

# Midlothian Council Fostering Service Fostering Service

Family Placement Team  
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Service provided by:  
Midlothian Council

Service provider number:  
SP2003002602

Care service number:  
CS2004083731





## About the service

This service has been registered since 2005.

Midlothian Council Fostering Service provides a fostering and family placement service for children and young people aged from 0 to 18 years and their families, who are assessed as in need of this. The service is responsible for the recruitment, assessment and support of carer families to provide a fostering service to a range of children throughout the area of Midlothian.

The service is now co-located with other children's services. During the past year there have been significant changes within the Agency. Only two members of staff remain from the team we met at the last inspection. A new manager has also been appointed and this has had a positive effect on the service.

## What people told us

We examined feedback from a number of sources, including questionnaires that had been sent to foster carers prior to the inspection taking place. We received 13 responses with mixed views in terms of carers experiences of the service. We met with nine carers during the inspection and also made contact with two foster carers by phone. Some foster carers reported good supports and outcomes for themselves and the children placed with them, however, a significant number of foster carers reported negatively on the support they had received since the last inspection.

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

## Self assessment

No self-assessment was requested from the service this year.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	3 - Adequate
Quality of staffing	not assessed
Quality of management and leadership	4 - Good

## What the service does well

From the evidence we looked at we could see that some young people were continuing to achieve good outcomes. We were satisfied that most of the children and young people we heard about during the inspection were having their needs met and in particular were experiencing nurturing care from foster carers and their family.

There were key strengths we identified during this inspection which we believe will be important for the service to improve and achieve the best outcomes for the children and young people they look after.

Care planning for children - there is a robust approach to planning for children. Whilst we did receive a couple of reports from carers that they were not involved in planning and meetings, the overwhelming evidence was that carers were respected in these processes and their voice was being heard. Information provided to carers prior to placement was usually very good. Carers felt that effective matching was always attempted and their views listened to. Carers attend and take an active part in multi agency meetings, reviews and hearings and where appropriate children and young people take part. These meetings and the records kept all appeared to be child focussed.

Support to carers - there are some elements of support which were viewed positively by carers. Training in particular was seen as a strength. We saw improving evidence of regular visits and contact. We heard specific examples where extra support was provided for individual children and young people. Most carers also reported positively on the support received from the child's social worker.

Service improvement - we saw some evidence that the service works hard to get feedback from those using the service. We were encouraged with this openness and we found that service development plans were coherent with the feedback received and the organisational goals. We would be keen to see how these have been implemented at the next inspection. The decisions to co-locate the team with other children's services and to appoint only one manager for the team were viewed positively by those we spoke with. The new team manager is viewed by all staff and others as a key strength for the service in making the necessary improvements. Equally the quality of the panel has been sustained and remains a strength of the service.

## What the service could do better

The service has been through a difficult year in terms of stability within the staff group and this has contributed to some young people and carers not receiving the quality of service experienced by others. This has impacted on the relationships between the service and the carers.

We felt that addressing the following areas for improvement will be important for the service and we will review progress in these areas at the next inspection.

Relationships between the service and carers - we were concerned about some of the feedback received from carers in particular about the relationship they have had with the service over the last couple of years. Even where there was recognition of efforts to improve, the impact of these negative experiences was evident in discussions with carers. We heard that some carers were frustrated by inconsistent approaches of staff and this had clearly been exacerbated by the significant turnover of staff. We generally found that most of the carers we spoke with or heard from have felt undervalued and/or under supported and this ultimately will affect the care experience of children. The service must ensure that there is a priority given to developing trusting and supportive relationships between Supervising Social Workers and carers. The service should also consider the best way to deliver support to carers, including consistent supervision practice and the format of support groups. (Recommendation 1)

Quality of assessments and reports - we found a variable standard of work in the evidence we have looked at and this was also reported by others. There has been a significant staffing changes over the past couple of years. It appears that these pressures have impacted on the quality of work not least of all due to the loss of expertise within the team. We would suggest that the service considers the need for further training and a review of internal quality assurance processes to ensure the quality of this work. Improving quality assurance practices should also ensure that statutory tasks e.g. unannounced visits, are undertaken and properly recorded.

Monitoring and managing the workloads of staff - we were concerned that all staff felt overwhelmed by their workload at the moment and there was no sign that this pressure would be eased. Our main concern was about the retention of staff if this was not addressed. Staff reported taking their work home, this was seen as an unfair expectation and viewed as a negative culture. There were a number of other issues around the capacity of the team which we felt needed to be addressed and shared these with the service at feedback. We would suggest that the service must look at the workloads of staff as a matter of urgency.

## Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

## Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 1

1. To ensure that children and young people are being looked after by carers who feel well supported the service should review the provision of support groups and properly implement supervision of carers in line with their own policy.

National Care Standards, Standard 2(3) and Standard 5(8)

## Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website ([www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

## Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
18 Nov 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
26 Aug 2014	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
16 May 2014	Announced	Care and support	2 - Weak
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	3 - Adequate
27 May 2013	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
22 May 2012	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
23 Feb 2011	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	Not assessed
		Management and leadership	3 - Adequate
15 Mar 2010	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good

Date	Type	Gradings	
5 Mar 2009	Announced	Care and support	2 - Weak
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	3 - Adequate
		Management and leadership	3 - Adequate



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