

Children's Services and Commissioning

Young Inspectors Programme Briefing Paper – April 2025

- Emma Pattenden, Snr Commissioner and Quality Assurance Officer

Overview:

This briefing paper outlines the development of our Young Inspectors Programme and how it is aimed at strengthening the QA inspection process and oversight of supported accommodation for looked-after children and care leavers aged 16-18. The initiative aligns with Medway's QA framework and Ofsted regulations to ensure high-quality provisions and promoting the voices of young people in care.

Medway Council held an information and training session for our Young Inspectors Programme, inviting Medway young people in care and care leavers, this has resulted in 4 care leavers showing an interest and have signed up to our pilot programme.

The Young Inspectors Programme empowers young people with lived experience of the care system, they will be playing a meaningful role in inspecting and improving supported accommodation for children in care. The initiative is to ensure services are safe, supportive, and truly responsive to the needs and rights of young people in care.

Background:

Supported accommodation is a key component of the care system, particularly for young people aged 16 and over transitioning towards independent living. Despite its importance, concerns persist about variability in quality and the lack of young people in care having oversight and involvement in service feedback. The young inspectors programme addresses the gap by placing young people at the centre of the evaluation process.

Objectives:

- To ensure the voices of young people in care are central to the service evaluation.
- To embed care experienced young people's perspective into the inspection and monitoring of supported accommodation.
- To promote accountability and transparency in supported accommodation settings.
- To drive continuous improvement in standards of care through peer-led insights and recommendations.
- To promote sector improvement by identifying good practice and areas of concern from a peer informed standpoint.
- To build skills, confidence, and leadership among participating young inspectors.

Children's Commissioning and Quality Assurance:

The Young Inspectors Programme is an initiative where young people have the opportunity to inspect and evaluate supported accommodation providers used by Medway Local Authority for children in care. This programme empowers young individuals to:

1. **Assess quality:** Evaluate the standard of services and living conditions provided by supported accommodation.
2. **Give feedback:** Offer constructive feedback on how providers can improve their services to better meet the needs of young people in care.
3. **Amplify voices:** Ensure the voices of Medway's young people are heard, particularly those in care, in decisions that directly affect them.
4. **Promote positive change:** Help drive improvements in care services by highlighting strengths and identifying areas of development.

This programme not only supports the involvement of young people in shaping their environment but also equips them with valuable skills like teamwork, communication, and critical thinking. It ensures that services are truly reflective of the needs and experiences of those they support.

Process:

Key features	Focus	Outcome	Timeline
Recruitment and training	Young people (often care experienced) are trained in inspection techniques, safeguarding, communication and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Introduction session- QA bitesize session- Report writing session- DBS check	6 weeks
Inspection framework	Tailored tools and frameworks are developed with input from both professionals and young people to assess key quality indicators.	Young inspectors to read the following; <ul style="list-style-type: none">- QA framework- Ofsted regulations Microsoft Teams Q&A session to discuss	2 weeks
Collaboration	Young inspectors work alongside professionals to carry out visits, interviews and reviews.	Quality Assurance commissioner and Young inspector complete visits to Supported Accommodation provisions.	On-going
Feedback and reporting	Findings are shared with providers and commissioners with clear,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Report writing session with young	On-going

	actionable recommendations.	inspector 3-5 days following visit - Report reviewed and emailed to provider	
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Expected outcomes:

- Improved quality and consistency of supported accommodation
- Stronger engagement between providers and service users
- Enhanced confidence and life skills among young inspectors
- Greater trust in the care system from young people.

Next steps:

Pilot the programme – May 2025

Evaluate effectiveness and refine process

Explore integration with QA framework