

East Renfrewshire Council Fostering Service Fostering Service

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East Renfrewshire Council

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About the service

East Renfrewshire Council's Fostering Service provides support to children and young people aged from birth to 18 years who are assessed as in need of alternative care arrangements. The service recruits and supports caregiving families to provide a range of services.

The service is delivered by a dedicated team of supervising social workers and management who work across both the fostering, adult placement and adoption services. The team has a range of responsibilities including adoption and continuing care.

The inspection of the adoption and adult placement continuing care services took place at the same time and the findings of these inspections are provided in separate reports.

About the inspection

This was a short notice inspection which took place between 13 January 2025 and 6 February 2025. 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 13 people using the service and 13 caregivers
- spoke with five staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

We also reviewed MS survey responses from seven young people, nine caregivers and five staff members.

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.

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

- Children and young people experienced a high standard of care. They had developed meaningful and trusting relationships and lived in stable and predictable home environments.
- Children and young people and caregivers benefitted from the agency having a strong and well embedded commitment to participation and inclusion.
- Children and young people were supported to maintain meaningful relationships with extended family members, significant birth family members and were involved in the wider community.
- Caregivers provided nurturing, trauma informed care, supported by staff who were skilled, knowledgeable, and responsive.
- There was evidence of positive outcomes for children and young people. This was supported by good quality assessments of caregivers and in the support provided following the placement of children.
- The safety and wellbeing of children and young people would be enhanced through the use of individualised safer caring plans.

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

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.

Children and young people had meaningful, affectionate and secure relationships with their caregivers that promoted a sense of belonging, trust and security. We saw young people thriving as a result of nurturing and enabling care that was attuned to their needs. Being fully embraced by caregiving families and extended families increased their sense of belonging.

Children and young people experienced a high level of acceptance and understanding. Their confidence and sense of self-worth was promoted by their experience of being valued and accepted as individuals.

Caregivers had awareness of the impact of trauma on children's development and cared for them in a way that was sensitive and responsive to these experiences. This was highly evident in the individualised care they received to meet their, sometimes complex needs, provided by skilled and committed caregivers.

Caregivers experienced positive and established relationships with their supervising social workers, and the wider team, and greatly valued staff knowledge, skills, commitment, and responsiveness. This supported caregivers to feel that they were consulted and listened to in relation to planning for individual young people and the development of the wider service.

Caregiving families were trauma informed and used this knowledge to best support the children and young people in their care. We concluded that the skills and commitment of the staff team, combined with enduring relationships, was integral in enabling caregivers to provide therapeutic and individual care. One caregiver commented, 'The social work staff are supportive and genuinely caring for the carers and the young people and I feel very much that I am working in a team'.

It was evident that staff members knew both caregivers and young people very well. We were encouraged to hear the level of emotional support caregivers experienced from staff. They were actively supported through training and supervision. One caregiver survey response told us, 'I feel actively supported by the service to provide the best care for the children and young people I care for'.

Children and young people were involved in their care and benefitted from caregiver families who advocated passionately and effectively on their behalf. Young people's rights were prioritised and promoted by the service and caregivers. We saw a strong ethos and commitment towards children's rights across the local authority.

Independent advocacy was sought where appropriate to support children and young people. The strong and positive relationships between young people, their caregivers and the staff group were seen as key in ensuring the quality and stability of care provided.

We saw children and young people's voices being valued through high levels of participation and inclusion in activities, and also through wider activities supported throughout East Renfrewshire. Young people participation was seen to be supporting the shaping of the service.

Caregivers worked respectfully and effectively with birth family members to promote positive experiences for young people and support their sense of family identity. The role and importance of brother and sister relationships was well understood. We saw that children were living with their brothers and sisters when this was appropriate. When children could not live with their brothers and sisters, caregivers prioritised these family connections and children were supported to maintain relationships with those who were important to them. We were particularly impressed by the practice of social workers across the authority to involve, support and sustain meaningful links with birth parents.

We saw that children and young people experienced positive outcomes across all areas of their life. This was evident within education where we saw young people succeeding and being supported to overcome barriers and achieve their potential.

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.

A wide range of relevant and appropriate learning opportunities are available for caregivers and staff to support them in their roles. Caregivers had a strong understanding of the impact of developmental trauma

and as a result, were thoughtful and reflective in their responses to children and young people. We highlighted to the service the need to ensure adequate oversight of caregiver and staff training as the systems used do not appear to provide required information as effectively as they would hope.

Children and young people were supported to develop a strong sense of identity and positive mental health. This is supported by stable living situations, positive predictable relationships with caregivers and appropriately timely, supportive interventions.

Caregivers had access to good quality support and learning in preserving their part in the child's life story and in sharing this information sensitively and creatively with the child, at different stages of their life. This supports children and young people to have better lifelong understanding of their history and, in turn, a positive sense of identity.

Children and young people's health and wellbeing was actively supported and caregivers ensured access to appropriate community health services, including specialist resources. Children and young people who had varied and complex health needs received a high level of care in response to their individual health needs and multi-agency working between their caregivers and relevant agencies. We were very impressed with the health visitor input to families as part of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. This made a valuable contribution to the health needs of very young children being understood and met.

There were limited moves evident for most children and young people with the majority experiencing stable and consistent care. Timely interventions supported relationships and individual wellbeing.

The service's assessments of caregivers were of a consistently high standard. These were comprehensive, evidence based and contained an appropriate balance of strengths, vulnerabilities and analysis. The assessment process was collaborative and transparent and based on positive working relationships between caregivers and their supervising social worker. Caregiver reviews took place within the legal guidelines. Review processes were underpinned by the service and foster carers working in partnership together.

Children and young people who are in need of permanent alternative care had their assessments were completed without unnecessary delay. This reduced uncertainty for all involved and supported young people to have an increased sense of security and has had a positive impact on outcomes. 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. This was greatly aided by the strength of relationships and practice between the service and the children's social work practice team.

The matching of children and young people with caregivers within the service was strong. This was aided by the quality of foster carer assessments and reviews. The service had a sound knowledge of their caregivers and the mix of skills, abilities and experience they possessed. We saw positive examples of children and young people being supported to visit the caregiver family prior to moving and transitions were generally well considered.

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 children and young people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

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

service.

The service had a key role in contributing to multi-agency planning for children and young people. Children and young people's views are consistently sought and represented in decision making forums. Their views and participation are sought and influences aspects of service development. Supervising social workers and caregivers are effective 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, caregivers often act as powerful advocates and will enlist independent advocacy when needed.

Multi-agency children and young people's plans are enhanced by staff in the service engaging well with children and young people and their caring households. Well established relationships with both carers and children and young people further strengthened this. Child plans we did see, identified involvement and input from a wide range of professionals and specialists, supporting the child, their family and their living 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 a household safer caring plan and appropriate risk assessments where needed. Whilst we did see positive outcomes for children and young people, these were not supported by individualised safer caring approaches. The safety and wellbeing of children and young people could be enhanced through the use of high quality and individualised safer caring plans which would reflect the specific needs of children and young people within caregiving families and support early identification of concerns and strategies to manage these. **(See area for improvement 1.)**

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure the safety of all young people the service should ensure that individual safer caring plans are in place for all young people and that these are regularly reviewed when circumstances change.

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

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

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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