

Stewart, Shona C

Child Minding

Auchterarder

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 May 2024

Service provided by:

Service provider number:
SP2004937382

Service no:
CS2004081599

About the service

Shona Stewart provides a childminding service from her family farm close to the village of Blackford, Perthshire. The childminder is registered to provide care service to a maximum of six children at any one time under the age of 12 years.

The children are cared for on the ground floor of the farmhouse. They have access to a large kitchen dining area, a toy room, and a toilet. The children also have access to the fully enclosed garden to the side of the house and they have opportunities to spend time with the childminder on the farm.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 15 May 2024 between 10:30 and 13:30. 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 two people using the service and two of their family members
- Spoke with the provider
- Observed practice and daily life
- Reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing care to support their wellbeing.
- Children experienced a welcoming, home from home environment that supported them to feel safe, secure, and comfortable.
- Children benefitted from effective personal planning as the childminder routinely gathered important information from families and used it meaningfully to support children.
- There were limited approaches in place to monitor and evaluate children's progress and achievements.
- Children were leading their own play and learning and were fully engaged in their experiences.
- Self-evaluation processes should be improved to evaluate the quality of the service and identify areas for improvement.
- Policies and procedures did not fully underpin the service being provided. The childminder should review and update their policies and procedures to align with current guidance and best practice documents. This will ensure families are provided with clear information on what to expect from the service.

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?	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	4 - 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, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

1.1. Nurturing care and support

The childminder and the children in her care had developed positive attachments and close relationships. The childminder knew the children very well and skilfully responded to minor disputes over resources, by using distraction techniques. Children experienced warm and caring interactions which contributed to them feeling safe and secure. This helped create a fun and trusting environment where children felt included, loved, and had a sense of belonging.

A member of the childminder's family was present, at times, during the inspection, and it was clear they had built positive relationships with the children. We observed children were happy to see them. They comfortably interacted with each other in a fun manner, which supported children to feel valued and respected in the childminders home.

Children benefitted from effective personal planning as the childminder routinely gathered important information from families. They had developed positive and meaningful relationships which enabled the childminder to provide children with care and support, throughout the day that was right for them. They were knowledgeable on children's circumstances, likes and preferences which contributed to children being happy and confident. The childminder was flexible and helped families by attending school events which demonstrated a holistic approach to supporting families and children. One parent told us, 'Nothing is a bother to Shona, and she provides such a nurturing environment, my child thinks it is another family members home'.

Children experienced mealtimes that were sociable and unhurried. The childminder and children sat and ate together at a large kitchen table, which meant they experienced a relaxed atmosphere in which to eat and drink. Children's choices were respected as they choose food from their packed lunch box or were offered a variety of fruit and sandwiches provided by the childminder. We asked the childminder to consider ways in which children could learn more independence and responsibility through their mealtime experience. For example, preparing their own fruit and pouring their own drinks would help support children to develop important life skills. Allergies were well managed, and the childminder could confidently discuss how they would respond to a choking episode which contributed to keeping children safe.

Children's health and wellbeing needs were being met as the appropriate forms and permissions were in place for the safe administration of medication. The childminder was knowledgeable on how to share initial concerns on children's welfare and confident in child protection procedures.

1.3 Play and learning

The childminder had an informal approach to planning as they followed children's interests and responded to their choices. This resulted in children leading their own play, learning, and being fully engaged in their experiences. Older children were learning life skills as the childminder had taught them how to knit. They made Japanese sweets together and liked to challenge the childminder to game of chess.

Younger children's skills in language literacy and numeracy were promoted as the childminder naturally repeated words, sang, and counted with the children as they went about their routines.

The childminder had a good understanding of children's current development needs. However, there was limited monitoring and evaluation of children's progress. The childminder should build on her approach within children's personal plans, by clearly recording identified next steps in development and learning and share children's success and achievements with families. This would help the childminder to effectively support and challenge children to reach their full potential (see area for improvement 1).

The childminder sensitively listened to children through kind and developmentally appropriate interactions, which empowered them to explore their feelings and express their emotional needs. The childminder meaningfully responded to children's individual asks and cues for comfort, support, or reassurance. Children were enabled to think for themselves, as the childminder used effective questioning to further develop their thinking and problem-solving skills. Older children had contributed to and created a 'rules poster' together, their comments included, 'No weird noises, be kind and include everyone.' These approaches provided children with a safe and secure environment in which to understand and develop their emotional wellbeing, play, and learn.

Children were well supported to maintain positive connections with their local community as they regularly attended groups and activities in the local area. For example, they visited a nearby park and library and participated in toddler and playgroups which helped them develop positive friendships and social skills.

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's progression in their learning and development, observations should be regularly recorded, and identify children's progress in their learning. Next steps in children's development should be meaningful, achievable, and monitored to ensure children are supported well to reach their full potential.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27).

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The childminders home was a farmhouse which was inviting, well-furnished, and provided children with a homely environment in which to play, learn and relax. They moved confidently around the large open plan kitchen dining area and the toy room. The toy room was well organised and resourced with developmentally appropriate toys and games. We saw younger children were engaged in their experiences, having fun, and played well together. This demonstrated that children felt comfortable and secure in the childminders home. We highlighted to the childminder that their provision of loose parts, natural materials and real-life resources could be enhanced further to promote children's sense of wonder, imaginative play, and their curiosities.

The childminder had good understanding of the positive impact that outdoor play had on children's overall wellbeing. There was a secure outdoor garden space, with climbing apparatus and the children often visited the farm. They told us they liked the ducks, chickens and geese and smiled and pointed at pictures of them feeding the lambs. A parent told us, 'Since being at Shona's our child wants to play outside all the time'.

Children experienced safe indoor and outdoor environments. The childminder routinely checked the house before the arrival of the children and the appropriate risk assessments were in place. For example, when the children visited the farm to feed the animals. This minimised potential hazards and contributed to keeping children safe. A parent told us, 'Shona has exposed our child to lots of interesting and different things, they are learning lots of concepts around boundaries and safety'.

Effective infection prevention and control measures were in place. For example, children washed their hands at the appropriate times and changed into indoor shoes after playing outside or visiting the farm animals. This helped to minimise the potential spread of infection. We saw one end of the kitchen had surfaces covered with paperwork, we asked the childminder to tidy and organise this area better, to ensure that their cleaning routines remained effective.

Children and family's personal information was kept confidential, as it was stored securely within the childminders home. We highlighted to the childminder best practice would be to become a member of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). This would help support her further in keeping children's digital images and information stored securely.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well.

The vision, values and aims of the service were shared with families before they started at the service. This meant that parents had clear expectations of what to expect from the childminder and the service they delivered.

At the previous inspection, we asked the childminder to review and update their policies and procedures in line with relevant best practice documents. The childminder had yet to action this and we found policies and procedures available were limited. The area for improvement made in relation to this will be continued. Further information can be found in section 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

Families told us they felt involved in the service, however, we found this was in an informal way. Children participated in mind maps and wrote lists to assist the childminder with ideas and plans for the summer holidays. However, there were no systems in place, to evaluate the quality of the service and identify areas for improvement. Expectations in relation to children's care and support in early learning and childcare are set out in the Health and Social Care Standards and the Care Inspectorate's: A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding, and school-aged childcare. These provide robust frameworks to support reflection and continuous improvement for childminder settings. While we acknowledged the childminder had made a start to using these frameworks this was still in the early stages.

We asked that they continue to consider these documents and the areas for improvement identified within this report to support their improvement journey (see area for improvement one).

The childminder engaged well with us throughout the inspection and were honest about the service they provided. To support them further with continuous improvement we signposted resources available on the Care Inspectorate Hub, including 'Self -evaluation for improvement- your guide'.

Areas for improvement

1. To improve outcomes for children, self-evaluation should be developed. The childminder should become familiar with best practice guidance and use this to support her to reflect and plan for continuous improvement, including gathering the views of families.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state; 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values

Children benefitted from the childminders warm and friendly manner which contributed to children feeling valued, loved, safe and secure. The childminder recognised the importance of partnership working. They were skilled at building strong relationships with families which created a welcoming and inclusive ethos within the service. A parent told us, 'Honestly, we think she is amazing, her patience is to be admired, she's very calm and accepts the children for who they are'.

The childminder had many years' experiences of childminding and running the local playgroup. They skilfully promoted manners, scaffolded the younger children's learning and sensitively diverted children's attention when needed. This told us they had a good understanding of the children in their care and how to meet their needs.

The childminder read emails and updates from the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) to keep her informed of developments within the sector. Additionally, they met with another local childminder to share practice, have professional discussions, and valued their support and positive working relationship.

The childminder had updated her core training since the last inspection including, First aid, Child protection and Food hygiene. This contributed to their knowledge aligning with current guidance and best practice. The childminder told us she had recently embarked on a degree course in early education and childcare. This demonstrated her commitment to children's overall wellbeing and improving outcomes. We were confident this course would help support the childminder with their ongoing improvement work and making positive changes to the service.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

The childminder should review the policies and procedures, which ensure that children are cared for in a safe and appropriate setting. Updated policies should be shared with parents.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that, "I use a service and organisation which are well led and managed". (HSCS 4.23).

This area for improvement was made on 17 April 2019.

Action taken since then

At the previous inspection, we asked the childminder to review and update their policies and procedures in line with relevant best practice documents. This is yet to be actioned.

We found that some aspects of the service provided would benefit from a policy and procedure to support practice. For example, there was no information to support healthy eating, or how children were learning positive and safe behaviours around the farm dogs when they were kept in the room next to the kitchen. We advised the childminder to review and update current policies and procedures and to continue to develop a range of policies and procedures to fully underpin the service they were providing. Additionally, this will provide clear information to families on what to expect from the running of the service.

This area for improvement has not been met and will remain within this report.

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	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	4 - Good

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.