care inspectorate

Stepdown Supported Carers Service
Adult Placement Service

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Glasgow
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Telephone: 0141 762 4523

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
Stepdown

Service provider number:
SP2008009794

Service no:
CS2010279414

HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

About the service

Stepdown Supported Carers Service has been registered with the Care Inspectorate since 1 April 2011.

The service is registered to provide an adult placement resource for care leavers or vulnerable young people from the community over the age of 16 years. The service is designed to give young people the opportunity to live in a supportive and structured family environment, enabling them to receive emotional and behavioural support whilst developing the social skills to support their future and community living. Stepdown supported carers and staff work in partnership with Local Authorities and other relevant professionals involved in the young persons' plan.

Although the supported care service has its own policies and procedures the service is linked to the fostering service as carers are dual approved. The same staff, manager, approval panel, board of directors, carers, support groups and training is used. Since the last Inspection, the service have retained their approved carers and assessed and approved two short breaks carers.

The aim of the service is to:

'Help young people fulfil their potential by delivering high quality care and support through a range of specialist services'

What people told us

We carried out two home visits during this Inspection, spoke with six carers and three young people in total. We had access to documentary evidence of other feedback provided to the service, and received four responses to questionnaires that were sent out prior to the Inspection starting. All of the feedback was very positive with an emphasis on the support provided by supervising social workers and the relationships developed by these staff with carers and young people. All carers we spoke with advised that they would have no hesitation recommending Stepdown to people wishing to become supported/foster carers.

Carers Commented:

'Stepdown provide a framework to cover a young persons everyday needs and provide a network of people who can advise on any problems you may have'

'Stepdown provide a fantastic service for carers and young people and are always looking for ways to improve by listening to carers ideas/concerns'

'My worker always comes when she says, and is always at the other end of the phone when I have any issues, to talk me through them and it always helps'

'Regular training is offered and is always appropriate to our professional development. some of this is mandatory for example, adult protection. Other training is provided on request, our own children have also attended training.

Young people commented:

'My carer is just like a mum to me, we are one big family'

'We have our ups and downs like any other family, and I am happy here'

'I was involved in interviewing for staff and really enjoyed it'

'I wasn't working or anything and was fully supported to get back on my feet, it's amazing where I am now compared to a few years ago'

It was pleasing to hear from young people that they knew all of the staff team very well, including senior managers, and they appreciated participation days where they could socialise and engage in fun activities, whilst at the same time being given an opportunity to express their views.

As the findings of this inspection are based on a sample of young people, Inspectors cannot assure the quality of experience for every single child receiving a service.

Self assessment

The service provided us with their service evaluation and improvement plan for this Inspection. It was clear that staff and carers had participated in the evaluation.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	5 - Very Good
Quality of staffing	not assessed
Quality of management and leadership	4 - Good

What the service does well

We found that young people continued to experienced very good outcomes during this Inspection, and we were satisfied that they were benefiting in particular from the establishment of nurturing and enduring relationships with their carers. These relationships provided a sense of security, which in turn promoted their emotional and physical wellbeing. This had helped young people sustain their placements during some very testing life events. In addition we heard from all carers and young people we spoke with about more practical outcomes, in relation to young people gaining and sustaining employment, educational achievements, the development of interests leading to competing at national levels, and young people who were actively volunteering in their communities.

It was evident that the relationship that carers had with the staff supporting them was of a very good quality. The regularity and responsiveness of this support was valued by carers who felt that the frequency of visits and meetings were proportionate to their needs. Carers we spoke with were very complimentary about their workers and they commented on their dedication to 'go the extra mile' to support both them and the young people in their care. Staff were familiar with all the young people using the service and viewed them as unique individuals, helping to provide them with a sound understanding of their needs.

Relationships between carers and young people we spoke with were positive and some were providing long term care to adult placements from early in their childhood. Close bonds and strong emotional attachments had been formed with carers and their immediate family, which were likely to endure life long.

These positive relationships develop a sense of trust and influence which enable young people to engage in other aspects of their lives with confidence and vigour. Young people we spoke with presented as motivated and they were keen to discuss their longer term goals and aspirations with a sense of purpose.

Carers advised us of the good quality training that they received from the service, and added that their learning had been beneficial to supporting young people. Carers particularly appreciated the recent trauma and emotional regulation training delivered in collaboration with psychological services. Some carers were able to give us specific examples about how they had understood and applied this learning to practice which we found impressive.

We examined the services adult protection presentation to carers, and were satisfied with the procedures in place to ensure young people were protected. Carers informed us that they had recently had refresher training in adult protection and that this had been very helpful. We welcomed the development of safeguarding training to include the adult children of carers, as this will help to strengthen the competency of the entire carer household. Overall we found that carers had a sound understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities surrounding young people, and applied this information to their practice.

Care planning for young people was prioritised by the service and we found that Stepdown's outcomes framework for young people had improved since the last Inspection. The document clearly set out the aims of the placement and what was required to achieve the desired outcomes. There was evidence of thorough collaborative working practices with all key individuals involved in the young persons plan. This inclusive approach helps to ensure that young people, and the individuals who support them, are fully aware of the decisions and actions that are required to help young people fulfil their potential.

Despite that fact that there had been planned and unplanned absence of staff resulting in capacity difficulties, managers had coped with this very well. There had not been had any obvious impact on young people or carers, and it is testament to the team as a whole that they had managed to prioritise the care and support of people despite some disruption. Staff informed us that this was due to very good peer support, being part of a small team, and on going managerial support which was appreciated. A new worker to the team advised us that she felt welcomed and was being fully supported by managers throughout a robust Induction and probationary period.

We examined the services self evaluation and development and improvement plan 2018. These documents highlighted what was required to improve the experience of carers and young people and it was evident that the majority of their targets had been met. Young people and carers also had the opportunity to present their views to the board of directors on an annual basis. This type of activity will also afford the opportunity to directly influence service provision from their unique perspective.

Managers were receptive to our views on improvements that could be made to their on going self evaluation and development plans during feedback.

What the service could do better

At an operational level we found several examples where foster carers had been appropriately challenged about their practice and this had been recorded. There was less evidence of this level of assurance and debate in some of the panel minutes that we examined. In two cases we also found that the quality of the minutes was not of a sufficiently good standard. This will form a recommendation (1)

During the Inspection we found weaknesses in the matching process, this had resulted in some disruption and had a significant impact on the carer household. We have also asked the service to hold a sudden end of placement review in relation to this case to ensure that the service draws this through into learning for future matching. This will form recommendation (2)

At the last Inspection we asked the service to make improvements in relation to risk assessments and how any identified risk should be responded to. We acknowledged that the service had taken steps and implemented more robust processes; however during this Inspection we noted that new and significant information had not prompted the review of a risk assessment prior to changes being made. Therefore the recommendation will continue. This will form recommendation (3).

During the inspection, we noted that the service had not submitted all notifications to the Care Inspectorate. We discussed with management the need to develop a more robust system to ensure accidents and incidents are reported in a timely manner.

We have asked the service to review their arrangements in relation to the annual carer review process. This is to ensure that these meetings are always chaired by someone who can provide an independent and objective view on the circumstances and on going competency of the carer.

When we raised any areas of concern about practice the service took this seriously and where necessary provided careful explanations. Suggestions about improvements received from young people were also shared with Managers during feedback. An example of this was a suggestion about young people being more involved in carer reviews and how this could be taken forward.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 3

1. The provider needs to ensure that formal panel minutes are recorded fully and accurately at all times, and always include action points where necessary.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that "I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice" (HSCS 4.11).

2. When the service is considering matching children or young people alongside an adult placement, this should always be based on a comprehensive analysis of risks and needs to minimise any disruption.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that "If I am supported and cared for by a team or more than one organisation, this is well co-ordinated so that I experience consistency and continuity" (HSCS 4.17)

3. The service needs to ensure that when significant information comes to light that prompts a change to the management of any identified risk, this is promptly reviewed, clearly demonstrates why any changes are being made and that this is updated within the risk assessment.

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

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
20 Sep 2017	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed Not assessed 4 - Good
15 Sep 2016	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed Not assessed 5 - Very good
26 Jan 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed 5 - Very good 5 - Very good
28 Nov 2013	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed 5 - Very good 5 - Very good
21 Nov 2012	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing	5 - Very good Not assessed 5 - Very good

Date	Type	Gradings	
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
30 Jan 2012	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed Not assessed 4 - Good

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