Department of Psychology Playgroup
Day Care of Children
University of Stirling
Stirling
FK9 4LA
Telephone: 01786 467640 / 466836

Inspected by: Fiona Stewart
Type of inspection: Announced (Short Notice)
Inspection completed on: 14 November 2012
Contents

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Service provided by:
Psychology Department Playgroup

Service provider number:
SP2003001112

Care service number:
CS2003005371

Contact details for the inspector who inspected this service:
Fiona Stewart
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Email enquiries@careinspectorate.com
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Care and Support</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of Environment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Staffing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Management and Leadership</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What the service does well

The staff are welcoming and highly respectful towards parents and children and this leads to very good working relationships.

The service genuinely wishes parents and children to be fully involved in the service - having their say, bringing their own special skills to the learning programme for children, taking part in the playroom and sharing activities with their child which extends what they are learning about at playgroup.

What the service could do better

The playgroup should ensure that all aspects of its work and the consequences this has for children remain evidenced in full. This includes the quality assessment they carry out to check their work and identify what they could do better.

What the service has done since the last inspection

The Playgroup staff steadily drive continuous improvement in the service through their motivation to learn and keep up to date.
Review of policy, systems and childcare practice is ongoing to take account of national initiatives including Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child.

They have followed this to further develop personal planning for children to support their care and learning needs.

**Conclusion**

The playgroup continues to deliver a quality service to children which parents are highly satisfied with.

**Who did this inspection**

Fiona Stewart
1 About the service we inspected

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Prior to 1 April 2011, this function was carried out by the Care Commission. Information in relation to 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.*

Stirling University’s Psychology Department playgroup is situated on the campus and is open to children from the local community and children whose parents work or study at the university.

A committee of university staff has overall management responsibility. For the first time in the service’s long history the committee also now has a parent member.
Day to day, the service is organised and delivered by the two members of staff who are both qualified and very experienced. A small bank of supply staff are available to work as required.

Up to 16 children aged 2 years 9 months to 5 years may attend at any given time with a maximum of 5 children under 3 years permitted at any session. The playgroup is available each weekday morning in term-time and includes the following in its aims:

“to assist in the all-round development of each child, promote stimulating play, covering a wide range of activities, encourage each child to use his/her imagination, build his/her confidence and to interact with others in a safe and happy environment, liaise with parents to share information about their child’s interests and progress”.

Children attending the playgroup may be asked to take part in research by staff and students within the Psychology department. This happens only if parents have given their permission and children are happy to participate.
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 Environment - Grade 6 - Excellent**  
**Quality of Staffing - Grade 5 - Very Good**  
**Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 5 - Very Good**

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 low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care.

What we did during the inspection
We wrote this report after an inspection that took place during the playgroup sessions on 9th and 14th November 2012. The inspection was carried out by Care Inspectorate inspector, Fiona Stewart.

As requested, the playgroup sent us an annual return and a self assessment.

We issued 15 questionnaires to parents and carers of children who use the service. 12 completed questionnaires were returned.

In this inspection we gathered evidence from various sources.

We spoke with:
- the chairperson of the management committee
- both members of staff
- children using the service on the days we visited
- 4 parents

We observed how staff work and we examined equipment and the environment e.g. is the service clean, is equipment set out well, are equipment and toys suitable for the children attending

We looked at

Evidence from the service’s most recent self assessment

Other documents including:

Welcome information (parents)
Welcome booklet (children)

Participation policy
Evidence of consultation with parents
Evidence of consultation with children
Records of:

Assessment and Planning to meet children's needs
Risk assessment
Administering medicines
Accidents/incidents

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

There were five recommendations made at the last inspection. The service has progressed all of these to our satisfaction in line with the action plan they sent us.

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. The playgroup sent us a fully completed self assessment document prior to this inspection. We were satisfied with the way they had completed this and with the relevant information they had given us for each of headings that we grade them under.

They provided information about the areas of work they consider they do well, what they have improved and work they plan to further develop. They also told us how they gather the views of parents and children to help them make improvements.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

Children arrived to a warm welcome from staff which helped them settle in with ease to their chosen play activity.
Snack was a sociable group activity with children readily taking on their allocated responsibility.
Story-time provided fun and children were comfortable joining in.
Children were happy when their turn came to “help” the students carrying out their research.
Taking carers' views into account

Twelve parents/carers completed and returned questionnaires to us before our inspection. When asked about the overall quality of the service their child receives, all twelve people said that they were very satisfied. Additional comments they made include the following:

"The playgroup is outstanding. Aileen and Sarah are spectacular with the children. My child (and me) have a very positive experience. We enjoyed every morning spent there with the full range of activities and topical subjects. Had varied experiences indoors and outdoors".

"My (child) enjoyed their time at playgroup. (Child) always left feeling confident and happy. The staff are of high calibre and I would recommend them to others".

"Very good staff. My child is very happy to go there and always happy on return".

"The playgroup is a wonderful place. It has turned a very quiet, timid child into a very confident child more than ready for school."

"The staff are first class and my child loved being with them".

"I am delighted with the quality of service my family have received at the playgroup".

"Very happy with the playgroup at Stirling university, particularly with the regular walks outside and learning about nature. Also very happy with the two playleaders - excellent".

We also spoke with four parents during our visit. They mentioned particular strengths of the playgroup such as the welcoming staff whom their children relate well to, the very good use of the university grounds for outdoor activity and learning, the very good communication about their child, the very good introductory information which painted a helpful picture of what to expect and helped the child prepare, feeling consulted, involved and comfortable to raise concerns if any arose.

We took all comments received from parents into account when reaching our inspection conclusions.
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
Consulting parents and children to promote them having a say about the care and support staff provide is well established practice in the playgroup. Staff routinely give children an opportunity to make decisions and choices about what they do in playgroup each day. They consult with them to promote their ideas and interests influencing planning and they use discussion and questionnaires to hear their comments on their playgroup experiences and what they would like changed. In this way, children potentially keep shaping their playgroup experiences during their time there.
Similarly, staff promote parents having the say they wish by the means they prefer about the care and support for their child and about wider playgroup matters. They can talk with staff when they call at the service or arrange a private meeting with them. They may share their views by completing surveys, by e-mailing comments, adding suggestions in the comments book or by following the service’s complaints procedure if they wish to follow a formal route to raise concerns.
This choice enables parents to find the way to participate which suits them best and, in turn, this potentially improves the level of participation at any given time.
These are commendable practices which the playgroup staff have continued to review and develop over time to make them more successful in yielding feedback.
The staff also make sure the action taken on feedback is shared. Seeing that their comments are influencing change makes it potentially more likely that people using the service will have their say again.
However, most influential in leading us to conclude that the playgroup is excellent in this area of participation is what the staff themselves bring to the process. They both believe parents and children have a right to have their say and that their involvement can help them provide a better service. This leads to them promoting participation in a genuine way which, in turn, helps people take part with confidence that their views will be valued. The staff are also both very skilled in making people feel welcome and at ease communicating with them which creates good conditions for open discussion and sharing of honest views. Furthermore, it is obvious in service information, day to day communication and notices and displays around the playgroup that participation is the everyday expectation and practice. Parents who gave us inspection feedback all told us they felt very involved and comfortable having their say and people we spoke with attributed this readily to the personalities and skills of the staff and the trust they have in them as a result.

Areas for improvement
The playgroup staff continue to promote as many parents as possible contributing feedback about improvements. They stay vigilant to what methods are working best at any given time and they provide these popular opportunities to maximise involvement levels until people’s preferences lead them to consulting in other ways instead.

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

Children attending the playgroup benefit from staff being knowledgeable about up to date practices which help them keep the environment safe and hygienic for children. Staff setting the children an example of highly respectful, considerate behaviour towards others and encouraging children to talk openly about feelings helps them learn how to behave in a positive way with other children and adults and helps their confidence to express how they are really feeling, including worries they may have. Snack is a time to socialise and to learn together about eating foods that are healthy. Children’s involvement in deciding snack menus and in preparing snack is helping them learn about what to include in a healthy diet now and in future. Similarly, children’s opportunity to take part in the daily toothbrushing initiative is helping them learn good dental health habits.

The routine opportunity children have to experience nature and wildlife during regular walks on the university campus, collecting natural items as craft as play materials and having visitors talking to them about wildlife such as bees, all potentially stir children’s interest and appreciation of outdoors as a pleasant source of fun, learning and exercise. These combined actions are commendable in themselves in promoting the health and well-being of children attending the playgroup as a whole. However, what is most noteworthy is the diligent attention the staff pay also to promoting each child’s health and well-being.

The staff have taken account of current health and education guidance to develop systems which enable them to work with parents to assess and review each child’s needs on joining the playgroup and regularly thereafter. The consequence of this is that planning for them is personalised and progress able to be tracked. Children with additional health needs have led to staff accessing training and specialist advice and working with parents to compile protocols and risk assessments to enable them to meet the child’s needs appropriately and safely. Areas of concern about a child, including them not making progress as expected, results in extra discussions with the family and contact with other professionals as appropriate so that additional support planning can be implemented at an early stage.

This is an independent service who do not have ready access to systems and supports which other mainstream settings have. Staff show steadfast initiative in developing systems and making contacts which help them meet children’s needs effectively. Taking all our findings into account, we conclude that the playgroup’s performance in promoting children’s health and well being is excellent.
Areas for improvement

The playgroup staff continue to drive regular review of policy and practices which keep them up to date with current health and well being legislation and guidance. Involving families by developing home/playgroup resources such as "story sacks" is one of the significant recent developments to further promote families and the service working together to support children.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0
Quality Theme 2: Quality of Environment

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 environment within the service.

Service strengths
In Quality Theme 1, Statement 1, Service Strengths, we outlined a range of ways the playgroup offers parents and children to express their views about children’s care and support. We also outlined strengths of the service’s approach which help to improve the opportunity and likelihood of people having their say.

The staff are as motivated to hear parents and children views to help them shape and improve the playgroup environment and resources and anyone who wishes can use any of the options we previously outlined to have their say. In addition children routinely influence how the playroom is organised and resourced through staff observation of how they use activities, the opportunity to request favourite play items staff have not put out on a particular day and through direct consultation about new resources they would like. Moreover, there is evidence of the playgroup carrying out active focussed consultation with parents about resources such as the recently developed story sacks and in regard to suggested projects for the University’s Artist in Residence. For these reasons, we conclude that the service is excellent at involving parents and children in improving and developing the playgroup environment and resources.

Areas for improvement
The playgroup staff continue to develop new ways for parents and children to influence development of the accommodation and resources.

Staff are considering giving children an opportunity to contribute to how the playroom is organised by encouraging them to map their ideas on a drawn outline of the room.

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: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1
We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.

Service strengths
Adults contributing to the work of the service with children include the permanent staff, supply staff and students carrying out research.

Opportunities parents and children have to comment on these people if they wish are those we described in Quality Theme 1, Statement 1, Service Strengths.

There is also active consultation through questionnaires for both parents and children. Furthermore, staff described taking account of children’s interaction with the involved adults to determine when relationships are working and when changes would be advisable and to deploy staff according to who children prefer to support them in different activities.

They also told us that children’s current needs and play interests have also led to staff undertaking training to update their skills and knowledge to support them more effectively.

These practices lead us to conclude that the service is currently very good and improving towards excellent in this area of work.

Areas for improvement
The service does not routinely evidence all aspects of parents’ and children’s current influence on staffing matters.

We recommend that the playgroup evidences more fully how they take account of parents/children’s views, needs and preferences to influence decisions about staff/students. (See recommendation 1)

In addition to our development recommendation, the playgroup identifies in the inspection self assessment that they intend to develop a questionnaire asking parents new to the service to comment on staff.
Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of recommendations: 0

Number of requirements: 0
**Statement 3**

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

**Service strengths**

Both members of staff in the playgroup are highly dedicated to providing a quality service for children which follows current guidance in care and education practice.

They both have long service in the playgroup and, over the years, they have undertaken qualifications and training to meet the requirements of their role, including registration with the Scottish Social Services Council, to keep abreast of the developments and initiatives in daycare of children during that time, to meet the expectations of the University in providing the playgroup as a departmental research facility and to meet the individual needs of the children attending at any given time.

The motivation of the staff to meet these diverse demands is of an exceptional standard.

They are a stand alone setting with an employer whose primary business is not childcare.

Yet, under the framework of employment and financial support which the Psychology Department provides, the staff have confidently taken it upon themselves to seek out the information, training and contacts they need to keep the service to children up to date and of a high standard.

All parents who provided inspection feedback strongly agreed that the staff have the skills and experience to care for their child and support their learning and development.

They credited their satisfaction with the service to the personal and professional skills of the staff.

As a result of these findings, we conclude that the playgroup staff show an excellent standard of sustained professionalism and motivation to provide positive experiences for children from day to day and to keep improving their performance.
Areas for improvement

Arrangements have been made recently for more regular meetings to take place between the Chairperson of the Playgroup Management Committee and the member of staff who is the Playgroup Manager.

We endorse this decision and encourage the arrangement to continue as it will provide improved ongoing support for the manager in their day to day work and development.

**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: 5 - Very Good

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
In Quality Theme 1, Statement 1, Service Strengths, we outlined a range of means parents and children have to comment on improvements to the service. They have the same opportunities to comment on management matters if they so wish and there is evidence that their views have led staff to changing systems such as "signing in" and communication about children’s activities and experiences among other developments.

The playgroup provides parents with information about policy, approaches, initiatives and events and this ensures they have an accurate, up to date basis for their comment. Staff have invited parent comment when reviewing policy. Most recently their views have been sought on the services approach to child protection.

Furthermore, the recent appointment of a parent to the management committee will enable a parent’s perspective on strategic decisions for the first time.

As with participation in care and support, the playgroup environment and staffing, the service strives to routinely enable all parents and children to influence management improvements and we conclude that their performance in this area of work is very good as a result.

Areas for improvement
The staff continue to seek effective ways of consulting with parents which are convenient for the parents and productive in terms of the level of feedback gathered.

We encourage them in their efforts and ask them to continue to evidence how parents/carers and children routinely influence review and development of policy, service information, management approach and management systems through the active consultation they carry out and the informal feedback people share.
Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

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
We consider that the playgroup’s performance is currently very good in promoting continuous improvement through evaluating its work. The service aims to keep children safe and well and provide positive experiences for them while they are in their care. The staff regularly carry out a range of activities to check that policy, practices and systems remain appropriate and effective in achieving these outcomes. This includes monitoring, audits and regular discussion to highlight areas needing adjustment to meet children’s changing needs and to stay in line with current legislation and practice guidance. University and community services also visit regularly to check that the playgroup continues to meet fire, health and safety and environmental health requirements. Consultation with parents and children keeps their views contributing to service improvement and development as we have described earlier in this report. Reporting to the management committee on a regular basis enables staff to highlight and discuss with them what is working well and areas for development. All these elements of quality assessment help inform improvements which the service can make in the short term and longer term Development Planning.

Areas for improvement
The playgroup uses a range of quality assurance mechanisms to check its work in bringing about safe and positive outcomes for children.

Currently however, this is not documented in policy or in a schedule which informs people of the playgroup’s approach and promotes it happening consistently from year to year.

Accordingly, we advise the service to develop a quality assurance policy and a monitoring schedule to outline their approach and the routine checks they make to promote continuous improvement in all areas of their work. (See recommendation 1)

Also we advise the playgroup to evidence consulting others who may be able to contribute an external viewpoint to quality assessment such as students/visiting professionals and others contributing to day to day life in the playgroup and the programme of learning for children. (See recommendation 2)

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good
Number of requirements: 0
Number of recommendations: 2
Recommendations

1. Quality Assurance policy and Monitoring Schedule - The playgroup should develop a quality assurance policy and a monitoring schedule to outline their approach and the routine checks they make to promote continuous improvement in all areas of their work.

   **National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 13 Improving the service; Standard 14 Well-managed Service**

2. Other Stakeholders - The service should evidence consulting others who may be able to contribute an external viewpoint to quality assessment such as students/visiting professionals and others contributing to day to day life in the playgroup and the programme of learning for children.

   **National Care Standards Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 13 Improving the service**
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

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 SCSWIS re-grading the Quality Statement within the Management and Leadership Theme as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme for Management and Leadership being re-graded as Unsatisfactory (1).
5 Summary of grades

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of Care and Support - 6 - Excellent</th>
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<td>Statement 1</td>
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<td>Statement 3</td>
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<tr>
<th>Quality of Environment - 6 - Excellent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Statement 1</td>
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<tr>
<th>Quality of Staffing - 5 - Very Good</th>
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<tr>
<td>Statement 1</td>
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<td>Statement 3</td>
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<th>Quality of Management and Leadership - 5 - Very Good</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement 1</td>
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<td>Statement 4</td>
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6 Inspection and grading history

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Gradings</th>
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<td>8 Oct 2010</td>
<td>Unannounced</td>
<td>Care and support 5 - Very Good</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Environment 5 - Very Good</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Management and Leadership Not Assessed</td>
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<td>Environment 5 - Very Good</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Management and Leadership 4 - Good</td>
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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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