

Aberdeenshire Council Continuing Care Service Adult Placement Service

Gordon House
Blackhall Road
Inverurie
AB51 3WA

Telephone: 01467 532700

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Announced (short notice)

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Service provided by:
Aberdeenshire Council

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About the service

Aberdeenshire adult placement service provides a care service for young people from 18 to 21 years, who are in the care of their foster families on a continuing care basis. These young people and their foster families live in, or have connections in, the Aberdeenshire area.

Aberdeenshire adult placement and continuing care service was registered with the Care Inspectorate in August 2023.

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.

About the inspection

This was an announced (short notice) inspection which took place between 15 January and 21 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 one person using the service and two caregivers.
- Spoke with 14 staff and management.
- Spoke with one visiting professional.
- Observed one fostering panel.
- Spoke with the panel chair and the agency decision maker.
- Attended two caregiver support groups.
- Observed practice and daily life.
- Reviewed a wide range of documents.

The Fostering service was inspected at the same time and separate reports are available. The same management and staff team deliver the fostering and AP/CC services inspected, and the evaluations were similar.

A two-year review of Aberdeenshire Fostering and Adult Placement/Continuing Care (AP/CC) services was approaching a concluding phase during our inspection. The plans for transformational change were at an early stage of implementation and about to be impacted by staffing changes in the management structure of the services.

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

- Caregivers were skilled at developing positive, trusting and enduring relationships, and young people knew they were loved and respected.
- Young people were consulted and listened to by their caregivers and staff, who supported them to express their views and have their voice heard.
- Caregivers provided young people with safety, stability and predictability.
- Young people were encouraged to develop independent living skills and were supported to understand what continuing care meant.
- Outcomes for children could be enhanced through delivery of core training and reflective discussions with caregivers.
- There were occasions when caregivers were not reviewed in line with regulations and good practice.
- Complaints should be recorded and monitored in line with the organisations complaint policy and procedures.
- Safer caring and risk assessment planning could be more robust.
- Assessment of caregivers' ability to adapt to the changing support needs of young people as they transition from fostering to continuing care could be more robust.

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?	3 - Adequate
How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good

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

How well do we support people's wellbeing?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate. We identified some strengths which just outweighed weaknesses.

Young people benefited from meaningful, affectionate and nurturing relationships with their caregivers. They experienced stability and predictability of care and were considered a valued family member of the caregiver household. They witnessed caregivers maintaining relationships with young people they had

previously looked after and knew they too would be offered a lifelong relationship, aligning with the commitments in 'The Promise.'

Caregivers supported young people to manage and understand the dynamics of birth family relationships, in ways that were sensitive and met the needs of the young people. Young people's care was personalised and enriched by caregivers who understood their strengths and preferences. They were encouraged to develop independent living skills as they approached the age of adult maturity. Caregiver review reports failed to fully address how caregivers and young people were adapting to changing support needs, and this will form an area for improvement in this key question (**see area for improvement 1**).

Young people played an active and responsible role in decisions that affected them. Their choices to participate in various interests and activities were respected and they led active and fulfilling lives. This promoted their sense of confidence, self-efficacy and resilience. Young people accessed further education and paid employment. Caregivers engaged them in realistic discussions surrounding strengths and support required to work towards goals and aspirations. They gently provided practical and emotional support to push young people through their comfort zone and reach their potential.

Caregivers and young people were provided with information about their rights in terms of an adult placement and continuing care in a timely manner. Housing and Through Care After Care services provided information events. Young people were informed and empowered to make informed decisions about their future. An information leaflet for young people explained their rights and complaint procedures. Aberdeenshire Council Complaints Handling Procedure is comprehensive and defines a complaint as 'any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.' We identified that some expressions of dissatisfaction had not been managed in accordance with organisational procedures. Complaint management, recording and monitoring will form an area for improvement in this key question (**see area for improvement 2**).

Many caregivers valued the support from their supervising social worker, recognising their skills, knowledge and responsiveness. Staff and caregiver documentation, however, did not evidence current and up-to-date training in child and adult protection, or trauma informed care. We were not provided with evidence that supervising social workers encouraged reflective discussions or how learning was applied in practice. To ensure young people benefit from the highest quality therapeutic care, in line with the commitments of The Promise, the service should develop a schedule of core or recommended training which includes child and adult protection and a trauma skilled approach. Caregiver attendance should be tracked and monitored, with evidence of reflective practice discussions recorded. This will form a requirement in this key question (**see requirement 1**).

We identified that staff in each children's service had relevant skills, knowledge and resources that could improve outcomes for children and young people if shared. Closer working relationships, sharing of knowledge and equity in learning opportunities across children's services will form an area for improvement in this key question (**see area for improvement 3**).

Fostering panel memberships was diverse with clear panel processes in place. Panel member scrutiny was rigorous and sensitive with feedback provided to improve standards and/or recognise quality. Plans to ensure the voice of the young person is heard in caregiver reviews is a priority action of the management team, reinforced by the panel. Timescales for some caregiver reviews were out-of-date, and we were not provided with any documentation which might reassure us of the scale of these delays. One caregiver reported, 'I experienced significant delay for the young person due to extremely lengthy delays in Foster Carer Reviews which meant CC Approval had not been given.' The management team were aware that some reviews were out-with timescales, and they were working to address these issues. Ensuring caregivers

reviews are tracked and monitored and undertaken in line with regulations and good practice will form an area for improvement in this key question (**see area for improvement 4**).

Requirements

1. By 30 April 2025, to ensure children benefit from the highest quality therapeutic care in line with the commitments of The Promise, the provider must develop a schedule of core or recommended training that supports staff and caregivers to further develop their skills and knowledge.

This should include but not be limited to:

- a) Ensuring the provision of high-quality specialist training in child and adult protection.
- b) Ensuring the provision of high-quality specialist training to support children impacted by trauma.
- c) Ensuring all caregivers engage with child and adult protection and trauma training opportunities provided.
- d) Recording reflective discussions between staff and caregivers, which evidence learning and how it is applied in practice.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

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); and

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure caregivers can meet the needs of young people as adults, their review reports should provide evidence of their ability to adapt to the changing needs of young people as they transition from fostering to continuing care.

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

'My future care and support needs are anticipated as part of my assessment' (HSCS 1.14); and

'My human rights are central to the organisations that support and care for me' (HSCS 4.1).

2. To promote the safety and welfare of children and young people and their care giver families, the service should follow their complaints procedure when expressions of dissatisfaction are raised. To achieve this the AP/CC service should have a clear knowledge of the complaints procedure, and this should be shared with all staff and caregivers.

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

'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).

3. To ensure children receive high-quality care and support the provider should encourage collaborative practices and the sharing of relevant skills, knowledge and resources across staff in all children's services.

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

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice (HSCS 4.11); and

'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources' (HSCS 4.27).

4. To ensure that caregiver performance and professional development is appropriately reviewed and supported, the service should ensure that all caregiver reviews take place within statutory timescales.

This is to comply with Regulation 25 (1) of The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009.

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

'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 well is our care and support planned?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. We identified a number of important strengths which, taken together, outweigh areas for improvement.

Young people benefited from high quality personal planning. This included welfare assessments and pathways plans, which were reviewed in line with statutory requirements. Multi-agency planning was evident. Supervising social workers and caregivers prioritised attended planning meetings and provided reports. Advocacy services were invited when they were involved. Relevant health and education professionals provided written reports and attended reviews, where appropriate.

Young people were at the heart of formal care planning. Their views were represented in reports from all professionals, and they were encouraged to submit their own report 'Having your say.' Care planning meeting minutes recorded positive responses to whether professional reports had been shared with the young person and their caregiver.

We identified that some young people and their caregivers may benefit from comprehensive safe care plans that are underpinned by robust and dynamic assessments of need and risk. These would assist caregivers to work with a young person in an open and honest manner as they identify, manage and mitigate risks in the home and community. We recognise this will require the consent of young people. The management team agreed to consider this in their work with young people.

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?	3 - Adequate
1.1 Children, young people, adults and their caregiver families experience compassion, dignity and respect	4 - Good
1.2 Children, young people and adults get the most out of life	3 - Adequate
1.3 Children, young people and adults' health and wellbeing benefits from the care and support they experience	4 - 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?	4 - Good
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects the outcomes and wishes of children, young people and adults	4 - Good

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Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

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