

Midlothian Council Continuing Care Service Adult Placement Service

Family Placement Team
7 Eskdail Court
Dalkeith
EH22 1AG

Telephone: 01312 705 678

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
29 September 2025

Service provided by:
Midlothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002602

Service no:
CS2019377544

About the service

Midlothian Council has a registered adult placement service linked to their fostering service for the sole purpose of continuing care. The Family Centred Care Team provides a continuing care service for eligible young people and their caring families, who are assessed as in need of this. The service is responsible for the assessment and support of carer families to provide ongoing support to young people. It is co-located with other children's services.

This inspection took place alongside the inspections of the Midlothian Council fostering service. Separate reports are produced for each service. This report should be read in conjunction with the report for the fostering service.

About the inspection

This was a short notice announced inspection which took place between 25th August 2025 and 16th September 2025. The inspection was carried out by three 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:

- met with 2 caregivers and one young person in their homes and spoke with a further 14 caregivers during focus groups, MS teams calls or telephone calls.
- spoke with 8 staff and management
- spoke with the panel chairs for both the permanence and adoption and the fostering panels and the Agency Decision Maker
- reviewed documents
- spoke with one placing social worker
- considered questionnaire feedback from carers, young people, staff, panel members and other professionals

Key messages

Significant staffing changes and gaps meant that caring households had experienced multiple changes in allocated worker which had negatively impacted people's experience of support.

Young people experienced stable, enduring and attuned care from nurturing caregivers.

The service showed a clear commitment to ensuring brothers and sisters remained together throughout their childhood and into young adulthood.

Young people's views were known, and their voice had influence on the direction of their care and support.

There was a lack of clarity in approach to continuing care for carers, within the team and across the broader services.

Quality assurance mechanisms were not yet comprehensive enough to fully support clear overview and improvement within the service.

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?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Young people's relationships with carers were stable and enduring, and they were valued and understood as individuals. This meant they enjoyed a sense of security with nurturing caregivers, and often carers' extended family, into young adulthood and beyond.

Ongoing staffing changes have meant that very few caregiving families have benefitted from enduring positive relationships with supervising social workers within the service and instead have experienced multiple changes in allocated worker or periods without an allocated supervising social worker. We heard that several carers felt that this had improved for them in recent months as permanent team members have been recruited. Although the impact on caregiver families varies, most have found this difficult even if they have been positive about individual workers. At the time of the last inspection an Area For Improvement was made in relation to this which will be repeated.

Young people's views were known, and their voice had influence on the direction of their care and support. Carers continued to provide support in this area where needed, and we saw examples of carers working closely with young people and agencies to promote positive outcomes.

The service showed a clear commitment to ensuring brothers and sisters remained together where this was possible, throughout their childhood and into young adulthood. This offered them security and stability, recognised the importance of these relationships and supported naturally shared experiences as a family unit.

Young people benefit from the support of carers who understand their individual needs, including health needs, and impact of trauma. They were seen to achieve in further education and learning. These, and other achievements, were encouraged, recognised and celebrated within caring households.

Training has been provided to carers relating to continuing care however carers would benefit from this being revisited and offered at regular intervals. Some staff also indicated that they would welcome input in relation to continuing care to better equip them to provide advice and support to caring households and young people.

The local authority's continuing care policy had been reviewed, and a strengthened message was evident about young people's legal rights. However, we heard from some carers and staff that there remains confusion in this area, and we noted there is still some contradiction apparent in the policy about the status of people aged 16-18 years of age which may be a contributory factor. This is discussed further in KQ2.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

Although permanent staff have been recruited to the service since the time of the last inspection, there have been further changes. There have also been significant changes within the management of the service. Whilst this situation is improving this needs to be stabilised in order for the leadership to have capacity to drive forward service developments. .

Detailed and aspirational service development plans have been created which were informed by a self-evaluation undertaken by the service. We encouraged the service to refine these plans to support progress in identified improvement work.

Although work has begun to create and implement systems which offer strategic and practice overview in other key areas, this is at an early stage and it is not possible to assess effectiveness or impact on outcomes and experiences at this time. As a result, it was assessed that the Requirement has not been met and will be repeated.

At the time of the last inspection an Area For Improvement was made in respect of clarifying the service's approach to continuing care. Although we heard that young people are receiving a more consistent message regarding their right to continuing care and we note that the local authority continuing care policy has been reviewed, there is still some inconsistent messaging within this about the status of 16-18 year old young people. Continuing care carers highlighted a lack of clarity about what they could expect from the service and management and staff also advised that a consistent and shared understanding around continuing care requires to be achieved by professionals. As a result, we have assessed that this Area For Improvement has not been met.

Although few carers have moved through the process of approval for continuing care since the time of the last inspection, we found that panel function was robust and provided a valuable quality assurance role. This provides additional oversight and support while developments and improvements continue to be progressed by the service.

How good is our staff team?

3 - Adequate

We evaluated this key question as adequate, where strengths only just outweighed weaknesses.

A sustained period of staffing changes have led to caring households experiencing a lack of consistency and stability in how their support is provided and limiting their ability to build trusting and enduring relationships with staff. The service is aware of these challenges and this is an ongoing priority for them. Staff and management are optimistic that the increased staffing resources which have been achieved will provide stability and support work towards addressing these ongoing concerns.

The staff team is still forming and not yet at full complement, with staff members ranging in experience and length of qualification. Although evidencing a clear commitment and optimism about the future of the services, some staff reflected that opportunities for learning had been impacted by staffing changes and that additional training would be welcomed to increase knowledge, expertise and confidence in their roles.

Some staff described a lack of clarity, or in some cases a lack of familiarity, around continuing care within their service and the broader organisation which negatively impacts confidence and expertise. Staff and carers added that they would welcome specific learning and development inputs which would support their roles and enhance their knowledge and expertise in this area. (Please see the unmet Area For Improvement under KQ 2.)

How well is our care and support planned?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children/people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Multi-agency working and planning was evident supported and supervising social workers were generally actively involved with this process. These forums highlighted good multi-agency working which supported young people's plans being progressed and their needs being met. Carers provided key input to these meetings.

Outcomes focussed assessments were found to be in place for young people, however these did not contain explicit consideration of the continuing care welfare assessment. An Area For Improvement will be made in relation to this. (See Area For Improvement 1).

Young people's views and wishes were seen to be represented in decision making forums and carers would also advocate on their behalf if not present.

Safer caring family policies were in place, and these were appropriately personalised to young people in caring households supporting the direction of their care and support and arrangements for living together.

Areas for improvement

1. To enable young people to experience stable and consistent care beyond the age of 18, the provider should ensure that a continuing care welfare assessment is undertaken timeously, the outcome of which is explicitly recorded and explained to young people using the service.

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' (HSCS1.14).

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 15 January 2024 the provider must ensure quality assurance systems are robust and effectively support a strategic and practice overview and improvement work.

To do this, the provider must as a minimum:

- a) Implement systems for tracking key areas and benchmark progress
- b) Ensure care inspectorate annual return information is accurate

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (welfare of users) of the Social Care and Social Work improvement Scotland (Requirements for care services) regulations 2011 (SS1 2011/210)

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

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19)

This requirement has not been met and will be extended until 12.01.26.

This requirement was made on 27 October 2023.

Action taken on previous requirement

The service has introduced a proforma for the audit of key areas of practice within the fostering and adoption services, tracking key paperwork and statutory requirements and this is in the early stages of being tested and reviewed. There were no concerns noted regarding the accuracy of the service's annual return.

Whilst it appears there are still some gaps in some areas of practice due to staffing pressures, there is a clearer understanding of where these gaps are. The service has a clear plan identifying how to address these gaps moving forward, however at the time of inspection this has not yet been achieved.

As stated above, this requirement has not been fully met and will be extended until 12.01.26.

Not met

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

To promote positive outcomes the service should establish and sustain important relationships with carers and young people. This should include, but is not limited to, achieving consistency of workers supporting caring households.

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) and;

'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)

This area for improvement was made on 27 October 2023.

Action taken since then

Due to ongoing staffing challenges, consistency of workers has not been delivered for the majority of care giving households, including those approved for continuing care.

As a result this Area For Improvement has not been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

The service should ensure clarity and consistency of approach to continuing care. This should include, but is not limited to, ensuring clear, accurate messaging and ensure that this supported by policy and practice which reflects individualised best practice for young people.

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 because people have the necessary information and resources' (HSCS 4.27)'

This area for improvement was made on 27 October 2023.

Action taken since then

We heard that young people are receiving a more consistent message regarding their right to continuing care and we note that the local authority continuing care policy has been reviewed.

However, there is still some inconsistent messaging within this about the status of 16-18 year old young people. Continuing care carers highlighted a lack of clarity about what they could expect from the service and management and staff also advised that a consistent and shared understanding around continuing care requires to be achieved by professionals.

As a result this Area For Improvement has not been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure that young people within caring households receive the support that is right for them, the service should ensure that individualised safer caring policies are in place and regularly reviewed to capture emerging needs or changes in circumstances.

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)

'I am supported and cared for sensitively by people who anticipate issues and are aware of and plan for any known vulnerability or frailty' (HSCS 3.18)

This area for improvement was made on 27 October 2023.

Action taken since then

Safer caring family policies were in place, and these were appropriately personalised to young people in caring households supporting the direction of their care and support and arrangements for living together.

We have assessed this Area For Improvement as met.

Previous area for improvement 4

The service should ensure that assessments considering continuing care are always individualised, needs led and reflect the best interests of young people rather than reflecting a service policy position based on chronological age or being resource driven.

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)

This area for improvement was made on 27 October 2023.

Action taken since then

At the time of the last inspection an Area for Improvement was made due to concerns that a blanket approach was being adopted in relation to decisions around young people ceasing to be looked after, based on chronological age (16years).

At the time of this inspection this was no longer evident and there was clearer evidence of young people being encouraged and supported to understand their right to remain through continuing care. Outcomes focussed assessments, although appearing to give limited explicit reference to continuing care, were found to always be individualised, needs led and reflect the best interests of young people.

We have assessed this Area For Improvement as met.

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?	4 - Good
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	4 - Good
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 good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate

How good is our staff team?	3 - Adequate
3.2 Staff have the right knowledge, competence and development to support children, young people, adults and their caregiver families	3 - Adequate

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

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.