

East Renfrewshire Council Fostering Service Fostering Service

Eastwood Health and Care Centre
Drumby Crescent
Clarkston
Glasgow
G76 7HN

Telephone: 0141 451 0725

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Announced (short notice)

Completed on:

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Service provided by:

East Renfrewshire Council

Service provider number:

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About the service

East Renfrewshire Council's Fostering Service provides a fostering and family placement resource for children and young people aged from birth to 18 years who are assessed as needing the service. The service recruits and supports carer families to provide a range of fostering placements including temporary and permanent foster care and respite care. Five foster carer households had been approved since the last inspection.

At the time of the inspection 22 children from East Renfrewshire Council were placed within East Renfrewshire's 17 approved foster care households. The council also have a number of children in kinship care placements. Kinship care arrangements are provided by a child's extended family or by a close friend who had a pre-existing relationship with the child.

The team consists of a Team Manager, an Advanced Practitioner, two supervising social workers and are currently recruiting a third social worker. The team also work within the adoption service and adult placement service, East Renfrewshire Council's Adoption Service was inspected at the same time and a separate report is available.

The Fostering Service is part of East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), that brings together community health services and social work services.

What people told us

During the inspection we spoke with two children living in foster care and four young people who are part of the champions group.

Children in foster care, told us they get really liked living with their foster family and shared positive experiences. Older young people expressed confidence in the way they were supported by East Renfrewshire HSCP and included in decision making. One young person told us having a 'constant' was of critical importance and expressed how she had benefitted from having the same social worker over many years who had been her 'constant'.

We spoke with four foster carers and received four questionnaires from foster carers. Comments made to us are detailed below:

"Training opportunities are great and if we ask for something specifically then our link worker will make sure it is made available"

"All the workers I have dealt with, both social workers and supervising social workers, are professional, caring and mindful of the best interests of the child"

"Sometimes the information about the children could be provided quicker"

"It helps if we are told what children have told about why they are here, that way we know what to say when they ask us that question"

"Link workers always present our views well and we are very well supported"

"There is definitely a need for getting therapeutic help quicker for children"

"If I need training not on the list, they will always organise it"

"The staff are always available for any questions I have"

"I am asked regularly how the service could improve and they do take on board our views"

"It would be helpful if the child's social worker would let us know when they will be unavailable, if they are going on holiday, or someone else could let us know. Even a text message would be enough"

A parent of a child recently living in foster care told us, " It was the best care I could ever have expected, I know I can call on them (foster carers) for advice anytime and they will give it"

Self assessment

A self-assessment was not requested by the Care Inspectorate for this inspection, however the service provided a development plan and comprehensive evidence folder which assisted with the inspection process.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

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

What the service does well

Children and young people were benefiting from the nurturing, loving relationships within fostering households. Foster carers promoted healthy, active lifestyles with hobbies and interests promoted. The free and prioritised access to East Renfrewshire Council's range of community-based events was providing impressive opportunities for engagement in the wider community.

The need for safety and the management of risk was well balanced with the opportunity for children and young people to grow and develop. Foster carers were attentive to the health and wellbeing of children and young people and health checks were undertaken by the 'Looked after and accommodated' nurse. The re-introduction of the school nurse gave older children more immediate access to the health support. The 'Head Strong' training initiative brought a shared understanding amongst professionals, foster carers and young people of the impact of teenage anxiety and ways to build better mental health.

Improved educational outcomes in learning and attendance was complimented by the policy guide 'Improving outcomes for looked after children' along with the 'no exclusion' agreement. One child told us, "I am doing better now because I can sleep better here and at my mums".

Foster carers maintained very good contact with schools, assisted with homework and advocated for children when additional supports were required. We were told that children were receiving good support from schools.

The 'Family firm' gave older young people opportunities for work, volunteering and training within a supported environment.

Foster carers played a significant role in helping children make good transitions, in pre-admission introductions, returning home or to adoptive families. The level of commitment shown by foster carers to families was commendable. The significance of attachments was understood and the recent training in 'Trauma and loss' was developing a trauma aware and informed approach to care.

The newly introduced 'Signs of Safety' strength based, relational approach had transformed the way children, their families and foster households were empowered to contribute to decision making. The use of the 'Three houses' tool enabled younger children to verbalise fears and worries, hopes and aspirations was outstanding, as was the use of independent advocacy and intensive support services. A younger child told us, "Houses help me tell what happened and not be scared because I can talk about my feelings and express them and that means they are out of me and I don't have to be worried". A foster carer told us, "I feel I am part of decision making now and really listened to, it's not a case where I raise a worry and it's filed away somewhere, but something is actually done and it's addressed. It's all out in the open, it's a brilliant new way of working."

The collaboration between corporate parents and the champions board was ambitious and highly effective as highlighted by initiatives in education, health and leisure. The young person's champions group was established, motivated and continued to influence the strategic direction of East Renfrewshire Council's responsibilities to 'looked after children' and 'care experienced'. One young person told us, "They, (Corporate parents) are good at coming along to meet and speak to us. They listen to us and make changes that are needed to do things in a better way".

The service conducted foster home reviews of foster carers to ensure continued suitability. We could see from records and in discussion with foster carers that this was an opportunity to consider support provided and needed and to acknowledge the care provided. Foster carers also attended the fostering panel bi-annually. Foster carers told us they were well supported by supervising social workers. We were told the training had improved and training specific to the needs of individual children had been provided. Foster carers had the opportunity to attend a support group including an evening group option.

Staff members told us that morale was very good and that the team worked well together.

The team impressed as competent and confident in their role and worked effectively with inter-agency and multi-agency partners. A child's social worker told us, "I feel we are just part of one big team because we all work so closely together"

Management were described, supportive, approachable and inclusive which was valued and appreciated. The enhanced leadership opportunities, including the new position of advanced practitioner, continuing care/representative at Scottish throughcare and aftercare forum, practice teaching and panel advisor confirmed this approach. Training opportunities were described as very good, staff considered a need for training in therapeutic working. We were told this was being addressed.

Formal supervision was taking place though not within the frequency stipulated by the agency. A new model of supervision has been recently introduced to reflect the implementation of the signs of safety approach, this includes both individual supervision and group led learning. In addition, we found the suggestions and strategies recorded by the team leader within case notes to be very good practice.

A safer recruitment exercise of one worker's file evidenced that safer recruitment practices were being followed with checks conducted before commencing employment. We noted that the check of the Scottish Social Services Council register was not checked as part of the initial process by Human Resources however we were satisfied this was carried out by the administration support to the Chief Social Work Officer.

The service had a comprehensive development plan which included the need to review key policies and procedures. There was good progress made in meeting all goals identified.

What the service could do better

Practice areas identified were the need to improve the robustness of process used when considering a change of registration for foster carers including a more uniformed approach to the way requests are presented to the fostering panel for consideration. We also considered that if, in the exceptional circumstances, foster carers are out-with their registration a fuller impact assessment along with the skills, competences and chronology of the foster carers should be presented to the Agency Decision Maker with a date of review. This was accepted at inspection feedback as areas which would be improved.

We suggested the team meetings could benefit from being held more frequently with clearer recording of the progress of actions points. We were told this would be addressed.

We did consider the service should record a clearer overview of training undertaken and refresher training required by foster carers in particular mandatory training, such as child protection. We were advised this was being developed.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Complaints

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

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection

Previous recommendations

Recommendation 1

The service should ensure that young people are given the opportunity to secure their future living arrangements in line with the principles of Continuing Care Guidance.

National Care Standards, Foster Care and Family Placement Services

Management and Staffing: Standard 13

This recommendation was made on 16 December 2016.

Action taken on previous recommendation

This recommendation was met. The service had registered an adult placement service and young people were benefiting from staying within a family household as part of continuing care best practice.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
8 Nov 2016	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing Not assessed Management and leadership 5 - Very good
19 Feb 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
24 Mar 2014	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 4 - Good
28 Mar 2012	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very good

Date	Type	Gradings	
		Environment Staffing Management and leadership	Not assessed Not assessed 5 - Very good
20 Jan 2011	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed Not assessed Not assessed
31 Mar 2010	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good Not assessed
31 Mar 2009	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good

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Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

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