

Foster Care Connect Limited Adult Placement Service

42 High Street
Galashiels
TD1 1SE

Telephone: 01896 751 999

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
20 May 2024

Service provided by:
Foster Care Connect Limited

Service provider number:
SP2005007159

Service no:
CS2020378673

About the service

Foster Care Connect adult placement service has been registered with the Care Inspectorate since 2020 and is linked with Foster Care Connect's longer established fostering service.

Foster Care Connect Ltd is an independent company based in the Scottish Borders. The adult placement service enables young people to remain with their foster families beyond the age of 18 in accordance with continuing care legislation.

Foster Care Connect is a small agency and this is reflected in the very small number of carer households currently providing an adult placement service.

The vision for the service is 'to ensure that eligible looked after young people are encouraged, enabled, and empowered to stay in an existing care placement until they are able to demonstrate their readiness and willingness to move onto interdependence living'.

During our inspection year 2024-2025 we are inspecting against a focus area which looks at how regulated services use legislation and guidance to promote children's right to continuing care, and how children and young people are being helped to understand what their right to continuing care means for them. Any requirements or areas for improvement will be highlighted in this report.

About the inspection

This was a short notice announced inspection which took place between 9 April 2024 and 20 May 2024. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate and was conducted at the same time as the inspection of the provider's fostering service. This report should be read alongside the inspection report for the provider's fostering service.

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 nine children and young people using the service and seven foster carers
- spoke with seven members of staff and management, the panel chair and the agency decision maker
- observed practice, meetings and daily lives
- reviewed documents and survey responses
- spoke with three external professionals.

Key messages

- Young people consistently benefitted from loving and attuned care within their caregiver families.
- Most caregiver families had very positive experiences of timely and compassionate support from a skilled staff team.
- The service worked in partnership with education providers to ensure that young people had the best possible educational experiences.
- The service needs to review its complaints process to make this more robust.
- The service needs to ensure that there are clearly defined roles within the leadership team.
- Young people benefitted from robust risk assessment and care planning.
- The service has a clear and robust continuing care policy in place and is proactive in ensuring young people's rights in this area are championed.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	5 - Very Good

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

How well do we support people's wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for young people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Young people consistently benefitted from loving and attuned care within their caregiver families. Young people were given the clear message that they were loved and experienced fun and predictability. This provided young people with the security and confidence to grow, develop and get the most out of life.

These relationships were nurtured with skilled, timely and compassionate support from the professional team at Foster Care Connect. Most caregiver families were positive about the working relationships they had with staff within the service and the responsiveness of the service. Support from the service adapted and evolved effectively to continue to meet the needs of young people as they transitioned into adulthood.

Caregiver families had a good understanding of their role in supporting young people to maintain positive relationships with family members and other important people.

Young people were effectively kept physically and emotionally safe. Any concerns or potential risks were identified at an early stage and appropriate support plans agreed in conjunction with carers and young people.

Young people are enabled to engage with education and to reach positive educational outcomes. The service actively helped young people to explore options for their future and secure places on courses that met their needs. The service responded quickly and creatively when young people needed support with aspects of their learning, including when they were young adults attending further education provision.

This commitment to learning is replicated in the service's thorough, well organised and responsive approach to carer learning. All carers have a Personal Development Plan which is reviewed twice a year.

Caregivers and staff work well together and with other agencies to ensure that young people's health care needs are met. Where young people required mental health support or diagnosis, the service worked alongside the multiagency team to ensure this was provided. This was enhanced by the service's development of an SCQF accredited course for carers on supporting children and young people who have experienced trauma. This enhanced caregivers' skills and confidence, better enabling them to respond therapeutically to the young people in their care.

The service has a detailed continuing care policy, which reflects legislation and best practice guidance in this area. When one young person was feeling under some pressure to consider 'moving on', the service ensured that they were aware of their rights and the young person was helped to seek guidance and support from Clan Child Law with positive results.

Caregiver families were comprehensively assessed to ensure that they had the capacity to meet the needs of young people and adults. The service appropriately presented carers preparing to transition to adult placement at the panel, well in advance of young people reaching the age of 18. This ensured that all caregiver families had undertaken training in adult protection. Discussions about young people's future were initiated at an early point, allowing for comprehensive planning and reducing anxiety for young people and caregivers.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for young people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement identified.

The service effectively and continuously reviews and monitors outcomes and experiences for young people using a number of tools.

The service makes use of several useful quality assurance mechanisms, including a statutory check matrix and an overview of carer training. There is a good awareness of the statutory and good practice obligations of the service and a robust overview of where each worker and caregiver is in relation to these.

There is a service development plan in place. However, we noted that there was not always a clear link between the evaluative narrative and the identified action points. The service could benefit from using the Care Inspectorate's quality framework as a basis for self evaluation, to ensure that any future action plans are explicitly linked to an area of practice.

There were strengths and some identified areas for future development in relation to the performance and function of the fostering panel. Panel members are drawn from a diverse range of personal and professional backgrounds. Panel member induction and appraisals are in place and panel development days have taken place over the past year. The service has, when appropriate, recently made use of an independent panel advisor which has enhanced the robustness of the panel. An experienced and knowledgeable independent agency decision maker is in place. However, workers within the service expressed frustration that some practice issues highlighted in reports were not fully explored during the panel process. This has been recognised by the service who have reviewed panel processes to reflect some of these concerns. More concise social worker assessments, with salient points clearly highlighted, would also help to signpost panel members to the key areas for discussion at the panel.

We noted that some panel members would also benefit from training, to ensure they have a robust knowledge of the practice values and legal requirements underpinning continuing care provision.

The service has received no direct complaints over the inspection period. However, in recent months three complaints have been made to the Care Inspectorate. Two of these complaints related to the same situation and have been upheld. On review, we noted that the agency's internal complaints policy would benefit from review, to ensure that people can have confidence that any complaints will be approached transparently and fairly. We have made an area for improvement in relation to this. **(See Area for improvement 1)**

We noted that due to the small size of the service, there was sometimes a lack of clarity in relation to roles within the service. At times, members of the leadership team undertook the supervising social worker role without professional supervision in place to promote a culture of reflection and accountability. We have made an area for improvement in relation to this. **(See Area for improvement 2)**

Areas for improvement

1. To enable all caregivers and people using the service to have confidence in the organisation that supports them, the provider should ensure that a robust and sufficiently independent internal complaints policy is in place.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'If I have a concern or complaint, this will be discussed with me and acted on without negative consequence for me' (HSCS 4.21).

2. To ensure all caregivers and people benefit from a service that promotes a culture of reflection and accountability, the provider must ensure that there are clearly defined roles for the leadership team and clear lines of professional supervision for all staff undertaking a social work task.

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

'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23); and

'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 found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for young people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

The staff team's practice strongly reflects the values of the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) codes of conduct. Staff within the agency skilfully built effective working relationships with caregiver families and with young people. It was clear that the young people we spoke to knew the staff team well and had a good understanding of the role of the service. The staff team were able to challenge caregiver families where necessary, exploring any areas of conflict whilst keeping the experiences of children and young people at the centre. The service made good use of supervision, action plans, carer personal development plans and the fostering panel, to review and support the practice of carers.

The staff team are enabled to respond to any emerging needs or times of crisis in caregiver families in a tailored and supportive way, showing great commitment and investment in relationship-based practice. One carer told us, "We feel fully supported by all at Foster Care Connect, the staff are helpful, approachable and knowledgeable. We enjoy working with them."

All members of staff benefit from a personal development plan which is reviewed annually, with a midpoint check led by the learning and development team. The staff team can access high-quality learning and development opportunities and external training where this is in line with the agency's priorities. Weekly team meetings were used for reflection, planning and information updates and team development days were planned regularly.

Staff benefitted from regular professional supervision where there was always a focus on reflection and discussion of individual wellbeing. In addition to formal supervision, staff were easily able to access support and guidance from the leadership team and from colleagues. The exception to this, was where some members of the senior management team were involved in a supervision social worker capacity and did not have arrangements in place for professional supervision.

The small team has experienced a turnover of staff over the past year and we heard that a lack of hybrid working opportunities may have contributed to this. However, we also noted that most of the current staff team have been with the service for four or more years, including two members of staff who had undertaken social work training whilst employed as social work assistants within the service.

How well is our care and support planned?**5 - Very Good**

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for young people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

The care and support of all children and young people within the service was enhanced by the implementation of high quality, SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) planning. The service uses a range of planning tools to support care and young people's views are well reflected.

Caregivers and staff within the service also actively contribute to local authority planning and statutory reviews of young people's plans. Placing social workers commented favourably on the frequent and clear communication from the service and there were several examples where this had impacted positively on local authority plans made for young people.

Caregivers and workers within the service were skilled and effective advocates for young people. This ensured that young people's voices were heard and their rights were upheld. We saw examples of this influencing planning in a wide range of areas including, family time, funding applications and plans for continuing care.

The safety and wellbeing of all young people is supported by high quality individualised risk assessment and safer caring plans. Staff within the service know young people well and take a trauma enhanced approach to care planning. Risk assessments are regularly updated throughout young people's time with the service. These risk assessments underpin all care planning. This proactive and thorough approach led to very good outcomes for young people in all areas of life.

Complaints

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

Detailed evaluations

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
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	5 - Very 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	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
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?	5 - Very Good
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults	5 - Very Good

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.