

National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Limited Fostering Service

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Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
28 November 2024

Service provided by:
The National Fostering Agency
(Scotland) Limited

Service provider number:
SP2005007502

Service no:
CS2005098696

About the service

National Fostering Agency (Scotland) (NFAS) is an independent fostering agency with an office base in central Scotland. The agency supports carers across Scotland and is part of the UK wide National Fostering Agency group. NFAS assesses, approves, and supports foster carers and offers a range of fostering options to local authorities for children and young people aged 0-18 including short break, emergency, interim, long term and permanent.

An inspection of NFAS adult placement service, registered for the purpose of continuing care, was undertaken in conjunction with this inspection. The findings of that inspection can be found in a separate report for that service which should be read in conjunction with this report.

About the inspection

This was a short notice announced inspection which took place between Monday 4 November 2024 at 10:30 and Wednesday 27 November 2025 at 17:15. The inspection was carried out by three 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:

- met with seven foster carers and six young people (including one birth child) in their homes
- met with eight foster carers during our observations of the fostering support group
- spoke with two foster carers during a focus group for foster carers
- met with ten young people and four carers during our observation of a young person's event organised by the service
- spoke with four local authority placing social workers
- met with eight members of staff
- met with two Team Managers and two Advanced Practitioners
- met regularly with the registered manager of the service
- spoke with three children and young people support workers
- spoke with the carer recruitment officer
- spoke with the senior referrals co-ordinator.
- spoke with the assessment manager responsible for foster carer approval assessments
- observed 2 annual foster care reviews chaired by an independent reviewing officer.
- observed a fostering panel led by an independent panel chair.
- met with the independent chair of the fostering panel.
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

In addition we considered responses to MS Questionnaires from young people, carers and staff.

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.

Key messages

- A high level of acceptance and understanding was reflected in the relationships young people experienced with caregiver families.
- Young people and caregivers benefitted from the agency having a strong and well embedded commitment to participation and inclusion
- Young people's health and wellbeing was actively supported and carers ensured access to appropriate community health services, including specialist resources.
- Young people were leading positive, healthy and enjoyable lives through the implementation of high-quality planning.

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 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

A number of strengths were identified which resulted in positive outcomes for children and young people, therefore an evaluation of very good has been awarded to this key question

Young people were provided with high quality, nurturing care where they experience secure, loving relationships. Being fully embraced by caring families and extended families increased their sense of belonging.

A high level of acceptance and understanding was reflected in the relationships young people experienced within caregiver families. Young people's confidence and sense of self-worth was promoted by their experience of being valued and accepted as individuals. This was highly evident in the individualised care they received to meet their, sometimes complex, needs provided by skilled and committed carers.

Caring households benefitted from meaningful and enduring relationships with their supervising social workers and with the wider team. This supported caregivers to feel that they were consulted and listened to in relation to planning for individual children and the development of the wider service.

Children and young people's safety and wellbeing was promoted by a robust and consistent approach to

child and adult protection, which reflected best practice and national guidance. Caregivers and staff members have all completed relevant protection training, and safety is promoted by clear and regularly updated individualised risk assessments and safer caring plans. We advised the service that comprehensive carer chronologies would offer further benefits to support early identification of concerns and service overview.

Young people were supported by well-equipped and skilled carers and staff. A wide range of relevant and appropriate learning opportunities are available for carers and staff to support them in their roles. Carers had a strong understanding of the impact of developmental trauma and were thoughtful and reflective in their responses to children and young people as a result. We highlighted to the service the need to ensure adequate oversight of carer training as the systems used do not appear to provide required information as effectively as they would hope.

Carers worked respectfully and effectively with birth family members to promote positive experiences for young people and support their sense of family identity. Young people were supported to remain with brothers and sisters and where this was not possible, to maintain these important relationships.

Positive education experiences were achieved and carers liaised closely with education professionals/ establishments to support this. Where necessary, they also advocated effectively on the behalf of young people to ensure their rights to high quality education experiences, which meets their needs, were upheld.

Young people's health and wellbeing was actively supported and carers ensured access to appropriate community health services, including specialist resources. Carers worked effectively with other professionals and, when required, advocated on their behalf to ensure the, sometimes complex, needs of young people were met.

Timely access to specialist resources to support young people's health and wellbeing were also available through the fostering service. These were also available to others in the caring household promoting an holistic approach to ensuring high quality of support was experienced.

Legal certainty regarding permanence for young people with carers was being sought and achieved where appropriate. This reduced uncertainty for all involved and supported young people to have an increased sense of security.

The views of young people within fostering households were consistently being sought and represented. This meant young people were heard, their views were considered and held influence.

A referral hub based in Scotland had recently been introduced at the time of the last inspection and was now firmly embedded within the service processes. This was reflected in a more mindful and informed approach to matching based on a strong knowledge of caring households and local geography. This contributed to young people experiencing more positive and stable care arrangements.

How well is our care and support planned?

5 - Very Good

A number of strengths were identified which resulted in positive outcomes for children and young people, therefore an evaluation of very good has been awarded to this key question

Children and young people were leading positive, healthy and enjoyable lives through the implementation of high-quality planning. Care and support is enhanced by the involvement of caregivers and the wider agency.

The fostering service actively seeks involvement in multi-agency planning for children and young people. Young people's views are consistently sought and represented in decision making forums and the service works to ensure birth children are also heard and appropriately considered. Young people's views and their participation is also sought and influences aspects of service development.

Supervising social workers and foster carers are active partners in local authority review processes and help to ensure that children and young people's voices are central to these plans. Where young people's views are not being sufficiently heard, carers act as powerful advocates and will enlist independent advocacy or legal support when needed. The service has developed an escalation process and we trust that we will be able to see evidence of this in practice at the next inspection.

Multi agency children and young people's plans are enhanced by staff in the service engaging well with young people and their caring households. Child plans highlighted involvement and input from a wide range of professionals and specialists, supporting the child, their family and their care arrangement. This contributed to holistic and comprehensive assessments promoting positive outcomes for children and young people.

Children and young people in the fostering service benefitted from an individualised safer caring plan and appropriate risk assessments. These were detailed, regularly reviewed and supported the achievement of positive outcomes.

Quality of young people's documents was not always consistent. We encouraged the service to continue their development work in this area to support increased consistency and quality of recording across the service to support planning to achieve positive outcomes.

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 support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, the service should review their processes for the recording and monitoring of safeguarding concerns.

This should include, but not be restricted to, ensuring notifications to the Care inspectorate are appropriately detailed and timeous.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social care Standards (HSCS) which state that : 'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities' (HSCS 3.20)

This area for improvement was made on 6 October 2022.

Action taken since then

- Children and young people's safety and wellbeing is promoted by a robust and consistent approach to child and adult protection, which reflected best practice and national guidance in this area.
- Where there had been concerns or allegations in relation to caregiver practice, these were clearly recorded and investigated, with good communication maintained amongst the multi-disciplinary team around young people.
- Increased monitoring and improved quality of recording supported service overview and practice in this area.
- Weekly Safeguarding meetings are held to consider and monitor presenting protection matters and/or concerns.
- Safeguarding surgeries are held to consider more complex events in detail.
- Caregivers and staff members have all completed relevant protection training, and safety is promoted by clear and regularly updated individualised risk assessments and safer caring plans
- Notifications were submitted in a timely fashion, correctly notified and contained relevant information with some limited exceptions which were discussed with the service.

We highlighted to the service that comprehensive carer chronologies would offer further benefits to support early identification of concerns and service overview.

We found this area for improvement to be met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support young people to experience their care in a safe and planned way, with full consideration of needs and strengths within a caring household, the service should ensure that any emergency authorisation for changes to carers approval is returned without delay to panel for consideration and review.

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 is consistent and stable because people work well together" (HSCS 3.19) and "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes" (HSCS 4.19)

This area for improvement was made on 6 October 2022.

Action taken since then

- Comprehensive analysis of temporary change to foster care approvals are contained in request documents. These contain input from the team manager and subsequently the Agency Decision Maker cites the reasons for authorisation or otherwise in detail.
- These were returned to panel in a timely manner for consideration.

We have highlighted to the service some issues with their recording which require to be addressed to ensure accurate information is held. We have also advised the service that they should review their policy to ensure the timescales which they work to are detailed and that this is reflected in recorded information on the request document.

We found this area for improvement to be met.

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 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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