

The Cottage Care Home Service

1 Cobblehaugh Farm
Lanark
ML11 8SG

Telephone: 01555 663 532

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
20 December 2024

Service provided by:
Common Thread Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2005007437

Service no:
CS2015343491

About the service

The Cottage is a care home for children and young people, registered to care for three children and young people between the ages of eight to 18 years old. The property is a large bungalow, with a substantial outdoor area, located in a rural area near the town of Lanark. The provider is Common Thread, and this service has been registered with the Care Inspectorate since 2016.

Each young person has their own bedroom and there is a large kitchen with dining space and a good sized living room area. There is also an office and two sleep in rooms for staff.

At the time of inspection, there were three young people living at The Cottage.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 17 December 2024 09:45 to 17.45, 18 December 2024 09:30 to 18:30 and off site evidence reading and interviews on 19 and 20 December 2024. The inspection was carried out by one inspector 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. We reviewed responses to our survey questionnaires from young people, staff, families and external professionals.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with three people using the service and one of their family members
- spoke with seven staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with one visiting professional.

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 areas for improvement will be highlighted in this report.

Key messages

Children and young people received a high level of nurturing support which promoted positive outcomes.

Staff supported young people to have active and fulfilling lives.

Care was specifically tailored to the young people whose opinions were sought in relation to their plan and goals.

Staff promoted mental and physical health and engaged with multi-agency teams to ensure any needs were met.

The service should strengthen their commitment to continuing care.

There was continuous evaluation of children and young people's outcomes through strong leadership.

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 children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

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

Young people in The Cottage have been kept safe. Staff understood their needs very well and nurtured positive relationships within the house. The young people were listened to and felt valued by staff. One young person told us "It's a really good house and I feel listened to and loved and cared for".

Young people's rights were promoted, and staff advocated on behalf of them proactively, using their understanding to represent their views and needs. The young people received good support to make use of independent advocacy where required.

Staff were effective at managing young people with complex care needs and were committed to providing the best level of care to all the young people who came to live in the house.

Young people benefitted from a staff team who were, in the main, knowledgeable in Nurture Principles and Trauma Informed Practice. This meant that young people were able to invest in safe and trusting relationships and experienced a reduction in risk taking behaviours. One external professional told us "It's all about the relationships and I have been impressed that the staff team see the importance of this and that relationships are key to supporting and progressing young people".

Staff had a high awareness of young people's needs and physical restraint was only used when other forms of de-escalation had been tried.

Young people felt respected and understood the importance of mutual respect. One staff member told us "Staff have an open and honest approach with all young people which is very effective for their care plans, risk assessments and behaviour support plans".

Staff ensured that physical and mental health appointments were prioritised for all young people. Young people all had access to appropriate health professionals and strong multiagency working ensured that their needs were being met with specialist interventions being sought as required to best support them.

Young people's relationships with loved ones and people that were important to them were actively supported and promoted which had a positive impact on their emotional wellbeing. One family member told us "Staff do an amazing job and are keeping the young person safe and happy".

Young people's interests were nurtured. Young people told us about activities such as day trips, visits to restaurants and holiday plans. All of these are fun activities that promote bonding and relationships with staff and others in the house.

Good engagement with education was resulting in positive outcomes for the young people. One education professional told us there is "very individualised support and care for the young people in their care. It is clear from conversations and actions that they want the best for the young person. The relationship built with the young person is strong and has come from genuine investment in what is right for them".

There was a good commitment to continuing care in the service with an expectation that young people will

remain in the service until they are ready to leave. The service does not have a continuing care policy. This should be progressed and all staff should undertake adult protection training. (Area for improvement 1)

Young people were fully engaged in their care and support. Their views were sought and included within the care plans which were personally tailored. We asked the service to continue to focus on ensuring that goals identified for young people are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound) and person centred to ensure that their needs and aspirations are maximised.

Areas for improvement

1. The service should develop a continuing care policy to set out its responsibilities to provide continuing care to young people and how it will ensure that young people are aware of their right to continuing care up to the age of 21. They should also ensure that all staff undertake Adult Protection training.

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

'As a child or young person I feel valued, loved and secure' (HSCS 3.5) 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 areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To improve young people's care and support experience following all events of concern, the service should ensure that a process of recording, debriefing and management oversight is in place to promote opportunities to reflect on practice.

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

I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2022.

Action taken since then

During inspection we reviewed the service's response to all events of concern. Improved reporting and recording processes are now in place. We saw evidence of regular, timely and reflective debriefs and there was a robust level of management oversight of these.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support continuous improvement and meet young people's changing needs, the provider should enhance their quality assurance processes, including the external manager role.

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

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 December 2022.

Action taken since then

The manager has put in place detailed and robust levels of quality assurance across all aspects of the service. External manager oversight of this was evident and all systems worked well together to identify themes or issues and to support the future development of the service in meeting young people's needs.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

For young people to have the service that is right for them, the provider should further improve their admissions and matching process. This includes consideration of young people currently in the service and staff skills, experience and knowledge.

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).

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2022.

Action taken since then

Admission and matching documentation evidenced that the service, where possible, planned admissions with clear referral processes and pre-admission meetings taking place. The needs of young people already living in the house were taken into consideration in a number of ways and staffing needs assessments informed the skills and numbers of staff to meet the needs of any new young person.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

To ensure young people are cared for by the right number of staff who have the required experience and skill mix to meet their changing needs, the provider should establish a staffing analysis process.

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 provided in a planned and safe way, including if there is an emergency or unexpected event. (HSCS 4.14).

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2022.

Action taken since then

The service now has in place a detailed staffing analysis which informs the matching of young people to the house, staff ratios and shift planning. This was robust and updated on a monthly basis.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 5

To support staff to deliver effective care and support, the provider should ensure care plans are SMART.

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

My personal plan is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices. (HSCS 1.15).

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2022.

Action taken since then

Care plans for young people were seen to be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound) and detailed a range of goals. Whilst this area for improvement has been met we would urge the service to continue to ensure that goals are aligned with the views of young people and remain SMART and ambitious.

This area for improvement has been 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 children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life	5 - Very Good

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