

Alva Childminding Service

Child Minding

Alva

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 April 2025

Service provided by:
Sierra Sison

Service provider number:
SP2019990340

Service no:
CS2019372596

About the service

Alva Childminding Service is provided by Sierra Sison. The childminder's home is situated in the village of Alva and is close to local amenities. Children have access to the large sitting room and kitchen on the ground floor. The bathroom is on the upper floor. The fully enclosed garden is at the back of the property.

The service is registered to provide care for a maximum of six children at any one time under the age of 16, of whom no more than three are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Numbers are inclusive of the childminder's family.

Where a childminder is working together with an assistant they may care for a maximum of eight children up to 16 years of age, of whom no more than eight are under 12 years, of whom no more than five are not yet attending primary school and of whom no more than one is under 12 months. Minded children can only be cared for by persons named on the certificate. Maria Sison and Sean Callander are employed as assistants. The service works in partnership with Clackmannanshire Council to deliver funded places.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 17 April 2025 between 12:00 and 15:15. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. Feedback was given to the childminder on 17 April 2025.

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:

- spent time with the children using the service
- received feedback from two parents
- spoke with or received feedback from the assistants and the childminder
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- Children experienced nurturing, caring interactions that supported them to feel safe and secure.
- Children benefitted from a childminder that knew them very well as individuals.
- Children's creativity and problem solving were supported well by a range of resources and fun experiences.
- Children's choice was respected and valued.
- Children benefitted from a passionate childminder that was committed to improving the quality of care for children in their service.
- To minimise the risk of infection to children the childminder should ensure that all areas are free from clutter and easily cleaned.

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?	4 - Good
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 found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Quality Indicator 1.1 - Nurturing care and support

Children benefitted from warm, nurturing care and support. Positive relationships with the childminder supported children to feel safe and secure. One parent shared, "We as a family have a great relationship with Sierra. She is kind, understanding, great at communication and takes excellent care of our children." Another parent shared, "Sierra is very friendly and approachable and this makes it easy for us to communicate." This supported children and families to feel respected and valued.

Children's individual care and needs were supported by effective personal planning. Families told us that they felt involved in their child's care. Detailed reports were in place which highlighted children's progress and identified next steps in their learning or development. One parent shared, "Sierra invites us in to her house to attend progress meetings to discuss how the children are getting on with their learning." The childminder spoke confidently about children's likes, dislikes, interests and individual support. As a result, children experienced care which was tailored to their individual needs.

Mealtimes and food preparation were social experiences for children. The childminder shared that some children had recently shown an interest in cooking and baking. On the day of inspection, children were having fun as they baked biscuits with the childminder. They measured out the ingredients and followed the recipe together. Children spoke about this experience positively. This meant children were developing a positive relationship with food.

Quiet areas with low lighting promoted children's emotional well-being. The childminder was aware of safer sleeping practice and ensured that children had opportunities to rest throughout their day. Children's home routines, for example when they usually slept, were respected and valued in the childminder's home. As a result, children benefitted from a calm, relaxed environment.

Appropriate policies and procedures were in place to support the safe administration of medication and management of allergies. This meant that children's health was promoted as their medical needs were met.

We evaluated this quality indicator as good where several strengths impacted positively on children's outcomes and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.3 - Play and learning

Experiences were well considered for children's different ages and stages of development. The childminder used spaces and resources to ensure there was challenge for all children. Children were free to lead their own play and learning. They independently chose from resources available and toys which linked to their interests. Such as playing twister or climbing on the climbing frame outside. This supported children to remain engaged in their play.

The childminder knew children very well as individuals. They told us about their likes, dislikes, interests and individual next steps. Detailed reports were in place for children which reflected their learning and highlighted individual next steps in areas such as numeracy and literacy. As a result, children were making good progress in their learning.

The childminder demonstrated a good understanding of child development. Their practice was child-centred and responsive to the interests of children. For example, children told us that they liked to go out on walks. One child shared, "We go to the park, we went to feed the ducks, we go to soft play, I like the childminder's car, it has so many seats." This showed that children were carefully listened to and their individual voices and ideas were valued.

Children celebrated their achievements and were confident to share their learning with us. Approaches to planning were responsive to children's interests. A recent interest in insects was extended as the children collected ladybirds and tadpoles. They observed how they changed over time and shared these experiences with us. As a result, children were excited and happy to spend time in the childminder's home.

Children's learning and experiences were shown through individual learning journals and shared regularly with families on a private online platform. The childminder had spent time developing their approach to planning. We encouraged the childminder to continue to develop this to ensure that children's learning was regularly evaluated. This would further support children's progress.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 2.2 - Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from a homely, well considered learning environment. There were dedicated spaces which allowed children to choose from a wide variety of age appropriate resources, activities and books. Resources were well presented and supported children's developing curiosity and problem-solving skills. Children had opportunities to relax, sit at the table to draw, play gymnastics or go outside. The open plan space in the home meant that children's choice was respected and they had access to a range of experiences.

Children's wellbeing was promoted through regular access to outdoor play. Children had free flow access to a fully enclosed garden. This space had been thoughtfully developed to support children's developing skills. The childminder had focused on this area as an improvement priority. It had been rearranged and updated since the previous inspection. This meant that the space was more organised and thoughtfully presented to support children's play. When asked what the most positive aspect of their child's experience in the service was, one parent responded, "The outdoor learning opportunities and being part of Alva community." Another parent shared, "Making outside potions, playing in the park, climbing frame and the outside cooker in the garden." This showed children had a range of opportunities to explore outdoor play.

Children's understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe was promoted by opportunities to experience risk and play. For example, inside a space had been set up for children to practice gymnastics. One child spent time teaching other children what they had learned. The childminder and assistants extended this interest as they had added some gym equipment in the space for children to explore. One child showed us that they had learned to do a pull up while in the service. This meant spaces and resources in the service reflected children's current interest.

Some areas in the service were cluttered and not easily cleaned, for example, the kitchen or nappy change area. This meant that the risk to infection was increased. We asked the childminder to ensure that all spaces were easily cleaned and free from clutter. To ensure children's health and safety are promoted the childminder should ensure all spaces in these areas are cleaned and free from clutter. This would minimise the risk to spread of infection for children (**see area for improvement 1**).

Areas for improvement

1. To promote children's health and minimise the risk of infection, the childminder should ensure all surfaces in the kitchen and nappy change area are clutter free and easily cleaned.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.22).

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 3.1 - Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The childminder provided a warm and nurturing service, helping children feel safe and secure. Parents shared that they were regularly welcomed into the service. The childminder engaged with families through informal conversations at drop off and pick up times, a closed social media group and parent evenings. This supported families to feel part of the service.

Effective self-evaluation highlighted the improvements that had been made in the setting and the impact this had on outcomes for children. The childminder had put an action plan in place since the previous inspection to address the outstanding areas for improvement. They had recently further developed the outdoor space and enhanced personal planning to improve the quality of experiences for children. As a result, children experienced sustained improvements which were meaningful.

The childminder used a variety of methods to evaluate the quality of care that children received in their service. For example, they kept a journal with reflections on their own practice. They used these regular reflections to identify areas of practice to further develop and celebrate strengths. As a result, children benefitted from a childminder whose practice continually improved over time.

The childminder had robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that they were working within their registration conditions. They kept up to date registers of children and had added an assistant to their registration. As a result, children's experiences and safety was promoted.

The childminder had made appropriate notifications to the Care Inspectorate when new assistants had started in their role. We asked the service to ensure that all assistants had undergone safe recruitment procedures. For example, to ensure that assistants had two references in place. The childminder took action and obtained the appropriate references following feedback. To ensure children benefit from safely and appropriately recruited assistants, the childminder should ensure that all assistants have two references prior to beginning employment in the service (**see area for improvement 1**).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure that children benefit from safely and appropriately recruited assistants, the childminder should ensure that two references are obtained prior to beginning employment in the service.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited' (HSCS 4.24).

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

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

Quality Indicator 4.3 - Staff deployment

The childminder understood the importance of strong connections with children and their families. When asked what the most positive aspect of the service was, one parent shared, "The friendly approachable nature of Sierra." This showed the childminder's kind and nurturing approach ensured that children felt safe and valued.

Children experienced warmth and kindness in the responsive interactions with the childminder and assistants. This enabled them to feel valued and secure as positive relationships had been established. Spontaneous cuddles, smiles and laughter received from children throughout the inspection clearly demonstrated their attachments with the childminder and assistants. One child shared, "She is the best childminder in the whole world".

The effective deployment of the assistants and childminder across the service meant that the right number of staff were meeting children's individual needs, consistently throughout the day. The assistants and childminder were proactive in recognising any gaps and ensuring effective supervision and quality engagement with children. This included during busier times such as at lunch. The childminder ensured effective supervision and quality engagements as staff would deploy themselves across the open planned space to ensure good supervision.

Children benefitted from assistants which were clear in their role and how they would support children. The childminder had written and reviewed clear expectations of assistants to ensure children experienced quality care. They have reviewed policies and procedures and spoke confidently about child protection procedures. We asked the childminder to further consider training for assistants to ensure they have relevant up to date knowledge and skills of how to support children's care and experiences. To ensure that children benefit from a knowledgeable and skills staff, the childminder should ensure that assistants access regular training **(see area for improvement 1)**.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure that children benefit from a knowledgeable and skilled staff, the childminder should ensure that assistants access training regularly.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

With immediate effect, the childminder must ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children is maintained by delivering their service within the constraints of the conditions of registration as stated on the service certificate of registration.

This is in order to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

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

This requirement was made on 10 October 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

The childminder had robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that they were working within their registration conditions. They kept up to date registers of children and had added an assistant to their registration. As a result, children's experiences and safety was promoted.

Met - within timescales

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

To help improve outcomes for children, the childminder should further develop the use of children's personal plans so that information about how children are supported, their achievements and next steps are included. Plans should be formally reviewed at least once every six months.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS), which state that: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

This area for improvement was made on 10 October 2024.

Action taken since then

Children's individual care and needs were supported by effective personal planning. Detailed reports were in place which highlighted children's progress and identified next steps in their learning or development. The childminder spoke confidently about children's likes, dislikes, interests and any individual support required. As a result, children experienced care which was tailored to their individual needs. Therefore, this area for improvement has been met.

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	5 - Very 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?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good

How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

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