

# Highland Council Adult Placement Continuing Care Adult Placement Service

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**Type of inspection:**  
Announced (short notice)

**Completed on:**  
15 March 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Highland Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003001693

**Service no:**  
CS2020380728

## About the service

Highland Council Adult Placement Service is linked to the Highland Council Fostering service and supports young people remaining with their caregiver families past the age of 18 years old in continuing care.

Inspections of the Fostering and Adoption services have been undertaken and separate reports have been completed.

## About the inspection

This was a short notice inspection which took place between 19 February and 15 March 2024. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we spoke with:

- Two young people using the service.
- Two adult placement carers.
- Eight staff and management.
- Three external professionals.
- Panel chair and the Agency Decision Maker.

We also reviewed survey responses from:

- 44 caregivers.
- 14 staff.
- 17 external professionals.

## Key messages

Young people experienced supportive, enduring relationships with caregiver families that provided them with a sense of belonging.

Caregivers valued genuine trusting relationships and we assessed that staff were skilled at supporting them.

Caregivers were provided with consultations and therapeutic support from mental health specialists.

Continuing care policies and procedures had not been progressed sufficiently since the last inspection.

Caregivers were not being approved as adult placement carers.

Young people were not being provided with information or the opportunity to participate in decisions about their futures.

Welfare assessments were not evidenced for those young people we case tracked.

## 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 well do we support people's wellbeing?	2 - Weak
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	2 - Weak

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

## How well do we support people's wellbeing?

**2 - Weak**

We made an overall evaluation of weak for this key question. Whilst some strengths could be identified, overall, these were compromised by significant weaknesses. As these weaknesses concerned the welfare and safety of children and young people, we made requirements for improvement.

We saw that a number of young people were supported to remain within their caregiver families past the age of 18. Young people enjoyed, warm, affectionate, and trusting relationships with their caregivers promoting a sense of belonging and security. Young people experienced individualised care that adapted to their changing needs supporting transition to adulthood with a greater emphasis on independence and choice.

Caregivers we spoke to valued staff knowledge, skills, commitment, and responsiveness. We saw evidence of regular monthly visits taking place and caregivers confirmed they were getting high levels of support.

Young people were achieving positive outcomes in education and employment and had access to a range of leisure and social activities. Caregiving families supported young people to have fulfilling lives with high aspirations for success. This supportive and positive culture contributed to positive outcomes for young people.

Caregivers were being provided with and attending a range of training opportunities, however, the area for improvement made at the last inspection in relation to the provision and completion of Adult Protection training had not been met and will therefore be repeated (see area for improvement 1).

Safeguarding has been improved through the provision of caregiver training, new individualised safer caring documentation and the completion of unannounced visits in line with guidance.

We were concerned to see that for those young people we case tracked there was an absence of consistent support from the care and protection social work team.

At the last inspection concerns were raised regarding the fact that young people moving to continuing care and adult services did not have clear information about their rights and discussions around transition were not begun at an appropriate stage. We were not confident that Welfare Assessments were being comprehensively undertaken in line with continuing care legislation. Further work was required to ensure that changes to policy and practice were relevant and becoming embedded. The service does not have policies or procedures in place to ensure that all continuing care caregivers are assessed, approved and supported to provide this care. This requirement has not been met and therefore will be repeated with a new timescale of 31 May 2024 (see requirement 1).

Reviewing caregiver's competencies and ability to meet the needs of children at a Panel is a statutory requirement. We identified that a significant number of caregiver reviews had not taken place, in line with the services' policy of every two years. Best practice of annual caregiver reviews, with the legislative requirement of presentation at Panel every three years was discussed. Best practice also identifies caregivers' attendance at Panel, at these regulatory timescales. This would improve scrutiny processes and ensure the needs of children are met by their caregivers. This will form an area for improvement (see area for improvement 2).

## Requirements

1. By 31 May 2024, the provider must take steps to support young people to remain with their foster carers post 18 years. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- They decide how best to assess, train and approve foster carers as adult placement carers and;
- How best to assess young people to ensure that continuing care is in their best interests.
- Any action is in line with regulations on continuing care.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11).

### Areas for improvement

1. To ensure that carer families are skilled and supported to care for young adults the service should develop and deliver Adult Protection training to all carer households.

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) and 'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities (HSCS 3.20).

2. For children, young people and their foster carers to be best supported, the service should ensure to undertake regular reviews with clear assessment of recommendations for caregiver registration. To do this the provider should, at a minimum, ensure:

- Undertake annual reviews of all caregiver families.
- Ensure that all applicants and caregivers attend panel's and that this adheres to fostering regulation timescales.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standard which states "I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice" (HSCS 4.11).

### How good is our leadership? 3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. While the strengths had a positive impact, key areas needed to improve.

Since the last inspection the service has evidence the capacity to improve.

Improved quality assurance processes were in place. These enabled some key performance indicators to be monitored and analysed and provide oversight of practice within the team. This contributed to consistency in key elements of practice which promoted children's safety and wellbeing.

We assess there was now a more consistent overview of key processes, such as caregiver checks, caregiver reviews, unannounced visits and safer caring plans. We noted some of quality assurance processes were not up to date and urged attention to this detail to safeguard children and caregivers', and the continued progress of improvement planning.

The requirement from the last inspection relating to the monitoring, reporting and analysis of serious incidents had not been met. Several significant incidents and allegations had not been submitted as notifications to the Care Inspectorate. We were however satisfied that child protection procedures had been

followed when allegations of abuse were made. The requirement relating to notifications to the Care Inspectorate will be repeated (see requirement 1).

The service has an experienced panel chair and panel membership was diverse. Caregivers do not at present attend their panel reviews and therefore we were unclear on the independence and scrutiny oversight of carer reviews. Key Question 1 addresses this issue which includes an identified area for improvement.

Panel members have access to a range of learning and development opportunities, however, they were not being supported through annual appraisal. This will form an area for improvement (see area for improvement 1).

## Requirements

1. By 31 May 2024, the provider must ensure that they access the up-to-date Care Inspectorate guidance on notifications and notify us of all incidents, accidents and allegations of abuse against foster carers in accordance with this guidance.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) 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 Standard which states: 'I am protected from harm, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities' (HSCS 3.20); and 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

## Areas for improvement

1. The service should ensure that panel members are provided with regular opportunities for support and that annual appraisals are undertaken.

This is to ensure that practice is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state: '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).

## How good is our staff team?

### 5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good. There were major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for people.

Staff viewed improvements implemented since the last inspection positively. Their practice, observed through tracked cases and individual discussions, aligned to the values and principles of the Health and Social Care Standards. All staff were appropriately registered with the Scottish Social Service Council.

Staff displayed passion for their area of practice and had worked hard to build genuine and trusting relationships with caregivers. Consistency within the staff team meant that many caregivers had formed enduring relationships with their supervising social worker. Staff competence, knowledge and responsiveness were valued by caregivers.

Staff appreciated the level of support they received from their visible management team. They received monthly formal supervision in addition to a high level of informal supervision. Monthly team meetings provided staff with an additional reflective space for case discussion and consideration and prioritisation of key tasks.

Staff had access to a new staff appraisal system, introduced after the last inspection. This supported a joint review of progress, and for staff to identify their professional learning and developmental needs. Staff were involved in developing and delivering training sessions to caregivers. An improved range and schedule of internal and external learning and development opportunities had been implemented.

We identified that many policies and procedures had not been reviewed for several years and heard this need had been identified by the management team. Greater clarity from updated policies and procedures will increase staff knowledge, skills and confidence in their role and provide consistency in approach to practice.

### How well is our care and support planned?

**2 - Weak**

We made an overall evaluation of weak for this key question. Whilst some strengths could be identified, these were compromised by significant weaknesses. As these weaknesses concerned the welfare and safety of children and young people, we made several requirements for improvement.

Young people are leading positive, healthy, enjoyable and meaningful lives, however, good quality planning was not evidenced. Care plan meetings were not taking place regularly for young people who were or had reached the age of continuing care. This meant that assessments were not comprehensive and positive outcomes were not promoted.

Supervising social workers provided progress reports to Care Plan meetings, where they do take place, which is supporting collaborative multi-disciplinary working and promoting positive outcomes for children and young people.

Safer caring plans were in place for all young people. These were detailed and individualised to reduce potential risks for everyone in the caregiver household.

Young people did not have opportunities or benefit from participation in decisions that affect them. Care Plan meetings were not taking place regularly and there was limited evidence in those records we did see of young people's views being sought and detailed. The voice of young people was not evidenced. We were informed that formal advocacy was used where required, however, we were not provided with any evidence to support this. At the time of the last inspection an area for improvement was made asking the provider to evidence the support provided young people to express their views, attend meetings and understand how their needs will be met through care planning processes. This area for improvement has not been met and will therefore be repeated (see area for improvement 1).

Safer caring plans were in place for all children and young people. These were detailed, which were detailed and individualised to reduce risk for families and the service had implemented a specific plan for those young people over the age of 16.

A requirement was made at the time of the last inspection which related to the assessments of young people and the completion of welfare assessments. We were provided with no evidence of welfare assessments being completed for the young people we case tracked. We were not confident that Welfare

Assessments were being comprehensively undertaken in line with continuing care legislation. Further work was required to ensure that the Continuing Care policy is finalised and that changes to practice are embedded. This requirement has not been met and therefore will be repeated (see requirement 1).

## Requirements

1. By 31 May 2024, the provider must take steps to support enable young people to experience stable and consistent care beyond the age of 18. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- How best to assess young people to ensure that continuing care is in their best interests.
- That a continuing care welfare assessment is undertaken timeously for all young people using the service. Any action is in line with regulations on continuing care.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11).

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children and young people have opportunities and benefit from participation in decision that affect them, the provider must evidence of support provided to children and young people to express their views, attend meetings and understand how their needs will be met through care planning processes.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that 'I am fully involved in developing and reviewing my personal plan, which is always available to me' (HSCS 2.17) and 'my human rights are central to the organisations that support and care for me' (HSCS 4.1).

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

## Requirements

### Requirement 1

By 31 December 2022, the provider should ensure children and fostering families are included in discussions related to safer caring. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- The service should review its implementation of safer caring plans.
- The service should review formats of documentation and improving guidance to staff on how to engage children and fostering families in safer caring plans.



This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) 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 am as involved as I can be in agreeing and reviewing any restrictions to my independence, control and choice.' (HSCS 2.6)

**This requirement was made on 9 December 2022.**

#### Action taken on previous requirement

The service have implemented new individualised safer caring documentation for all children and young people. Carer training has been updated and provided to carers.

**Met - within timescales**

### Requirement 2

By 31 December 2022, the provider must take steps to support young people to remain with their foster carers post 18 years. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- They decide how best to assess, train and approve foster carers as adult placement carers and;
- How best to assess young people to ensure that continuing care is in their best interests.
- Any action is in line with regulations on continuing care.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11).

**This requirement was made on 9 December 2022.**

#### Action taken on previous requirement

We saw only minimal progress in relation to this requirement. Policies and procedures have not yet been finalised and care givers are still not being approved as adult placement carers. Assessments for continuing care have also not progressed. This requirement will be repeated with a new timescale of 31 May 2024.

**Not met**

### Requirement 3

By 31 December 2022, the provider must ensure that robust quality assurance processes are in place to monitor key areas of performance within fostering regulations with monitoring and review to identify areas of continuous improvement: To do this, the provider must as a minimum ensure:

- Undertake foster care agreements in line with best practice guidance and statutory requirements.

- Ensure systems are in place for identification and panel review of foster carers and dual registered prospective adopters.
- Ensure that the safety of children and young people is improved through unannounced visits.
- Individual safer caring plans are developed and reviewed regularly in response to changing need.
- Unannounced visits take place within required timescales.
- Full carers checks are monitored and kept up to date.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) 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 experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11)

**This requirement was made on 9 December 2022.**

#### Action taken on previous requirement

We could see that quality assurance processes had improved and there were now trackers in place to monitor key processes.

**Met - within timescales**

## Requirement 4

By 31 December 2022, the provider must take steps to support enable young people to experience stable and consistent care beyond the age of 18. To do this the provider must, at a minimum, ensure:

- How best to assess young people to ensure that continuing care is in their best interests.
- That a continuing care welfare assessment is undertaken timeously for all young people using the service. Any action is in line with regulations on continuing care.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice.' (HSCS 4.11).

**This requirement was made on 9 December 2022.**

#### Action taken on previous requirement

We found evidence of insufficient progress in relation to this requirement and therefore it will be repeated with a new timescale of 31 May 2024.

**Not met**

## 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 that carer families are skilled and supported to care for young adults the service should develop and deliver Adult Protection training to all carer households.

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) and 'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities'.

**This area for improvement was made on 9 December 2022.**

#### Action taken since then

We saw insufficient provision and attendance of Adult Protection training. This area for improvement will be repeated.

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children and young people have opportunities and benefit from participation in decision that affect them, the provider must evidence of support provided to children and young people to express their views, attend meetings and understand how their needs will be met through care planning processes.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that 'I am fully involved in developing and reviewing my personal plan, which is always available to me' (HSCS 2.17) and 'my human rights are central to the organisations that support and care for me' (HSCS 4.1).

**This area for improvement was made on 9 December 2022.**

#### Action taken since then

We saw limited evidence of improvements in opportunities for young people to benefit from participation in decisions that affect them. Care plan meetings were not seen as a priority for young people requiring continuing care and therefore there were insufficient efforts to support them to understand how their needs will be met. This area for improvement will be repeated.

### Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	2 - Weak
1.1 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families experience compassion, dignity and respect	5 - Very Good
1.2 Children, young people and adults get the most out of life	4 - Good
1.3 Children, young people and adults' health and wellbeing benefits from the care and support they experience	5 - Very Good
1.4 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families get the service that is right for them	2 - Weak

How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
3.2 Staff have the right knowledge, competence and development to support children, young people, adults and their caregiver families	5 - Very Good

How well is our care and support planned?	2 - Weak
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults	2 - Weak

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