

Supported Lodgings Scheme Adult Placement Service

Family Placement Team
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Dumfries & Galloway Council

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About the service

This service was previously registered with the Care Commission and transferred its registration to the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

The Supported Lodgings Scheme is provided by Dumfries and Galloway Council Social Work Service and is available across the whole council area. It was originally set up as part of the work of the council's leaving care team in 2004 and since 2015 has been integral to the work of the family placement team.

The Supported Lodgings Scheme provides alternative accommodation options for care experienced young people and, in exceptional circumstances, to other young people in need of accommodation. Supported lodgings are provided by people in the community, following assessment and approval, who are willing to offer young people accommodation in their own home and to support them to develop living skills to equip them for independent living.

The scheme also allows for young people who have been with foster parents, to receive continuing care by converting their placement to supported lodgings post-16. At the time of this inspection, the majority of the council's supported lodgings providers were also foster carers and most of the placements currently provided by the service had begun as foster placements. As will be highlighted in the body of this report, the service intend to register a separate adult placement service for the specific purpose of continuing care in the New Year to reflect these changing dynamics.

This inspection was carried out using a blended method involving both virtual and face-to-face contact.

What people told us

We spoke directly with one young person during the course of this inspection. Others were reluctant, or unable due to other commitments, to meet with us. We considered young people's views recorded in documentation and through discussion with their carers and leaving care workers.

We spoke with two carers who stated they were generally satisfied with the service. Both spoke particularly positively about the support young people received from their leaving care workers. Some comments from carers are noted below:

"I hope I have provided a happy safe comfortable home for him".

"I've not heard of any support groups, I would be interested in that".

"There seems to be quite a bit of shuffling of workers. You get used to somebody and then it's another one and then another one".

Comments from other professionals involved include:

"He (young person) is safe, he feels cared for and reassured, he can stay there for as long as needs to build his confidence and self-esteem".

"She (carer) encourages him to do more".

"(The carer) offers stability and continues to prepare him for getting his own place and hopefully getting some further education and employment".

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?	3 - Adequate

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 identified some strengths during this inspection; however, these just outweighed weaknesses. As a result, we evaluated this key question as adequate.

We found young people experienced affectionate, warm, and enduring relationships which offered them security and a sense of stability. This offered, provided them the opportunity to take time to make important decisions and work towards identifying and achieving their goals. We heard, in some instances, of these relationships enduring beyond the young person leaving the caring household, highlighting the strength and importance of these connections.

Some carers spoke of experiencing of a number of changes of family placement team workers; however, felt this had not had a significant impact on them and that they were happy with the support they received, with one carer stating, "If I have any problems at all they're at the end of the phone". In one instance, we noted that the carers did not have an allocated worker from the family placement team.

We understand that changes of worker will take place for a number of reasons but did query with the service the process of a new worker being introduced in relation to those carers who the young person has lived with on a fostering basis up to that point. It was also not clear as to the planned benefit of this change for carers and young people; it appeared to be procedural. We felt these changes do not support enduring relationships for carers or young people with professionals who know their story and therefore, do not support positive outcomes. (See area for improvement 1).

The service was due to commence the Bright Spots Scottish project being piloted by Celcis and Coram Voice which will support the service to explore what children and young people feel about their wellbeing, their care experience and transition to independence. It was also exploring the use of digital technology in their attempts to improve outcomes in this area. We look forward to considering this aspect of improvement at the time of the next inspection.

Some young people had, or were, engaging in opportunities in relation to further education, training and employment and others were receiving encouragement and support to access opportunities from their carers and leaving care team workers.

Examples of young people being supported and/or encouraged to develop a variety of skills in line with their age and stage were evident. This gave young people confidence and enhanced their abilities, better equipping them for their future transition to interdependence.

Progress in relation to desired outcomes for young people, however, were not always easy to identify and, whilst we noted positive aspects of their experiences, we felt that assessment, planning and monitoring did not support these being enhanced or progress defined (see key question 5: How well is our care and support planned?).

No protection matters had taken place since the time of the last inspection and we were satisfied that appropriate protection policies and procedures are in place.

We heard that young people benefitted from access to primary health services and received support from their carers to engage with these where appropriate.

We heard that workers from the leaving care team provided good support for young people and were accessible, available and responsive. They had a good understanding of the young people they were supporting and had established positive relationships with them over time. One young person highlighted this, stating, "My leaving care worker has gone above and beyond in making sure I have everything I need and to make sure that I am comfortable and safe. If I have any concerns, they're usually sorted the next day".

The service had planned to progress service specific training for supported lodgings carers (in line with recommendations from the previous inspection) which would provide information and knowledge to further equip them in their role of supporting young people in their transition into young adulthood and interdependence. This would be the only training provided to those carers who had not 'converted' to the service as those in fostering households could continue to access training relating to their fostering role. This had not been progressed. In addition, although we were informed that the local authority provided care for an increasing number of unaccompanied children and young people seeking asylum, and provided support within this service, no specific training was provided in relation to this complex and specialised area. This will inform a requirement. (See requirement 1).

Support from the family placement team was seen to be informal with contact being mainly over the telephone and supportive discussions not reflecting, and not being recorded as, formal supervision linking to identified strengths and needs of the carers or young people. This would positively impact ongoing support but also regular review of young people's experiences and carer approval. However, we noted the latter was not consistently taking place. (See area for improvement 2).

There appear to be inconsistencies in service provision, perhaps exacerbated by the two distinct routes by which carers and young people access the service. The service recognised that the young people accessing supported lodgings are increasingly living with carers who are 'converting' their approval and that this will continue to increase in line with the age and stage of young people in their fostering households. As such, the service advised their intention to make application in the new year for an adult placement continuing care service which will be linked to their fostering service. Certainly, for young people remaining with their foster carers, the current arrangements are less in line with the ethos of continuing care than the proposed service. These changes should ensure more clarity, streamlined robust processes and, importantly, continuity and quality of support for carers. We would also foresee a more joined up approach with the young person's worker.

Significant challenges were noted in recruitment of new carers who are not assessed and approved as foster carers, to provide a home environment for care experienced young people. The service is considering various options to address this matter and ensure that resources can meet future needs of young people within Dumfries and Galloway Council as recruitment drives have been as yet unsuccessful.

The commitment and motivation of carers within the service was at no time in question. One professional commented, "She (carer) is absolutely fantastic and goes way above and beyond. Young people who have left return". We were confident that young people benefited from the stability and security offered through these meaningful and enduring relationships. Young people, through the provision of this service, are enabled to experience, or continue to experience, support in a family household as they progress into young adulthood.

Requirements

1. By 1 April 2022, the service must ensure that the health and wellbeing of young people is always appropriately managed. In order to achieve this, the service must ensure all carers are offered and attend appropriate training, including adult protection and any relevant specialist training.

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 2011/2010).

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

'I am protected from harm abuse, neglect, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities' (HSCS 3.20); and

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled and are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.24).

Areas for improvement

1. To support meaningful, enduring professional relationships for young people and carers, the provider should ensure continuity of worker wherever possible.

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

'I experience stability in my care and support from people who know my needs, choices and wishes, even if there are changes in the service or organisation' (HSCS 4.15).

2. To promote a high quality care experience, the provider should ensure regular and formal support and supervision to carers which aligns to the Signs of Safety approach being introduced to all aspects of service delivery.

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).

How well is our care and support planned?

3 - Adequate

We identified some strengths during this inspection. However, these just outweighed weaknesses. As a result, we evaluated this key question as adequate.

We found that the views of young people were sought and incorporated into planning and decision making ensuring they had an active influencing role, particularly at the point of accessing the service.

The majority of young people within the service experienced continuing care, with their carers 'converting' from a fostering approval to that of supported lodgings carer. For young people, this did not constitute any change to their lived experience within the family. For those care experienced young people who were entering new living situations, we saw evidence of appropriate matching considerations and successful transitions. We heard that there have been changes with the timescales whereby assessments are undertaken by the leaving care team, in some cases at a very late stage.

In one case sampled, and one further observed during a supported lodgings panel, carers had not been presented timeously, with young people in both cases being over 19 years of age. No appropriate reason was offered in relation to these significant delays. This will inform an area for improvement. (See area for improvement 1).

Documentation provided to us, and discussions with carers, family placement team and after care team workers, identified that review processes for carers were not being appropriately implemented. It was also identified that young people's pathways planning was also not always being undertaken within agreed timescales and the quality of these documents were variable. As a result, it was difficult to ascertain progress in relation to desired outcomes and whether there had been changes in the strengths and/or vulnerabilities of carers which would impact this. This will inform a requirement. (See requirement 1).

Requirements

1. By 1 April 2022, the service must ensure that the health and wellbeing of young people is always appropriately managed. In order to achieve this the service must implement meaningful, timeous care planning and review processes for all young people and carers.

This is to comply with Regulation 5(2)(B) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/2010).

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).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure that the future needs of children and young people can be effectively planned for, the provider should ensure the timeous assessment and approval of carers.

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).

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

The Supported Lodgings Scheme should develop and provide a range of information and support for supported lodgings providers which helps them to support young people to transition to adulthood and prepare for their move to independent living.

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

'People using care services can expect to receive and understand information in a format or language that is right for them.' (HSCS 2.9).

This area for improvement was made on 19 March 2019.

Action taken since then

Work had been undertaken to progress this area for improvement. We note that further changes will be required in line with the proposed registration of an adult placement for the purpose of continuing care service as highlighted in the body of the report.

Previous area for improvement 2

Managers and staff should be intentionally adult-focused in the support provided to supported lodgings providers; for example, through support groups, training and development. This is in order to increase their knowledge and confidence to support young people to prepare for their next move.

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

'People using care services can expect to have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled and able to reflect on their practice.' (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 19 March 2019.

Action taken since then

This was not found to be met with details provided in the body of the report.

Previous area for improvement 3

Managers should review the draft House Agreement taking account of the specific areas identified in our report and make necessary amendments.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that people using care services can expect that the care and support provided will:

- (a) 'Enable them to use an appropriate mix of private and communal areas.' (HSCS 5.1).
- (b) 'Empower and enable them to be as independent and as in control of their life as they want to be.' (HSCS 2.2).
- (c) 'Help them to manage their money and have as much control of this as possible.' (HSCS 2.5).
- (d) 'Support them to participate fully as a citizen in their local community in the way they want.' (HSCS 1.10).

This area for improvement was made on 19 March 2019.

Action taken since then

This was undertaken by the service.

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

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