

## Jayne

Jayne (Photo B.1) is seventeen months old and is a quiet, contented little girl who likes her own space. She lives with her Mum and Dad and her brother Jack who is four years old. At home she spends time playing and exploring in the back garden with Jack and going for walks with her family. During the week, Jayne attends a home based childminding service in the north-west of Ireland.



Photo B.1: Jayne

## Lisa's Childminding Service - Background and context

Lisa's Childminding Service was established in 1999 and is situated in a quiet residential area on the outside of a seaside town. The service is notified to the Health Services Executive and is subject to annual inspection under the requirements of the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 1996 and Child Care (Pre-School Services) (Amendment) Regulations 1997.

Lisa's Childminding Service is mainly used by children living in the local area although one child travels from a nearby town to avail of the service of a notified childminder<sup>14</sup>. On reaching school age, most children attending the service attend the local national school approximately one mile away.

Lisa has developed close links with the local County Childcare Committee and receives ongoing support and advice from the Childminders' Advisory Officer. She has also accessed training and plays an active role in developing local networks for Childminders. She has participated in Quality Awareness Training for Childminders, First Aid, HACCP (Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Point: a quality management system for food preparation required under the childcare and food safety regulations) and Fire Safety Training and is currently working on a FETAC (Further Education and training Awards Council) Level 5 Award in Childcare.

Lisa's Childminding Service is based in a large two storey detached home. The children have access to two rooms, the kitchen and a living room, and a fenced outdoor play area. A connecting conservatory area doubles up as a sleep area for the younger children during the day and there is a toilet and changing area off the back hallway of the house. Six children, three boys and three girls, currently attend the service in the morning and their ages range from 14 months to four years. A number of school age children also use the service in the afternoons. Lisa is supported by Marion, who helps look after the children during the day as well as preparing snacks and joining in play activities.

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<sup>14</sup> A childminder can opt to notify to the Health Services Executive in a voluntary capacity and in doing so his/her childcare service is subject to annual inspection.

## Curriculum and assessment

Lisa believes that for young children like Jayne, there are many benefits of home based childcare. She offers a play based daily routine which aims to make the environment a *home from home for the children*. Domestic chores like emptying the dishwasher, cooking and doing the washing are part of the daily routine, which Lisa believes give children *a sense of home*.

Lisa remarked that she looks upon herself as being a *mother figure* to the children, but at the same time being aware of their stages of development and trying to enhance these through play activities. Children's care routines such as food, sleep and nappy changes are recorded in a Daily Record Book and shared with parents at the end of the day. There are currently no systems in place for recording children's learning and development, although Lisa commented that this is something she would very much like to have training to do in the future.

## Jayne's experiences in Lisa's Childminding Service

**Table 5: A day at the childminders for Jayne**

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Arrival<br>9.00 a.m.            | Jayne's Mum drops her off at Lisa's home at around 9.00 a.m. Some mornings Lisa has to distract Jayne until her Mum leaves but she usually settles down quickly. |
| Breakfast<br>9.15 a.m.          | Jayne enjoys a breakfast of cereal and toast shortly after she arrives.  |
| Morning activities<br>9.45 a.m. | Jayne potters around the kitchen area and plays with a range of toys such as blocks, doll and prams.   |
| Snack<br>10.30 a.m.             | Jayne has a light snack such as a drink and crackers or toast.   |
| Change                          | Lisa or Marion change Jayne's nappy in the nappy changing area located off the rear hallway.   |
| Sleep                           | Jayne takes her dummy and is settled in the conservatory area for a nap.   |
| Lunch<br>12.30 p.m.             | Jayne has lunch of sandwiches, fruit, yogurt and a drink.  |
| Change                          | Lisa or Marion change Jayne's nappy in the nappy changing area located off the rear hallway.   |
| Activities<br>1.25 p.m.         | Jayne enjoys participating in planned creative activities such as painting or drawing.   |

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|----------------------|--|
| Sleep                | Jayne is settled for her second sleep in the conservatory area of the childminders home.   |
| Afternoon activities | Now that the afterschool children have joined the service, Jayne joins in fun activities with her older brother Jack such as music and movement and dancing. |
| Dinner 4.00 p.m.     | All the children have dinner at 4.00 p.m. and Jayne enjoys dinners like potatoes and beans or stew.  |
| Activities           | After dinner children beginning to depart from the service at different times and Jayne potters about choosing activities to keep her amused.                |
| Departure 5.00 p.m.  | Jayne's Mum or Dad or sometimes both parents come to collect Jayne and Jack from the setting. Lisa provides a verbal overview of the children's day.         |

## Well-being

Jayne joined Lisa's Childminding Service when she was nine months old. She attends for five days per week between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Lisa commented that when Jayne joined the setting initially, *she found it difficult to settle* as she had been at home full time with her Mum until this time. However with consistent care and attention, she developed a relationship with Lisa and learned to trust and feel secure in Lisa's home. Lisa recalled that this change in behaviour occurred around the time that Jayne learned to walk and she feels that the added independence that this gave Jayne helped her a lot. Jayne's Mum and Lisa agree that Jayne seems more content and although some mornings she needs to be distracted until Mum leaves, she generally settles quickly. Jayne's Mum commented that there was no getting away from the fact that *Jayne's first preference would be to stay at home with her Mum, Dad and Jack*. However, they appreciate the benefits of attending the childminding service for Jayne. Her parents remarked that she has *more opportunity to socialise and develop independence* to do things for herself in the busier environment of the childminder setting.

When indoors Jayne spends most of her time in the kitchen area – and usually stays quite close to Lisa. Lisa nurtures Jayne's physical well-being by providing physical activities which help her to gain increasing control and co-ordination of her body movements (Photo B. 2). By using a small slide positioned in the kitchen, I observed Lisa encouraging Jayne to climb the ladder, position herself at the top of the slide and slide down whilst Lisa held her hand. The activity was used to encourage Jayne to take turns and learn about the importance of sharing. I observed Lisa offering plenty of praise and encouragement throughout the activity and Jayne responded by smiling, clapping her hands and running to the back of the slide eager to repeat the activity.



Photo B.2. Jayne practising using the slide

## Identity and Belonging

Jayne's parents commented that one of the main benefits of attending the childminding service for them was the fact that Jayne could interact and have fun with her older brother when he came home from school in the afternoon (Photo B.3). Jack attends the afterschool service provided by Lisa and she commented that *Jayne's eyes light up every day when she sees him coming and she welcomes him in with a hug and a smile*. This childcare arrangement nurtures a fundamental sibling relationship and helps affirm Jayne's sense of security and belonging. For Jayne's and Jack's parents, this was an important factor in choosing the type of childcare setting for the children as common practice within some crèche settings is to separate children according to age.



### Photo B.3. Having fun with brother Jack

My observations of Jayne in the childminder's home showed that she could play contentedly alone for long periods of time but frequently sought places for herself near either Lisa or her brother Jack. Lisa described Jayne as a very *chilled out baby* and commented that Jayne likes her own space and occasionally has to be enticed to get involved in activities. She said that Jayne tends to *sit back and look on* but once she gets started she can play co-operatively alongside other children participating in activities like floor puzzles and building blocks. I observed Jayne playing alongside Michael on the floor for a period of ten minutes or so with some plastic blocks (Photo B4). Whilst she did not communicate verbally with Michael, or he with Jayne, there was a quiet co-operative harmony about their play.



Photo B.4: Playing in harmony with Michael

## Communicating

Jayne listens and responds to spoken communication and appears to understand much more than she can say. She understands simple requests like *can you find your shoes?* and points to objects when she wants something. For example, when Lisa asked, *who wants a drink?* Jayne walked over to the cupboard and pointed to her cup and reiterated, *drink, me drink*.

Lisa is very aware that Jayne doesn't like being crowded or having too many children around her. When the older children come in from school they like to play with the younger children by singing and dancing with them. Jayne has developed the communication skills to express her dislike if the children crowd her space too much by holding up her hands, squealing and pushing them away. Lisa supports this individual choice and understands that there are times when Jayne wants to be quiet and reflective and opt out of the busy environment. Jayne has found a favourite place (Photos B.5 and B.6) in Lisa's home in the form of a low level recliner chair positioned by one of the walls in the kitchen. She frequently retreats to this chair with her bottle to observe what's going on and sometimes falls asleep.



Photos B.5 and B.6: Jayne's favourite place

Lisa promotes language in a fun, creative and playful way through activities like dancing to music and songs and rhymes, to support Jayne's learning and development in this area. Jayne particularly responds to the song, *Is this the way to Amarillo* and when Lisa plays this song during a music and movement activity, Jayne starts dancing in the middle of the floor, waving her arms, clapping her hands and bending her knees in time to the music (Photo B.7).



Photo B. 7: Jayne dancing to *Is this the way to Amarillo?*

Jayne demonstrates a preference for books and in particular books with stickers which she can peel off and move to other pages. Jayne's Mum says that she *can spend ages transferring small stickers from one page to another at home and points to pictures she recognises*. She also likes to look at the pictures in board books and using her senses to explore touch and feel books and pop up books. Lisa commented that she supports Jayne's language development by exploring picture books, identifying pictures which are meaningful to her like shoes, cat, house and encouraging Jayne to pronounce different words and sounds. Lisa usually carries out this type of activity with Jayne on her knee or with one or two other children to encourage her communication skills.

## Exploring and Thinking



Photo B.8. Jayne relaxing with Jack

Jayne gets excited when Lisa mentions going outside to play and she demonstrates this by clapping her hands and running towards the back door. Lisa pointed out that *Jayne seems to prefer outdoors more than indoors* and this is clearly seen as Jayne becomes much more animated whilst playing outdoors. Lisa's back garden is spacious with plenty of room for Jayne to run and explore. The garden is divided into a grass area and a safety surface area where even the youngest children can play on the small swings and slides. A range of different equipment is readily available such as bats, balls and hoops, a playhouse and a selection of push along toys and prams. Sometimes Jayne likes to sit beside Jack on the small swing, relaxing and observing what's going on (Photo B.8) and other times she goes exploring or pushes a pram.

Jayne's Mum reiterated her love of outdoors and commented that an enjoyable day for Jayne at home would involve her being outside as much as possible where she *likes to wander in and out of the garden, pottering about and picking up daisies*. She exhibits this preference for the outdoors to her parents by putting up her arms and saying, *walk, walk*. Jayne plays in the garden with her brother Jack on the slide, swings and see-saw. As she is getting older she has begun to spend long periods contentedly playing with Jack who is very protective and looks after her. At the moment she is going through a climbing stage and her Mum commented that *she wants to climb on everything and anything*. This gives Jayne an opportunity to explore and satisfies her growing curiosity by allowing her to see things from a different level and perspective.



Photos B.9 and B.10: Jayne drawing

In addition to music and movement activities and outdoor play, Lisa supports Jayne's capacity to learn through her senses by using creative activities like drawing, painting

and block play. I observed Jayne experimenting with media such as crayons (Photos B.9 and B.10) and paint. Jayne demonstrates frequent repetitive actions in her play as she is investigating how things work. She likes to put things into boxes and containers and take them back out again, repeatedly opens and closes doors and is generally very inquisitive. She can play for up to five minutes with blocks—putting them into a box and taking them out again, stacking them in towers and exploring them with her mouth.

During a busy play session in Lisa's kitchen, I observed Jayne listening to a tune on a small sit-and-ride toy and moving her arms and body to the music (Photo B. 11). She appeared to be able to process out the background noise in the busy kitchen and concentrate on the music. Jayne repeated this process a number of times by waiting until the tune ended and pressing the button again.



Photo B. 11: Jayne listens to a tune

## Conclusion

The childminding environment provides Jayne with lots of opportunities to interact with a range of children of different age groups. Jayne's parents feel that this socialisation aspect of attending the service alongside the fact that she has daily contact with her brother in the afternoons is very important for Jayne.

Lisa said that *Jayne is a great baby* and that she and her brother Jack make a *lovely addition to the group of children*. She commented that because she has had Jayne in her home since she was a baby, *it is rewarding seeing her coming on and learning new things as she gets older*.