

East Ayrshire Council Fostering Service Fostering Service

Dept of Educational and Social Services
Children and Families
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Type of inspection:

Announced (short notice)

Completed on:

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Service provided by:

East Ayrshire Council

Service provider number:

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Service no:

CS2004082088

About the service

East Ayrshire Council provides a Fostering Service for children and young people who are assessed as being in need of this service. The Fostering Service is delivered by the Fostering, Adoption and Kinship Team. The service recruits and supports carer families to provide a range of fostering placements.

The service state that their vision is to ensure that every child and young person who is looked after has the opportunity to achieve the outcomes we would want for our own children.

The Service is based in East Ayrshire in Kilmarnock and forms part of the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership.

As the findings of this inspection are based on a sample of children and young people, inspectors cannot assure the quality of experience for every service user.

What people told us

We spoke to one foster carer by telephone, three foster carers during home visits and a further nine foster carers attended a focus group. We also had a discussion with one young person during a home visit after he requested to speak to us. One young person provided us with a completed questionnaire. We also received questionnaire responses from three foster carer households. Generally we were told that foster carers felt well supported and young people were happy in placement. There were some specific issues raised with us which generated discussion with the management team to follow up.

Some of the feedback from carers included:

"My supervising social worker goes above and beyond to offer me support"

"I feel the service is responsive to the needs of carers and young people"

"Not all carers feel free to speak their mind"

" I feel disillusioned with the service just now"

"We have been able to support their education using East Ayrshire Support Teachers, educational psychologists and regular extra review meetings with the school head teachers and relevant teachers and support staff"

"Both children are supported health wise with yearly health checks by the service looked after and accommodated nurse"

One young person told us:

"I now know what proper care is"

Self assessment

A self-assessment was not requested for this inspection year, however, we looked at the last self-assessment completed in 2016 and spoke with the manager who provided a fostering service development plan and evidence of recent work and practice highlights.

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	5 - Very Good

What the service does well

We inspected both care and support and management and leadership as very good. This evaluation means that the service has major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for people using the service with a few areas of improvement.

Foster carers developed warm and compassionate relationships with children and young people. They were resilient and understood how to meet children's needs and were providing routines, boundaries and new experiences,.

Good quality support was available from social workers and the good communication and joined up working of social workers and other agencies supported good quality care and planning for children and foster carers.

There was ample evidence that young people were able to share concerns due to the relationships they had developed and that any such concerns were acted on appropriately.

The service now have access to Out of Hours support from residential services for complex cases and this was viewed as a positive development. The strength of this is evidenced further by joint working and sharing of training delivery to staff and carers. One member of staff stated "we want the gold standard of Therapeutic Crisis Intervention training to be available to carers".

The range and quality of training was viewed as very good. Training provided to carers is available in the form of face to face and on line (Kate Cairns). We asked the service to ensure that the calendar of training made visible to carers to increase awareness of the training options as this has worked well in previous years.

We were told and saw that children moving into foster care, experienced positive outcomes in terms of improved opportunities to learn, improved self esteem and improved access to health. There was evidence of a positive approach from carers and small achievements are recognised and celebrated.

We saw evidence of good matching systems in place and witnessed discussions taking place in the team in relation to the matching of new referrals.

Carers evidenced that they knew the young people they cared for and were kept up to date. The role of the supervising social worker was seen as crucial to this and the sharing of an office space with the locality team in Kilmarnock enhanced this sharing of information.

In several cases we saw evidence of creative thinking about managing situations and in doing so the service were respectful of the choice of the young people. In one such case, the use of the Who Care's worker was used to establish the views of the young people. In another example, the worker informed that the carer had done two sessions (with the support from the supervising social worker) with birth father in relation to boundaries and routines prior to the young people returning home .

The service have established an corporate parenting group and the inclusion of a care experienced young person was seen as invaluable to the progress of this group in improving outcome for young people in foster care.

Staff present as a knowledgeable, cohesive team with a solid nurture base. They advised that the management team is very visible and there is a high level of support provided. The managers of the service were improvement focused and presented as innovative in their approach to challenges.

The Panel provides quality assurance of practice, assessment and decision making through the use of a range of independent panel members.

We looked at child protection procedures and practice and were satisfied that there were procedures and practice in place to ensure service users are protected.

What the service could do better

The service should ensure regular file audits are completed. The recording of unannounced visits and safe caring plans should be monitored as part of any file audit.

Whilst the service had a full program of training available to carers, there could be consideration of the visibility of training available through the use of a calendar sent to the carers and the recording and monitoring systems required to evidence attendance at training.

Carers should be having yearly internal reviews and return to panel within legislative timescales. The service should audit the current situation and progress a plan to ensure that timescales are adhered to.

We would like to see the inclusion of information about timescales and return to panel for carers who have placements made which are outwith their approval range. We were told that the agency decision maker had authorised such placements, however, in many cases the evidence of this was not available and there was a lack of clarity about the timescales and processes in place to review this and return to panel to have this endorsed.

The service provided an action plan, however, it was suggested that this could be updated and more SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, reviewed and time bound).

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 2

1. The service should ensure that the process of a carer being outwith approval is clearly defined in policies and procedures and that any such situations are progressed and monitored closely.

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

2. The service should undertake an audit to and put a plan in place to ensure that all carers have a yearly internal review within timescales.

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

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
27 Oct 2016	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		5 - Very good Not assessed 5 - Very good Not assessed
12 Feb 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good
10 Oct 2013	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership
		4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good

Date	Type	Gradings	
12 Dec 2012	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 3 - Adequate
21 Dec 2010	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed Not assessed Not assessed
11 Mar 2010	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good
26 Mar 2009	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 3 - Adequate

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