next steps. Progress was clearly evident, particularly in language development where children were beginning to use more words and phrases over time. The childminder used this information to plan future experiences and support individual development. Observations and assessment processes supported children's progress and promoted positive outcomes for learning and development.

Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as **very good**.

The childminder was very warm, nurturing and responsive in their interactions with children. Strong, trusting relationships were evident throughout the inspection, with children confidently seeking comfort, reassurance and support when needed. For example, young children regularly climbed onto the childminder's knee for a cuddle while playing, showing they felt safe and secure in their care. The childminder was quick to recognise and respond to children's cues, such as providing a teether when a child began putting toys in their mouth. Children were also supported to understand and express their emotions through daily wellbeing check-ins linked to colours and feelings. For example, the childminder said, "I can see you're feeling red, but you can't go upstairs just now, I need to see you." The childminder's nurturing approach helped children feel happy, settled and valued.

Transitions and routines were calm, respectful and well established. The childminder prepared children for changes throughout the day by naturally talking about what would happen next. For example, children were told, "When [a child] wakes up, we can go outside to play," helping them understand and anticipate upcoming activities. Children were involved in everyday decisions and asked if they would like a snack or were ready for a nappy change. They responded confidently to familiar routines. When the tidy-up song was played, children eagerly joined in and when outdoor play was mentioned, one child immediately responded, "Shoes, shoes." These predictable experiences promoted independence and provided reassurance. Routines and transitions supported children's confidence, wellbeing and sense of belonging.

The childminder demonstrated a very good understanding of child protection responsibilities and safeguarding procedures. They understood the importance of recording significant events in children's lives through chronologies where required. Medication was stored securely in a locked boxes and appropriate records were maintained. We discussed adding more detail about signs and symptoms to further strengthen medication procedures and support safe administration. Safeguarding and medication arrangements supported children's health, safety and wellbeing effectively.

Mealtimes were relaxed, social and enjoyable experiences. Children sat together eating with the childminder, creating opportunities for conversation and developing social skills. Nutritious home-cooked meals, such as vegetable pasta, were provided and enjoyed by the children. Individual preferences and allergies were well catered for, including baking a suitable birthday cake. Children had access to water throughout the day and were encouraged to develop independence through self-feeding, self-serving fruit and helping with baking and cooking activities. Mealtimes promoted children's health, independence and social development.

Personal plans were in place for all children and had been developed in partnership with families. These contained relevant information to support individual care and wellbeing. Although the childminder knew children's preferences and routines well, we discussed ensuring this information was consistently recorded within plans. We also suggested using the wellbeing indicators to provide a more holistic overview of children's health and wellbeing. Personal planning supported individualised care, with opportunities to strengthen recording further.

The childminder had developed strong relationships with families and knew the children very well. Parents were welcomed into the setting daily and spoke highly of the care and support their children received. One parent described the setting as "fun, inclusive and a great space to learn through play," while another said their children were always happy and often did not want to leave at the end of the day. Open communication and positive partnership working supported children's development and wellbeing. Strong relationships with families contributed to 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.scot.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Children thrive and develop in quality spaces	5 - Very Good
Children experience high quality spaces	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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