

SCMA has developed this range of briefing sheets in response to the main questions we receive through our HELpline (01786 449063) which is open Monday to Friday, 10am-4pm.

Copies of any of the following briefing sheets can be obtained by sending a SAE to our Head Office in Stirling.

Grading is coming – to improve care services

Every care service in the country is to be clearly rated under a new grading system being introduced by Scotland's national care regulator, the Care Commission.

This system is designed to make it easier for members of the public to check the quality and performance of a care service. The system also allows the public to make a better informed choice about whether to use that service, or not.

The new system will involve each service awarding a mark in relation to separate areas. Each mark will be on a scale of 1-6, with six being excellent. In the case of childminding, these areas will be:

- Quality of relationships
- Quality of environment
- Quality of life/experience
- Quality of childminding service

The scores will be backed up by a more detailed report, giving further background information on how and why the grade was agreed. The first batch of reports will be published on 1st July 2008 to allow for a transitional period, but grading inspections will be carried out from 1st April 2008.

To achieve top grades in the individual areas, childminders must be able to provide evidence that they have involved and consulted service users and their families. This is in response to the Care Commission finding that service users want a greater say in how their care service is run.

Assessing childminding in this way allows potential users to make more informed choices. If they feel that **quality of experience** is more important to them than **quality of environment**, they can choose a service that is stronger in that area.

The system being introduced in Scotland not only awards areas of good service, it also makes it easier to identify examples of poor quality childminding, which can then be tackled to bring it up to the levels set out in the National Care Standards.

This means that the Care Commission can more effectively target poor service providers, there will be no hiding place for poorer performing childminders.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked to self-assess your childminding service using a number of quality themes. These themes identify specific areas of your childminding service. You already have and should be familiar with the tool used to develop the quality themes: your 'red book' – the National Care Standards. The standards are grouped under the four themes. To help you think about what you do and how you should perform in relation to each of these themes there are a number of quality statements. These statements help you think about what you do in relation to the themes.

For example:

Quality Theme 1: Quality of Relationships. This theme looks at what you do in relation to:

- Standard 1 – Each child or young person will be welcomed, and will be valued as an individual.
- Standard 2 – Each child or young person will be supported by staff who interact effectively and enthusiastically with him or her.
- Standard 6 – Each child or young person receives support from staff who respond to his/her individual needs.
- Standard 8 – You will be treated fairly and equally.

To help you think about how you would evidence this, the **Quality Statements** help you explore what you do and how you do it.

For example:

Quality Statement 1.1 reads “I provide opportunities for visits prior to any child starting and prepare current children for new arrivals’. Your sources of evidence could include your parent’s leaflet which explains how you operate your business; photographs of you and children you mind playing or visiting the library; photographs of each child displayed in the hall beside coat hooks or on the fridge. The more you can draw from your day-to-day childminding practice, the more appropriate your evidence.

How to get ready for self-assessment:

1. Go back to the National Care Standards and familiarise yourself with them. Think about which ones in particular will help evidence that you meet the new Quality Assessment Framework in the key areas.
2. Collect and record all the evidence you will use in your self-assessment forms, for example: your welcome leaflet; your policies and procedures; daily diaries; photographs of children taking part in your activities (with parental permission); copies of children and parent questionnaires.
3. Keep up to date by visiting the Care Commission website link: www.carecommission.com. Read up on the ongoing pilots and the *Regulating for Improvement* project.
4. Visit SCMA website www.childminding.org. Check the SCMA forum, read how other childminders are preparing themselves.
5. Think about how you can involve parents in discussions about the quality of your service. The more you talk to parents, the more personalised the service you can provide for their children. Make sure this is a priority, as the key to achieving good grades is how well you can ‘evidence’ the opportunities you give to parents to comment on, and suggest, improvements for the service you provide.