

Care service inspection report

Full inspection

Safe Base @ Balnacraig Care Home Service

Craiglunie
Faskally
Pitlochry



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

Service provided by: Balnacraig School

Service provider number: SP2010011127

Care service number: CS2013321869

Inspection Visit Type: Unannounced

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and set out improvements that must be made. We also investigate complaints about care services and 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.

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Summary

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection following other regulatory activity. For example, if we have to take enforcement action to make the service improve, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

We gave the service these grades

Quality of care and support	5	Very Good
Quality of environment	5	Very Good
Quality of staffing	4	Good
Quality of management and leadership	5	Very Good

What the service does well

We identified the following strengths in the areas inspected:

- staff support young people to express their views and take part in developing plans to meet their needs;
- young people using this service receive very good care and support and have made progress in a number of areas. They also have enjoyable experiences and are supported to make very good use of local facilities;
- the staff team is capable and committed to keeping young people safe and well, and to helping them to make the most of the opportunities available. They receive very good training and development to help them do a good job;
- the service is well-managed, has very effective quality assurance processes and is committed to continuous improvement.

What the service could do better

The provider does not need to make any significant adjustments given the service's already high standards. However, we have included some suggestions for development in the relevant quality themes in this report: these should support the process of continuous improvement.

What the service has done since the last inspection

This was the service's first inspection.

Conclusion

This new service is already providing high standards of care and support to young people. Since the opening of the home, the team has successfully established consistent and nurturing routines and a clear vision and ethos. They have reviewed progress and performance and agreed areas for development. This is a well-led and welcoming home with child-centred practices.

1 About the service we inspected

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Information about all care services is available on our website at www.careinspectorate.com

This service registered with the Care Inspectorate on 28 May 2014.

Safe Base @ Balnacraig is a care home for one young person between nine and 16. The maximum length of stay is 28 consecutive days (though some have stayed longer by agreement with the Care Inspectorate). The service provides emergency respite for young people in crisis, following a placement breakdown for example.

The premises consist of a single-storey cottage in a rural location near Pitlochry in Perth and Kinross, set in extensive grounds. Young people have use of a single en suite bedroom/sitting room, a communal lounge, dining room and kitchen. The house also has accommodation for staff.

Recommendations

A recommendation is a statement that sets out actions that a care service provider should take to improve or develop the quality of the service, but where failure to do so would not directly result in enforcement.

Recommendations are based on the National Care Standards, SSSC codes of practice and recognised good practice. These must also be outcomes-based and if the provider meets the recommendation this would improve outcomes for people receiving the service.

Requirements

A requirement is a statement which sets out what a care service must do to improve outcomes for people who use services and must be linked to a breach in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (the "Act"), its regulations, or orders made under the Act, or a condition of registration. Requirements are enforceable in law.

We make requirements where (a) there is evidence of poor outcomes for people

using the service or (b) there is the potential for poor outcomes which would affect people's health, safety or welfare.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

Quality of care and support - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of environment - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of staffing - Grade 4 - Good

Quality of management and leadership - Grade 5 - Very Good

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change following other regulatory activity. You can find the most up-to-date grades for this service by visiting our website www.careinspectorate.com or by calling us on 0345 600 9527 or visiting one of our offices.

2 How we inspected this service

The level of inspection we carried out

In this service we carried out a low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care.

What we did during the inspection

We wrote this report following an unannounced inspection by one inspector. The inspection took place on:

- Thursday 30 April 2015 between 1.55pm and 7.30pm;
- Saturday 2 May between 10.35am and 1.10pm.

We gave feedback to the manager (the chief executive officer), two members of the senior leadership team, the development manager and the house manager on Tuesday 12 May 2015.

We sent one care standards questionnaire to the manager to distribute to young people and received one completed form. We also sent six questionnaires to the manager to distribute to staff and received six completed forms. Unfortunately these were misplaced.

During this inspection process, we gathered evidence from various sources, including the following:

We spoke with:

- the development manager;
- the house manager;
- two care staff;
- the young person living at Safe Base.

We looked at:

- the corporate improvement plan and business plan;
- the service's brochure and website;
- young people's records, including daily logs, assessments, plans and reviews;
- accident and incident records;
- the menu;
- medication records;
- the Scottish Social Services Council's register;
- supervision records;
- training records;
- the training plan;
- records of external management visits;
- medication audits.

Grading the service against quality themes and statements

We inspect and grade elements of care that we call 'quality themes'. For example, one of the quality themes we might look at is 'Quality of care and support'. Under each quality theme are 'quality statements' which describe what a service should be doing well for that theme. We grade how the service performs against the quality themes and statements.

Details of what we found are in Section 3: The inspection

Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)

In any year we may decide on specific aspects of care to focus on during our inspections. These are extra checks we make on top of all the normal ones we make during inspection. We do this to gather information about the quality of these aspects of care on a national basis. Where we have examined an inspection focus area we will clearly identify it under the relevant quality statement.

Fire safety issues

We do not regulate fire safety. Local fire and rescue services are responsible for checking services. However, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant fire and rescue services so they may consider what action to take. You can find out more about care services' responsibilities for fire safety at www.firescotland.gov.uk

The annual return

Every year all care services must complete an 'annual return' form to make sure the information we hold is up to date. We also use annual returns to decide how we will inspect the service.

Annual Return Received: Yes - Electronic

Comments on Self Assessment

Every year all care services must complete a 'self assessment' form telling us how their service is performing. We check to make sure this assessment is accurate.

We received a fully completed self-assessment document from the manager, who identified what the service did well, some areas for development and any changes that were planned. We thought the self-assessment would benefit from clearer evidence of how young people had contributed to the self-assessment process and more evidence of outcomes and experiences.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

We received one completed questionnaire from a young person, who was very happy with the service overall and responded positively to all the other questions. We also spoke to one young person during our visits. He had only been at Safe Base for a couple of weeks but was happy with the service and staff. He had arranged his room to suit his needs and thought the food was good.

Taking carers' views into account

We did not have the opportunity to speak to any parents or carers during the inspection.

We asked six social workers for their views of the service and received one response. We asked whether their expectations of the placement had been met and were told:

- 'My expectation of this service was to provide the young person with a safe, secure and nurturing environment due to their high level of distress and anxiety. This placement provided the young person with the time and space they needed. They were able to gain a greater sense of security and the high staff ratio and one to one support was essential to this process'.

We have included other comments in the relevant quality statements in this report.

3 The inspection

We looked at how the service performs against the following quality themes and statements. Here are the details of what we found.

Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

“We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.”

Service strengths

We examined this statement in recognition of the link between children and young people participating in their care and support and achieving good outcomes for them. In 2015-16 all services are being inspected against this statement.

The service met all aspects of this statement, achieving a very good standard. We based our evaluation of this statement mainly on how well the service ensured that young people were respected, responsible and included. These are three of the Scottish Government's wellbeing (or SHANARRI) outcomes and should be promoted by all agencies in touch with children and young people.

We identified the following strengths:

- young people had access to a range of information about the service, for example on the corporate website and in the brochure, which some young people had been involved in developing. As a consequence they knew what it could and should provide, and about their rights;

- where possible, staff visited young people before they arrived to tell them about Safe Base and discuss their needs. They had also written to one young person to welcome them when a visit was not feasible;
- staff provided regular progress reports to social workers. This meant they were in a better position to evaluate the service's performance and its impact on young people and to make meaningful plans;
- young people had access to a complaints procedure if they were unhappy but had not yet made use of this;
- the positive relationships between staff and young people provided the basis for regular discussion provided the foundation for them to share their views and feelings on an on-going basis;
- young people took part in developing their personal plans, which reflected their preferences and were very individualised. They attended reviews to put across their point of view. They also had opportunities to add their comments to daily logs;
- some young people had been involved in selecting new staff: they had met the candidates and taken part in interviews.

A social worker told us that the young person was 'encouraged to be doing things herself and receive assistance from staff in new situations. These were all age appropriate. She was encouraged to help in activity and meal planning and what was happening in the house.'

Areas for improvement

The service should consider how young people can contribute to staff supervision and appraisal.

The involvement of the Who Cares? Scotland worker and how best use could be made of this support and advocacy service given the short length of the placement was under discussion.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Statement 2

“We enable service users to make individual choices and ensure that every service user can be supported to achieve their potential.”

Service strengths

The service met all aspects of this statement, achieving a very good standard with major strengths. We based our evaluation of this statement mainly on how well the service:

- achieved good outcomes;
- provided positive experiences; and
- worked in ways that were more likely to achieve these for young people, for example by using recognised best practice and research.

The Scottish Government expects all agencies in touch with children and young people to play their part in making sure that they are safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. These are known as the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators.

We concluded that the service did a very good job of keeping young people **safe**, for example:

- by managing incidents effectively and safely and learning from them to prevent recurrence. This included use of de-escalation techniques to restore calm and prevent the use of physical restraint;

- by identifying areas of risk and developing strategies to reduce harm;
- by liaising effectively with local police when more serious incidents occurred and taking their advice into account;
- by monitoring young people's emotional welfare and taking appropriate action when concerns arose.

We felt that young people were on the whole **healthy**, taking into account their previous life experiences, development and health conditions:

- they had a varied and balanced diet;
- staff acted on advice from the consultant psychologist about supporting young people with emotional difficulties;
- staff monitored the impact of medication and liaised effectively with GPs to ensure young people had the maximum benefit.

Young people had **active** lifestyles whilst at Safe Base. They took part in a wide range of physical activities and had plenty of fresh air, making use of local facilities.

Staff provided a **nurturing** environment aimed at helping young people to develop a sense of worth and self-esteem. For example, the staff rota provided good continuity of care and the staff team had a good gender balance to provide male and female role models. They supported young people to develop beneficial routines, including getting the right amount of sleep. They helped them to maintain contact with family members where this was appropriate. This included providing local accommodation at Christmas for a parent who lived some distance away. Staff had positive relationships with young people and focused on their strengths and potential.

Examples of **achievements** included cooking skills, swimming, proficiency in musical instruments and skills for employment (under the auspices of ASDAN, a curriculum development organisation and awarding body).

The service had an effective system for developing individualised personal plans for young people. This focused on achieving realistic outcomes given the length of the placement. The quality of evaluation of progress was also very good.

A social worker told us the following:

- 'Safe - This young person needed a one to one placement at this time. There was a high risk of her attempting to physically harm others or placing herself at risk through her actions. As already stated the placement was in a rural location with a high staff ratio. This placement assisted the young person in settling and helped in moving forward and changing this cycle of behaviour.

Healthy - Health needs met - optician appointment. Monitoring of her physical and emotional health.

Achieving - The young person did not attend school for the period she was at Safe Base but was encouraged to engage in ASDAN. This provided her with learning opportunities but outwith the classroom environment. There were a wide range of activities available to her.

Nurtured - The young person required a high level of nurturing due to her age and vulnerability. Being the only young person helped her thrive at Safe Base.

Active - She engaged in lots of activities to keep her fit and active but also to challenge her energy and provide her with a focus.'

Areas for improvement

We advised managers to request referring local authorities to provide risk assessments for young people prior to them arriving at the service to ensure staff were fully informed about meeting their needs - this was in the process of being done by the time we gave feedback.

There was scope for some minor improvements to the way the service managed medication though this did not reflect any negative outcomes for young people. For example, we suggested that medication administration records be used only for recording and not for audits, as these tended to be difficult to follow. The risk assessment used to help determine whether young people could manage their own medication was confusing: this needs to clearly identify what they are responsible for and what support staff will give.

There was one instance where staff had not requested the record of a child protection meeting from the local authority. Managers acknowledged this should have been followed up given the important role the service plays in keeping children safe.

Staff had not dated young personal plans - this was resolved quickly by amending the report format.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Quality Theme 2: Quality of Environment

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 3

“The environment allows service users to have as positive a quality of life as possible.”

Service strengths

We chose this statement following consideration of the service's self-assessment.

The service reached a very good standard overall. We reached this conclusion following discussion with staff and young people and observation of the environment, including the young person's room. The service's strengths included:

- the house was well-decorated, well-furnished and comfortable. The few structural changes made when the home was being registered had made quite a difference, allowing more natural light into the pleasant dining area and providing a spacious bedroom with adjoining sitting room for the young person;
- young people were able to personalise the bedroom with bedding or posters. The young person living there when we visited had moved furniture around and set the room up to suit himself. He spent time in his room and staff respected his need to be alone;
- the house was set in a beautiful, natural and quiet location though was relatively close to a small town and to a range of facilities that young people had made good use of;
- staff had taken care to limit the amount of paperwork on walls in communal areas, limiting this where possible to the office, to promote a more homely and less institutionalised appearance;

- young people had easy access to the kitchen to make meals, snacks and drinks.

Areas for improvement

There was no need for the service to make any significant adjustments in this area.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Statement 4

"The accommodation we provide ensures that the privacy of service users is respected."

Service strengths

The service's performance was very good and had major strengths. We came to this conclusion after reviewing some policies and procedures, speaking with staff and the young person and inspecting parts of the environment.

Strengths included:

- the fact that young people had their own room provided them with a private space for time away from staff and others. The en suite shower and toilet facilities were an added bonus;
- there were effective arrangements for storing and accessing young people's information, both in paper and electronic form;
- staff kept the office locked when they were not using it;
- access to the home was monitored to ensure only authorised people could enter;
- young people could use the phone to make private calls;

- staff practice was governed by policies on data protection and confidentiality.

Areas for improvement

Young people did not have anywhere to lock personal belongings - this would be relatively straightforward to provide.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 4 - Good

Statement 3

“We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice.”

Service strengths

The service reached a good standard with important strengths. We took into account evidence from the following sources: discussion with a young person, staff and managers; a completed questionnaire; the Scottish Social Service's Council's register; observation of staff practice; young people's records; training records; supervision records.

These strengths included:

- during the induction process new staff 'shadowed' established staff for a period before taking part in the rota. This allowed them to become familiar with routines and expectations. One staff member described the induction as 'excellent';
- staff had registered with the relevant professional body, namely the Scottish Social Services Council. This is a legal requirement and obliges them to comply with codes of conduct and maintain appropriate training and practice experience;
- most staff had had a planned supervision session on average every two months, providing time for reflection and discussion about their work with young people. There had been changes to senior staff's shift pattern to improve their availability for supervision;
- the staff we spoke to felt their views were valued and taken into account in service development;

- the service provided a comprehensive training and development programme for staff. This was based on corporate and individual needs and made a link with the service's strategic direction and needs of the young people it supported. It had been developed with the aim of meeting national outcomes for children and demonstrated a learning culture in the service. The programme included some compulsory training in key areas. Senior staff were scheduled to take part in a development programme in the near future, the impact of which we can evaluate at the next inspection;
- staff had opportunities to consult with the NHS clinical psychologist about approaches to working with individual children. This was very valuable.

Areas for improvement

The supervision records we reviewed suggested the need for a clearer and more consistent structure to maximise the benefits of supervision. This had already been recognised and on the day we gave feedback to managers the planned new supervision template had been issued.

There had been very few full staff meetings. This was because opportunities for them all to meet had been very limited. For example, the nature of the service meant they had referrals at short notice and were unable to predict when young people would be there. However, staff felt that other methods of communication such as handovers, e-mail, and individual supervision had on the whole met their needs. This was an area the service was keeping under review.

Grade

4 - Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Statement 4

“We ensure that everyone working in the service has an ethos of respect towards service users and each other.”

Service strengths

The service met all aspects of this statement and achieved a very good performance. We reached this conclusion by observing staff working with young people, reading records and reviewing policies and procedures.

We identified these key strengths:

- the service based their approach partly on a range of policies, procedures and guidance that were based on best practice, the Scottish Social Services Council codes of practice and legislative requirements, including for example data protection and confidentiality. These were covered in the staff induction;
- the induction for new staff also included sessions on values. These provide the cultural and ethical basis for working with children and families and reflected key principles;
- the service obtained written consent from parents and carers for young people to engage in specific activities;
- the records we reviewed demonstrated that staff understood the importance of extending respect into the way they wrote about young people. Records accessed by young people in the future may for example reinforce positive or negative memories and emotions about being looked after;
- staff confirmed that managers valued their views and that there were good professional relationships within the team;
- staff respected young people's right to privacy and to spend time alone.

Areas for improvement

Staff should continue to build on this very good work.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 2

“We involve our workforce in determining the direction and future objectives of the service.”

Service strengths

The service's performance reached a very good standard and had major strengths. The staff we spoke to confirmed that managers asked for and valued their views and contributions. They felt they made an important contribution to the development and improvement of the service. For example, they had taken part in the 'lessons learned' review of Safe Base and drawn up an action plan (see Quality Theme 4.4 for details). They had taken on designated responsibilities within the home, for example household checks, supplies, vehicles, outdoor activities and administration. At a corporate level, they had had discussions with the manager about the service's business strategy and quality improvement plan, with which they were all expected to be familiar.

Areas for improvement

There was no need for any significant adjustments in this area.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Statement 4

“We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide”

Service strengths

The service met all aspects of this statement and reached a very good standard with some aspects of excellence. Staff and managers evaluated performance against national indicators and best practice to bring about continuous improvement. They took account of a wide range of views in identifying the need for change and adjustment. Quality assurance activity contributed to the positive outcomes detailed in other quality statements.

The key strengths included:

- the provider had a comprehensive corporate improvement plan for its two registered services. The management team reviewed this regularly and there was clear evidence that this process of evaluation, monitoring and review had led to change. There was also a separate business plan based on systematic analysis of relevant information. In addition the property strategy made best use of the school's various assets and resources. Overall therefore, there was a very strong sense of direction and the service was clear about the steps needed to achieve their goals;
- Safe Base staff and managers had also conducted a 'lessons learned' review about six months after the service had begun to operate. This was a focused evaluation of the service's performance in relation to people, processes and structure and concluded with a development plan for the future. The staff group had already made progress in many of the areas identified, including a review of paperwork and development of the website;
- operational and strategic leadership was strong and well-informed. Managers met regularly to discuss a wide range of issues and maintain momentum with the improvement plan. They also had a very effective system for incident management. This allowed them to take prompt action when necessary;
- external management arrangements had continued to develop and improve. These are the processes by which residential childcare services provide external oversight and accountability with the main aim of safeguarding children. The arrangements took account of the Scottish Government's guidelines and included visits by board members

and unannounced visits by the chief executive, who also reviewed records, observed practice, and spoke to staff and young people. A development programme had recently been developed for members of the board, with the aim of improving their contribution to corporate governance;

- the house manager or development manager reviewed external reports prepared by staff to ensure they were of a high standard;
- managers had reviewed inspection reports for a number of other similar services and taken account of positive findings in the service development phase;
- in October 2014 the service had achieved the standard for the Investors in People Award. This is a nationally recognised, accredited award for business planning and leadership, management effectiveness and performance measurement;
- the staff team had played a key role in reviewing and assessing the processes for young people's assessments, plans and reviews to ensure they were as effective and streamlined as possible. They had also been offered the opportunity to take part in the development of the service's self-assessment. A new employee questionnaire provided feedback for managers on the induction process;
- partner agency feedback had been very positive and provided confirmation that quality assurance activity was working well.

Areas for improvement

There had been a delay in notifying the Care Inspectorate of a child protection matter. However, this had not had any negative outcome and we accepted it was an isolated incident given the service's usual practice.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

5 What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at our last inspection

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

6 What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at our last inspection

Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

7 Complaints

No complaints have been upheld since the service was registered.

8 Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service.

9 Additional Information

Not applicable.

10 Inspection and grading history

This service does not have any prior inspection history or grades.

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