

Flexible Childcare Services (Aberdeenshire) – Mobile Creche Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

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Service provided by:
Flexible Childcare Services Scotland
SCIO

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About the service

Flexible Childcare Services (Aberdeenshire) - Mobile Creche provides a day care of children service located from different locations across Aberdeenshire. We inspected services for two year olds accommodated within Dales Park School Nursery, Peterhead and Hill of Banchory School Nursery, Banchory. The service is registered to provide an early learning and childcare service (mobile creche) to a maximum number of children as defined by the available space. Records of the space ratios must be retained by the provider. During operating times, the service is permitted to operate from a variety of premises. Written risk assessments will be completed by staff and retained by the provider.

Adult:child ratios will be:

- under 2s - 1:3
- under 3s - 1:5
- 3 and over - 1:8 if the children attend more than four hours per day or 1:10 if the children attend for less than four hours per day.

The manager is also the manager of Flexible Childcare Services (Aberdeenshire) Sitter Service.

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 30 May 2022 and 8 June 2022. One inspector carried out the inspection. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- gathered views from two parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily routines
- reviewed documents.

What people told us

We were provided with comments from two parents. Overall, they were supportive of the service and told us their children enjoyed attending.

Self assessment

The service had not been asked to complete a self assessment in advance of the inspection. We considered their own improvement plans and quality assurance processes. These demonstrated their priorities for development and how they were monitoring the quality of the provision within the service.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	3 - Adequate
Quality of environment	2 - Weak
Quality of staffing	3 - Adequate

Quality of care and support

Findings from the inspection

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

Nurturing care to meet children's individual needs was inconsistent. Most children appeared settled and comfortable with staff and they were provided with cuddles and kind voices if they were distressed or upset. We observed some lovely interactions when children enjoyed the individual attention of a staff member who supported them with their personal care. Some staff did not always pick up on children's cues for help or support, compromising children's emotional security, overall wellbeing, and self esteem. Staff did not always notice or help children to wipe their nose, increasing the chance of infection and potentially causing sore and rubbed skin. Some staff struggled with reinforcing positive behaviour and in helping children to understand their emotions. We suggested staff were provided with training to develop their skills in promoting positive behaviour and the manager agreed to take this forward.

Children with additional support needs were provided with inconsistent care. Staff who worked regularly with the children provided them with loving care and children responded with laughs and giggles. At other times, children were supported by less experienced staff who were less familiar with their needs, personalities, and preferences. This meant children were not always fully engaged and happy. Visual aids were not used consistently to support transitions and resulted in some children becoming distressed and upset at key times during the day (**see recommendation 1**).

Children's personal plans contained relevant information to inform staff about children's needs. However, the recording of information was inconsistent and some relevant information was not clear or easy to find. We discussed adding a separate support plan for those children who need it, with small steps for progression and clear strategies with space to add any evaluations of progress made. The manager agreed to take this forward.

Children enjoyed eating a healthy lunch in an unhurried and relaxed manner. However, the routine and preparation leading up to lunch was noisy and poorly organised. Handwashing between courses did not support good infection control practices. We suggested using smaller jugs and providing opportunities during play for children to practice pouring water. This will help to reduce the number of spillages, improving the lunchtime environment for children.

Children were protected by staff who were knowledgeable and confident in using safeguarding procedures and in the safe administration of medication. Significant events in a child's life were recorded in a chronology but it was not always clear where action had been taken. We discussed improving the recording of information in the chronology to ensure children and families receive the support they need.

Children's learning and development was not fully supported. Some children were bored and not engaged in the activities on offer. There were limited observations of the children at play and these were not used to inform planning. The manager discussed that staff were not confident in learning, teaching, and assessment and that training from Aberdeenshire Council was ongoing.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. To help children experience warmth, caring, and nurturing approaches across the day, the provider and manager should ensure children are supported by familiar staff who know their needs well and are responsive in their care.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

Grade: 3 - adequate

Quality of environment

Findings from the inspection

We made an evaluation of weak for this theme. Whilst we identified some strengths, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

The creche service is provided from various locations in the Aberdeenshire area. We inspected the two groups accommodated within Dales Park School Nursery, Peterhead and Hill of Banchory School Nursery, Banchory. The risk assessments completed as part of the registration of the service were not robust and compromised the experience and safety of the children attending (**see requirement 1**).

The nursery environment did not support children's independence and safety. The outdoor resource trolley was stored in the playroom while the children were playing, creating a safety hazard and risk to children. The sliding doors between playrooms were not always effective to keep children safe and secure. This meant some children were able to leave the playroom and enter the main nursery building, increasing their risk of harm (**see requirement 1**).

Children were unable to explore, investigate, and be creative in a spacious, well set out playroom. Large pieces of furniture dominated the room and some areas were not attractive or well used. There were limited resources available for the children to access and there were no natural materials for sensory development. There were not enough real-life resources in the home corner for young children to play and learn through familiar situations. There were not enough opportunities for children to be creative and the cluttered water tray limited the opportunities for pouring and filling containers. There were not enough cosy spaces for staff to read stories and provide the children with cuddles and warmth (**see recommendation 1**).

Children were not provided with enough opportunities or resources to stimulate and engage children when playing outside. The service took immediate action and introduced more meaningful outdoor play during inspection.

The toilet used by the group did not support the needs of the children. The children were taken individually by a member of staff which did not support children's independence or those toilet training. Staff did not follow best practice infection prevention and control procedures when nappy changing or when supporting children with their personal care. This was actioned immediately during inspection.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 1

1. By Monday 4 July 2022, the provider and manager must ensure the nursery environment supports children's safety, health, and wellbeing. To do this, the provider must at a minimum, ensure the environment is fully risk assessed and meets the needs of the children attending.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) and 10(1) (Fitness of premises) 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 have enough physical space to meet my needs and wishes' (HSCS 5.22).

The guidance 'Space to Grow' should be accessed to support this. Available at: <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/space-to-grow/>.

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. To support children to achieve and progress, the manager and staff should ensure the environment is well planned and resourced to promote positive learning experiences and opportunities for independent safe play.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning, and creativity' (HSCS 2.27).

Grade: 2 - weak

Quality of staffing

Findings from the inspection

We evaluated this theme as adequate, where strengths only just out weighed weaknesses.

Staff were pleasant and spoke kindly to the children. They knew the children's needs well and children seemed at ease with them. The staff team were mainly consistent but worked different patterns over the five days and did not always see each other to pass on important information about the children attending.

We suggested introducing communication notes between colleagues to ensure everyone was fully informed about children's progress and achievements.

Parents spoke positively about staff and told us they found them helpful and approachable. Opportunities were available for parents and carers to speak to staff at pick-up and drop-off times, supporting working together to meet children's needs. However, some staff were not always considerate of confidentiality and the quality of information given to parents was inconsistent across team members.

Staff interactions with the children were inconsistent. Some staff modelled good practice and supported the children well; others did not always pick up cues from the children that they needed help and support. Some staff did not get down to the children's level and play games. Some staff were not confident in understanding the development of two year olds and using this to promote positive behaviour. Action was taken immediately by the manager and staff interactions improved during inspection.

Staff have undertaken online training to develop their knowledge and skills in keeping children safe and well. This impacted positively on staff's understanding of protecting children and first aid. Most staff were confident in infection prevention and control practices. Some staff spoke about other training opportunities, such as schema training, but this was not evident in their practice. One member of staff used visual aids well to aid communication with children but this was not consistent across the staff team. Training in learning, teaching, and assessment was ongoing and supported by Aberdeenshire Council (**see recommendation 1**).

Staff had an awareness of 'Realising the Ambition' and 'A Quality Framework for Daycare of Children, Childminding, and School Aged Children' but were not able to discuss these as guidance to support their practice. The manager should ensure all staff are encouraged and supported to use these documents to support self evaluation of the service. These can be found at: <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/>.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. To ensure children receive high quality early learning and childcare, are kept safe, and their wellbeing needs are met, the provider and manager should ensure staff are effectively supported to develop the skills and knowledge needed for their role.

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

Grade: 3 - adequate

Quality of management and leadership

Findings from the inspection

We made an evaluation of weak for this key question. Whilst we identified some strengths, these were compromised by significant weaknesses.

The manager was new to the service and was in the early stages of developing their role and responsibilities. They regularly visited the service and used this as an opportunity to build relationships with staff. Some staff told us they felt supported by the manager and that they were approachable and friendly. A few staff felt they were not given the help they needed to improve their practice. They told us they found online training difficult and did not feel they were adequately supported to develop their knowledge and understanding. Group support and supervision sessions had been recently introduced at the Peterhead setting and a meeting had taken place to share information and discuss areas for service improvement. This approach should be embedded into practice with regular planned staff meetings. This will help staff grow in confidence and feel happy and valued (**see recommendation 1**).

At times, the day-to-day running of the service was not supportive of children's needs. Senior staff did not always model best practice when supporting children and staff were not always provided with the encouragement and help they needed. This contributed to inconsistent care and poor outcomes for children (**recommendation 1**).

Quality assurance systems were not effective to identify poor outcomes for children. The risk assessment for the building had not been completed to a high standard, the environment did not meet children's individual needs, and the quality of the information recorded in children's personal plans had not been checked and assessed. Observations of staff practice were not used effectively to ensure children's needs were met (**see requirement 1**).

The manager had been supported by Aberdeenshire Council to develop the service and make improvements. Together with Aberdeenshire Council, they used self evaluation to identify where improvement could be made and used these to form an improvement plan. This had not yet impacted on service provision and good outcomes for children.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 1

1. By 4 July 2022, the provider and manager should undertake robust and meaningful quality assurance procedures and ensure they are effective and lead to improvements. This should include, but not be restricted to, developing a quality assurance calendar.

This is 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 benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. To ensure children receive high quality early learning and childcare, are kept safe, and their wellbeing needs are met, the provider should ensure that the service is well led by a competent and skilled manager and senior staff. To do this, the provider must ensure the manager develops their skills in leadership, promotes smooth day-to-day running of the service, and makes improvements to the quality of children's experiences.

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).

The Scottish Social Services Council's (SSSC) 'Step into Leadership' resources should be accessed to support this. Available at: <https://www.stepintoleadership.info/>.

Grade: 2 - weak

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

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

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

Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this care service since the last inspection.

Inspection and grading history

This service does not have any prior inspection history or grades.

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