

# Scottish Borders Council Continuing Care Service Adult Placement Service

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

**Completed on:**  
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**Service provided by:**  
Scottish Borders Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003001976

**Service no:**  
CS2018368271

## About the service

Scottish Borders Council Continuing Care Service is an adult placement service linked to the Scottish Borders Council Fostering Service, and supports young people to continue to live with their carers past the age of 18.

The service, known as the family placement team, is delivered by a manager, two senior social workers, and a team of supervising social workers and resource workers. Staff worked across the fostering, continuing care and adoption services. Inspections of the three services were undertaken at the same time. Separate reports are available for each of the services. This report should be read alongside the fostering report.

As the findings of this inspection are based on a sample of children and young people, inspectors cannot assure the quality of experience for every service user.

## About the inspection

This was a short notice announced inspection which took place between 22 October 2024 and 14 November 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 one continuing care family, including one young person
- spoke with 12 members of staff and management
- spoke with one external professional
- spoke to the independent panel chair and the Agency Decision Maker
- reviewed documentation
- reviewed survey responses from caregivers, external professionals, members of staff and young people.

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.

The provider of this service is a corporate parent, with statutory responsibilities to look after and accommodate children. This may mean that the duty to care for children and young people on an emergency basis, or with highly complex needs, is their highest safeguarding priority.

In these circumstances our expectations, focus on outcomes and evaluations remain identical to those of all other providers. We may, however, provide some additional narrative in the body of the report to reflect the impact of these duties, should it be relevant to this particular service.

**Key messages**

- Young people benefitted from enduring relationships with caregivers into adulthood.
- Continuing care was well promoted by the service, with clear information being provided about young people's rights.
- Educational outcomes were very positive and were well celebrated by the service.
- The transition for caregivers to continuing care was well managed and caregivers were suitably trained and reassessed for their changing role.
- Young people were active partners in planning, which helped to ensure the right support at the right time.
- Improvements are needed around the recording and notification of incidents and protection issues.
- The local authority should review legal pathways for continuing care, to ensure transition planning does not cause undue distress.

**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?	4 - 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?**

**4 - Good**

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

Young people living in continuing care were valued and loved members of their household. Relationships with caregivers were strong and enabled young people to feel fully supported. Caregivers advocated to ensure young people had what they needed for their future. The service ensured that young people had clear information on their right to continuing care, which included providing a young person's booklet. Young people had confidence in their care and were optimistic about their future.

Young people had strong networks of support around them, including from their caregivers' extended family. They were supported to keep in touch with members of their birth family, where this was appropriate, and brothers and sisters were commonly living together. Caregivers were skilled at supporting these

relationships and helped young people to manage these relationships as independently as possible. Young people had a strong sense of family identity and belonging.

Educational outcomes were very positive for young people who had used the service, with many attending higher or further education, or gaining employment. Positive outcomes were supported by Virtual Headteachers and work undertaken by the Champions Board. Successes were celebrated in the newsletter and at an awards ceremony. The service supported young people to continue having their family base while going off to study elsewhere. This allowed young people to have security in their care while they embarked on new challenges.

Caregivers had access to training which supported them in their role. Solihull training and trauma skilled practice training helped to develop a therapeutic approach to care. Caregivers providing continuing care were required to complete specific training to enable them to fulfil this role. Caregivers had a strong understanding of young people's needs which helped them to support young people to develop important skills for their future.

Young people were supported to be safe, and clear protection procedures were followed when incidents arose. The service should improve the recording and documentation of these incidents and ensure that they are appropriately notified to the Care Inspectorate. An area for improvement from the previous inspection has been repeated as this was not met (see area for improvement 1).

Transitions were well planned to enable a smooth pathway from foster care to continuing care. Caregivers were reassessed in advance of young people turning 18 and a clear policy and procedure helped to develop consistency in practice. We did however identify that the practice of having young people sign legal documentation at 16, when this was unnecessary, had the potential to cause distress, and the service should review this practice (area for improvement 2).

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure a robust and consistent approach to all child welfare concerns, the service should ensure that all incidents and accidents are appropriately recorded and notified to the Care Inspectorate, including any allegations of abuse against foster carers.

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

'I benefit from different organisations working together and sharing information about me promptly where appropriate' and in order to comply with SSI 2011/28 Regulation 4(1)(b). (1.2).

2. To ensure young people have clear and supportive legal transitions into continuing care, the service should review the purpose and impact of having young people sign Section 25 documentation at the age of 16.

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).

**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.

Discussions about continuing care were started early and included young people, caregivers and social workers. There was a clear policy and procedure which enabled young people, and those supporting them, to be clear about the process surrounding the transition. In conjunction with the reassessment of caregivers as continuing caregivers, young people typically experienced transition planning as seamless. This helped young people to have security in their future plans.

Young people in continuing care had pathway plans in place that were SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound). Welfare assessments were carried out prior to young people turning 18 to ensure their current and future needs were well considered. Plans and assessments were regularly reviewed, with young people and their views being central to this process. Young people were key drivers of their care and support.

An area for improvement was made at the last inspection for living together agreements to be developed. These were now in place and helped provide an overview of risk and clarity over responsibilities, within continuing care households.

**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 a robust and consistent approach to all welfare concerns, the service should ensure that all incidents and accidents are appropriately recorded and notified to the Care Inspectorate, including any allegations of abuse against foster carers.

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

'I benefit from different organisations working together and sharing information about me promptly where appropriate' and in order to comply with SSI 2011/28 Regulation 4(1)(b).

**This area for improvement was made on 29 June 2022.**

**Action taken since then**

We continued to identify examples of notifications, including protection concerns, not being notified to the Care Inspectorate in line with guidance. Information was not always recorded clearly, and the recording system required improvement to support consistency. The service should also clarify their own guidance on recording allegations against caregivers to ensure this is aligned with Care Inspectorate guidance. This area for improvement has not been met and will be repeated.

## Previous area for improvement 2

To best promote the dignity of children and young people, the service should review its use of language to ensure that this is in line with the recommendations of The Promise. This should include ceasing the use of the term 'respite', instead using the national placement descriptor of 'short break'.

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

'I am accepted and valued whatever my needs, ability, gender, age, faith, mental health status, race, background or sexual orientation'.

**This area for improvement was made on 29 June 2022.**

### Action taken since then

The service had carried out work to ensure respectful language was now used and the correct approval category of 'short break' was widely in use. Work was being carried out across the authority through the Promise workstream to improve the use of language and a 'reframing language' document had been distributed. This area for improvement has been met, however policies and procedures need to be updated.

## 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?	4 - 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	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	4 - 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

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