

Smith, Shona Child Minding

Falkirk

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
27 June 2025

Service provided by:
Shona McGill

Service provider number:
SP2003908292

Service no:
CS2003014040

About the service

Shona Smith provides a childminding service from their semi-detached house, in Carronshore, Falkirk. The childminder is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of eight children at any one time under the age of 16. Numbers are inclusive of children of the childminders family.

The service is close to local amenities, school and parks. Children are cared for downstairs and have access to the kitchen, living room and toilet. Children also have access to an enclosed garden to the rear of the property.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 26 June 2025 between 12:30 and 14:15. 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, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- observed two minded children present
- received feedback from four families from our online questionnaire
- spoke with the childminder
- observed practice
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children experienced kind, caring and nurturing interactions from the childminder and had established very strong attachments with the childminder.
- Children benefitted from a service that was homely, warm, and welcoming.
- The positive relationships formed with families supported effective partnership working to meet children's individual needs.
- Self-evaluation and quality assurance processes had supported the childminder to reflect in a focussed and meaningful way.
- A variety of training and professional development had been completed which promoted positive outcomes for children.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality key question as very good.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced kind, caring, and nurturing interactions from the childminder, who engaged with them in a respectful manner. These positive interactions helped children feel safe and valued, contributing significantly to their overall wellbeing and happiness. The children had developed strong, trusting relationships with the childminder and confidently sought comfort and reassurance from her when needed. We observed that warmth, affection, and emotional support were readily provided, creating an environment where children felt nurtured and secure. Parents comments include, 'Shona is kind, caring, compassionate and understanding. All the qualities you look for in someone taking care of your child'.

On the day of the inspection, two minded children were present. Both appeared happy, settled, and relaxed in the childminder's care. Her warm and attentive approach supported the development of strong emotional attachments, allowing the children to feel loved, confident, and secure in her presence.

The childminder knew children and their families very well and described positive, trusting relationships with them. A range of effective communication methods were used to ensure parents were involved in their child's care, including daily discussions and WhatsApp updates. This ensured good links between the childminder and home, which supported a continuity of care. Parents told us that communication was very good and one parent told us, 'Shona is the most approachable person. She makes us feel at ease knowing that [child] is there and communicates about everything on a daily basis when their in her care. No question is to much for us to ask'.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the childminder's knowledge and understanding of their needs. The childminder spoke confidently about individual children's needs and strategies they used to support them. For example, supporting potty training, and supporting children gross motor development. The childminder worked closely with parents to ensure children's routines and preferences were consistent with home. Six monthly reviews were carried out to ensure the children's care and support was right for them

No children required medication at the time of the inspection. The childminder had a medication policy and procedure in place which was in line with Care Inspectorate's best practice guidance 'Management of Medication in Day care and Childminding Services'. This meant that should children require medication; the childminder was well placed to administer medication safely.

Children were safe and protected as a result of the childminder's understanding of what to do if they had concerns about a child's health, safety or wellbeing. This contributed to keeping children safe and healthy.

1.3 Play and learning

Children experienced a balance of planned and spontaneous play. They had fun and actively engaged in play within the childminder's home. The childminder supported children to extend their play and learning through questioning and interactions. On the day of the inspection, we saw the childminder facilitating appropriate conversations which supported the development of skills in early language, literacy and numeracy. Parents comments include, 'Shona provides a range of experiences for all the children daily, I'm shown pictures of what [child] has been up to daily'.

Children were able to choose from toys and materials that suited their interests. They were able to access these independently which enabled them to make choices and lead their play. There were some loose parts available for children to explore and investigate. This meant they were able to use their imagination and inspire curiosity. As a result, children were engaged in their play.

Children's interests were extended by using community resources. Going to local parks and woods meant they benefitted from exploring their abilities and the natural environment. In addition to this, the childminder organised a variety of play experiences in a nearby hall. This included arts and crafts, sensory play experiences and active play. This enhanced opportunities for play and learning through strong connections to the children's own and wider communities.

Discussions with the childminder highlighted that they had a good understanding of child development and used their knowledge to recognise children's achievements and identify where children required support. The childminder used tracking tools to document children's achievements and to help with planning activities. This allowed the childminder to provide interesting experiences and help children to progress.

How good is our setting?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality key question as very good.

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children benefitted from a service that was homely, warm, and welcoming. The childminders home was clean, tidy and well-furnished. There was ample space for children to play, rest and explore. This demonstrated to children that they were valued. One parent commented, 'Shona provides a safe, warm, caring home'.

Spaces accessed by children were well organised. Children moved around the space with ease. Children's choice and interests were promoted through safe and easy access to resources and materials such as books and toys. This meant that children were able to make choices and lead their play. Since the previous inspection, the childminder had created sensory and treasure boxes. These provided play experiences that supported children's imagination, curiosity and creativity.

Infection prevention and control procedures reflected current best practice. Children were encouraged to wash their hands at key times of the day, further reducing the risk of spread of infection.

The childminder understood the importance of keeping children's personal information secure. They had well organised record-keeping which supported their ability to uphold confidentiality and manage information responsibly.

How good is our leadership?**5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality key question as very good.

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The vision, values and aims reflected the service and were shared with families. This supported them to have clear expectations around how their child's needs would be met in the setting. Some parents commented, 'Shona is a credit to the child minding service', and, 'We are incredibly grateful to have Shona in our lives'.

The positive relationships formed with families supported effective partnership working to meet children's individual needs. A range of communication supported information sharing, which included message updates and questionnaires. The childminder used informal daily discussion, to ensure that children and their families could be consulted on the day-to-day running of the service. The childminder ensured that parents were involved from the outset and through the settling in period. Policies and procedures were shared at enrolment and the childminder was willing to respond to ideas and suggestions if highlighted by parents. This provided families the opportunity to influence the care and experiences their child received. All parents who responded to our questionnaire strongly agreed that they were involved in meaningful way to help develop the service.

Self-evaluation and quality assurance processes had supported the childminder to reflect on their progress since the previous inspection in a focussed and meaningful way. As a result they were able to identify strengths and areas for improvement to ensure that actions were taken to improve outcomes for children and families. The childminder's reflective approach supported continuous improvement. The childminder should continue to develop quality assurance and self-evaluation processes to support sustained and continuous improvement.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality key question as very good.

4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values

During the inspection, we observed the childminder engaging in kind and nurturing interactions with the children. This approach contributed to a caring and supportive atmosphere in which children felt loved and secure. The children responded positively to the childminder's support and were given appropriate time to listen and respond to instructions, promoting their confidence and independence.

Support and feedback from the last inspection was used constructively to develop and improve practice. For example, the childminder had developed clear personal planning for children and implemented effective quality assurance processes to support ongoing improvements. Children benefitted from the childminder's commitment and motivation to learn. They were able to confidently discuss the impact the training had on their practice and how this supported high quality experiences for children. They stayed well-informed through regular updates from the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and the Care Inspectorate.

The childminder linked with other local childminders, which helped promote professional discussion of new guidance, challenges and practice sharing, as well as giving children further social opportunities within the local community. This encouraged them to reflect on their service and supported them to further develop and enhance children's experiences.

The childminder had a very good understanding of her professional responsibilities. She worked within the conditions of her registration and ensured children's safety through appropriate measures, including maintaining insurance, keeping daily attendance registers, and ensuring the premises remained safe and well-maintained.

The childminder had created a warm and welcoming ethos within the service. Parents valued the childminders supportive manner and, as a result, were able to share information and give feedback daily. This approach enabled responsive care that considered children and families changing needs. Parents commented, 'Shona has been our childminder for 14 years and it's like home from home. We have great communication and I've trusted Shona completely' and, 'Always welcome in Shona's, she has an open door policy and is always welcoming if you want to discuss anything'.

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 ensure children are supported to reach their full potential, the childminder should develop personal planning which captures children's developmental progress and identify next steps in learning. This is to ensure that children's needs are planned and met. To achieve this, plans should include, but not limited to:

- set out how children's needs will be met
- record how children have progressed
- be put in place within 28 days of a child starting at the service
- be reviewed every six months or more often if the child's needs change
- be shared and updated with children, parents and carers.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that; 'as child, 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 5 November 2024.

Action taken since then

To effectively meet children's individual needs and support their wellbeing, children's personal plans had been reviewed and developed.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support children's health and wellbeing, the childminder should ensure that effective infection prevention and control practices are in place. This should include but not limited to:

- ensuring effective hand washing routines are implemented and established for all children
- ensuring personal protective equipment is used effectively during nappy changing.

This is to ensure that infection prevention and control practices are consistent with the Public Health Scotland document: Health protection in children and young people settings, including education (2024).

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).

This area for improvement was made on 5 November 2024.

Action taken since then

The childminder was knowledgeable of 'Health protection in children and young people settings, including education' guidance' and effectively implemented this into their practice. This ensured children experienced appropriate effective infection, prevention and control measures.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To improve outcomes for children, quality assurance, including self-evaluation should be developed. The childminder should become familiar with best practice guidance and use this to reflect on the service and plan for continuous improvement.

This is to ensure that care and support is in line with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes" (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 5 November 2024.

Action taken since then

Since the last inspection, effective quality assurance processes had been developed. As a result, focussed and meaningful systems for the childminder to review and monitor various aspects of the service were now in place. Self-evaluation had been had been developed and the childminder was beginning to use this effectively to improve practice. This meant that areas for improvement were identified, shared and actions were taken to make positive changes to children's experiences.

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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good

How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.1 Staff skills, knowledge and values	5 - Very Good

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