

Care service inspection report

Firsthand Child Care Agency

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Inspected by: Emma Tracey

Type of inspection: Announced (Short Notice)

Inspection completed on: 8 January 2014



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Service provided by:

Firsthand

Service provider number:

SP2003003714

Care service number:

CS2004080017

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Summary

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection following other regulatory activity. For example, if we have to take enforcement action to make the service improve, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

We gave the service these grades

Quality of Care and Support	6	Excellent
Quality of Staffing	6	Excellent
Quality of Management and Leadership	6	Excellent

What the service does well

Firsthand provides a home based sitter service tailored to meet the individual needs of the children and families they work with. Feedback from children, parents and staff is very positive.

What the service could do better

Firsthand should now write a medication policy and develop a procedure for the administration of medication.

What the service has done since the last inspection

Since the last inspection Firsthand has improved on the way they gain feedback from parents and inform them of any action they intend to take as a result of this feedback.

Conclusion

Firsthand provides a unique service which offers a valuable service to children and their families.

Who did this inspection

Emma Tracey

1 About the service we inspected

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Information about all care services is available on our website at www.careinspectorate.com.

This service was previously registered with the Care Commission and transferred its registration to the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

Requirements and recommendations

If we are concerned about some aspect of a service, or think it could do more to improve its service, we may make a recommendation or requirement.

- A recommendation is a statement that sets out actions the care service provider should take to improve or develop the quality of the service but where failure to do so will not directly result in enforcement.

- A requirement is a statement which sets out what is required of a care service to comply with the Public Services Reforms (Scotland) Act 2010 and Regulations or Orders made under the Act, or a condition of registration. Where there are breaches of the Regulations, Orders or conditions, a requirement must be made. Requirements are legally enforceable at the discretion of the Inspectorate.

Firsthand is a Child Care Agency which offers regular respite to lone parent families and families with children with a disability. Firsthand offers respite in the family's home.

Firsthand is a registered charity and received funding to operate the service.

Firsthand's conditions of registration are:

1. Facilities to be provided: The introduction or supply of child carers.
2. Operating hours: Flexible hours of operation will be in place. The service will not operate an overnight service.
3. Staffing: The agency is responsible for ensuring that staff have the necessary skills and experience for the work that they are to perform and are vetted in accordance with regulatory requirements.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

Quality of Care and Support - Grade 6 - Excellent

Quality of Staffing - Grade 6 - Excellent

Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 6 - Excellent

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change following other regulatory activity. You can find the most up-to-date grades for this service by visiting our website www.careinspectorate.com or by calling us on 0845 600 9527 or visiting one of our offices.

2 How we inspected this service

The level of inspection we carried out

In this service we carried out a medium intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections where we have assessed the service may need a more intense inspection.

What we did during the inspection

We wrote this report following a short notice announced inspection. The inspection was carried out by Care Inspectorate inspector Emma Tracey. The inspection took place on Wednesday 8 January 2014.

As part of the inspection we took account of the completed annual return and self assessment forms that we asked the provider to complete and submit to us.

We issued twelve questionnaires to the service to give to staff and volunteers before the inspection. Six completed questionnaires were returned to us prior to the inspection.

During this inspection we gathered evidence from various sources, including the relevant sections of policies, procedures and records. This included:

- Paperwork completed for sits before they started,
- Completed accident and incident forms,
- Feedback from parents,
- Feedback from children,
- Staff files,
- Children's and families files,
- Record of complaints,
- Returned questionnaires from staff,

We also spoke with the director and a sitter co-ordinator.

Grading the service against quality themes and statements

We inspect and grade elements of care that we call 'quality themes'. For example, one of the quality themes we might look at is 'Quality of care and support'. Under each quality theme are 'quality statements' which describe what a service should be doing well for that theme. We grade how the service performs against the quality themes and statements.

Details of what we found are in Section 3: The inspection

Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)

In any year we may decide on specific aspects of care to focus on during our inspections. These are extra checks we make on top of all the normal ones we make during inspection. We do this to gather information about the quality of these aspects of care on a national basis. Where we have examined an inspection focus area we will clearly identify it under the relevant quality statement.

Fire safety issues

We do not regulate fire safety. Local fire and rescue services are responsible for checking services. However, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant fire and rescue services so they may consider what action to take. You can find out more about care services' responsibilities for fire safety at www.firelawscotland.org

The annual return

Every year all care services must complete an 'annual return' form to make sure the information we hold is up to date. We also use annual returns to decide how we will inspect the service.

Annual Return Received: Yes - Electronic

Comments on Self Assessment

Every year all care services must complete a 'self assessment' form telling us how their service is performing. We check to make sure this assessment is accurate.

Care Inspectorate received a fully completed self assessment document from the director. We were satisfied with the way the service she had completed this and with the relevant information she had given us for each of the headings that we grade them under. The director identified what they thought they did well, some areas for development and any changes they had planned.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

Due to the nature of the service we did not speak with any of the children who used the service. We saw from feedback to the service, that children said that they enjoyed using the service.

Taking carers' views into account

We did not speak with any carers, but saw from feedback to the service that they were happy with the service they had received or were receiving.

3 The inspection

We looked at how the service performs against the following quality themes and statements. Here are the details of what we found.

Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.

Service strengths

Firsthand worked with families who had been referred or self referred to assess what their needs were. This included home visits made by a sitter co-ordinator to discuss with parents their needs and the needs of their child.

Thereafter families were issued with two review forms whilst they were using the sitter service and were visited by the sitter co-ordinator. This helped to ensure that the needs of the families were being met.

Telephone reviews were also carried out with families. We saw that all conversations were clearly documented and any issues raised were dealt with.

Towards the end of the service the family was asked to complete an "end of sit" questionnaire. This gave the service feedback about the experience of families.

There was an age appropriate questionnaire for children to complete about their experience of the service. The questionnaire asked children "if you were in charge is there anything that you would change?". We saw that responses from children were very positive about their experiences and that they had enjoyed their time with the sitter.

The director told us that they were in the process of updating their website and Facebook page. The Facebook page gave information about the Annual general Meeting and staff training.

A review of an evaluation carried out in June 2013 showed that the quality of care and support was rated excellent by 91% of users.

Feedback from parents stated:

- "We hope that more families will benefit from your service. Thank you for the wonderful service we received".
- "A family based service is much more accessible and flexible in terms of being able to change dates and times to suit my families circumstances".

Areas for improvement

We discussed with the director that it would be useful for them to have a policy about Facebook which clearly told staff, volunteers and service users what was acceptable to post and what was not. The director agreed that this was a good idea and said that she would write a policy for Facebook.

The director told us that they had tried to hold forums for service users but people had not attended. As they offer a sitter service, it was obviously difficult for parents to find care for their child. We discussed that there were many ways for people to participate and they did not need to hold forums if it did not suit the service user.

In their self assessment, areas for improvement included, developing online processes for families who prefer to engage in that way. They were in the process of having their website updated and had introduced Facebook to share information with families.

The director should continue to monitor and maintain the excellent opportunities for service users to participate in assessing the quality of care and support offered. The director should ensure that she is rigorous in identifying any areas for improvement and implementing action plans to address these.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 3

We ensure that service users' health and wellbeing needs are met.

Service strengths

Parents were given information about the service prior to using it so that they would know what to expect from the service. As well as offering the sitter service, sitters worked with parents to offer support for example, providing boundaries for children,

providing information on child development and other services where support was available.

An initial assessment visit was carried out by the sitter co-ordinator, who visited the family at home to assess their needs. This allowed them to match the family with a sitter who had the necessary skills, training and experience to meet the child's needs. Information about the child was collected at this time, this included medical information, likes and dislikes, behaviour, any thing that makes the child anxious and what calmed them down.

A home safety check was carried out at this time. If parents wished the placement to go ahead, an agreement was developed. The agreement clearly stated what the sitter would do and what the parents responsibility was.

Where appropriate for the child's needs a care plan was compiled. This was to ensure that the sitter was aware of the child's needs and how to meet them.

Firsthand worked with statutory and voluntary organisations to support families. The sitter co-ordinator and sitter attended child planning meetings with the family. Depending upon the outcome of the meetings, Firsthand offered additional sits to support families.

We saw that sitters had recorded any accidents, incidents, when medication was administered and completed care plans where necessary. All staff completed 'records of sits'. This meant that there was complete information about the child on record. This helped to ensure the child's needs were monitored and met.

Parents who completed evaluation questionnaires described benefits to their child or children as:

- "attention from another adult"
- "improved behaviour"
- "the worker provides a good role model"
- "better relationships with siblings".

Areas for improvement

Permission was sought from parents for sitters to administer medication and sitters recorded when they gave medication to a child. We suggested to the director that they write a Medication policy so that parents and sitters are aware of what their responsibilities are. We also suggested that they ask parents to sign to acknowledge that they have been told that medication was given to their child. The director agreed that this was a good idea and said that she would do this. We signposted her to the

'Management of medication in day care and childminding settings" available on the Care Inspectorate website.

The director should continue to monitor and maintain the excellent processes to ensure that children and families health and well-being needs are met. The director should ensure that she is rigorous in identifying any areas for improvement and implementing action plans to address these.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.

Service strengths

Evidence in theme one, statement one also applies to this statement.

Parents had an opportunity to meet the sitter before they started with their child. Parents could decide if they wanted that sitter to work with their family. Parents had opportunities to give feedback about sitters throughout the placement.

Areas for improvement

The director should continue to monitor and maintain the excellent opportunities for service users to participate in assessing the quality of staffing. The director should ensure that she is rigorous in identifying any areas for improvement and implementing action plans to address these.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 3

We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice.

Service strengths

Firsthand employed both paid members of staff and volunteers. We sampled staff files and saw that a recruitment process had been carried out with all staff and volunteers. This included an application form, record of interview, two written references and a completed Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme membership.

In depth induction training was carried out, over three days. The induction included emergency first aid, child protection, infection control and food hygiene. A sitter co-ordinator whom we spoke with told us that the Scottish Social Services Codes(SSSC) of Conduct were discussed in-depth, as was the lone working policy, risk

assessments, note taking and service user involvement. In addition, family specific training was offered to staff, for example epilepsy and autism awareness.

Staff and volunteers had a wide range of qualifications and experience relevant to the role of working with children and families.

Sitter meetings were held for all staff and volunteers, three to four times a year. Staff were asked to contribute ideas for discussion at these meetings.

Staff were supported through telephone, email and one to one discussions. Each sitter had a supervisor whom they could contact at any time for support. We saw from files that staff were well supported and had opportunities to discuss any issues they had.

Staff and volunteer exit interviews were carried out. These asked the reasons for leaving and for suggestions to improve the experience for them. Comments included:

- "Firsthand provide an invaluable service and I am very proud to have been part of the organisation".
- "The training and support from my supervisor was very good."

In the staff questionnaires returned to us, all staff agreed that they had been offered opportunities to access training. Additional comments included:

- "I feel really supported in my role, I thoroughly enjoy going to every sit. There is always someone at the end of a phone if I need support or have a question about something."

Areas for improvement

The director told us that they were trying to organise more opportunities for sitters to meet. This had been difficult due to the commitments of staff and volunteers.

The director should continue to monitor and maintain the excellent recruitment processes currently in place. The director should ensure that she is rigorous in identifying any areas for improvement and implementing action plans to address these.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the management and leadership of the service.

Service strengths

Evidence in theme one, statement one also applies to this statement.

Parents had an opportunity to assess and comment on the management and leadership of the service through questionnaires, attending and voting at the Annual general meeting (AGM) and being a member of the board.

Areas for improvement

The director should continue to monitor and maintain the excellent opportunities for service users to participate and assess the quality of management and leadership. The director should ensure that she is rigorous in identifying any areas for improvement and implementing action plans to address these.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 4

We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide

Service strengths

Firsthand had many processes which involved service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of the service provided.

Firsthand was reliant on funding to provide its service. The director was constantly assessing the service provided to ensure that quality was maintained. Effective processes were in place to ensure that feedback from stakeholders was used in a constructive and meaningful manner, improving outcomes for children and families.

Feedback from families was gained through questionnaires, evaluations and co-ordinator visits to families. The service used this feedback to make improvements, where possible.

The management committee had an ex volunteer and an ex service user on board. This meant that people who had used the service and worked in the service could influence how it was managed based upon their experiences.

An Annual General Meeting was held which all service users were invited to. All service users could vote at the AGM, this meant that they could influence the management of the service.

Staff and families using the service were aware of the complaints policy. There was evidence that the director investigated complaints thoroughly and this had led to improvements for people using the service.

Firsthand asked referrers for feedback on the service provided. Referrers included Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), health visitors, social work department, City of Edinburgh Council. Feedback from referrers rated Firsthand as excellent for:

- meeting the needs of the child/children
- meeting the needs of the parent/carer
- meeting the needs of the family as a whole
- the quality of the care and support provided.

Areas for improvement

We discussed with the director that they should consider carrying out unannounced spot checks on sitters whilst they were working in the family home. This would enhance the existing excellent practice in quality assurance and allow managers to satisfy themselves that staff were working to a high standard.

The director should continue to monitor and maintain the excellent quality assurance processes currently in place. The director should ensure that she is rigorous in identifying any areas for improvement and implementing action plans to address these.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

4 Other information

Complaints

No complaints have been upheld, or partially upheld, since the last inspection.

Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service since the last inspection.

Additional Information

Firsthand provides a unique person centred service. They are reliant on funding to provide this service.

Action Plan

Failure to submit an appropriate action plan within the required timescale, including any agreed extension, where requirements and recommendations have been made, will result in the Care Inspectorate re-grading a Quality Statement within the Quality of Management and Leadership Theme (or for childminders, Quality of Staffing Theme) as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme being re-graded as unsatisfactory (1).

5 Summary of grades

Quality of Care and Support - 6 - Excellent	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 3	6 - Excellent
Quality of Staffing - 6 - Excellent	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 3	6 - Excellent
Quality of Management and Leadership - 6 - Excellent	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 4	6 - Excellent

6 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
1 Mar 2011	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support 6 - Excellent Staffing Not Assessed Management and Leadership Not Assessed
26 Mar 2009	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very Good Staffing 5 - Very Good Management and Leadership 5 - Very Good

All inspections and grades before 1 April 2011 are those reported by the former regulator of care services, the Care Commission.

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