

Care service inspection report

Full inspection

HELP (Argyll & Bute) Ltd Housing Support Service Housing Support Service

17/19 John Street
Dunoon

Service provided by: HELP (Argyll & Bute) Ltd

Service provider number: SP2004938599

Care service number: CS2003053769

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	6	Excellent
Quality of staffing	6	Excellent
Quality of management and leadership		N/A

What the service does well

HELP (Argyll and Bute) Limited provides excellent support for young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The key strengths of the service relate to the person led nature of provision and how managers and staff respond to feedback from young people and their experiences of using the service.

Exceptional leadership promotes highly motivated staff, who display considerable empathy and compassion for young people faced with significant challenges.

What the service could do better

We did not identify any specific areas for improvement during our inspection. However, we would encourage the service to continue to develop upon existing practices which promote the exceptionally possible outcomes for young people, highlighted throughout this report.

What the service has done since the last inspection

The service has continued to build upon existing ways of working, with improvements to the employment programme, resulting in a significantly higher number of young people taking part in the programme. The service has been quick to respond to the training needs of staff, with increasingly varied and relevant courses and during this inspecting year, by achieving the Living Wage accreditation, the service continues to value and motivate staff to produce their best.

Conclusion

The service was operating at an excellent standard across all areas inspected.

1 About the service we inspected

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Information about all care services can be found on our website at www.careinspectorate.com

The service was previously registered with the Care Commission and transferred its registration to the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

HELP (Argyll and Bute) Limited is a housing support service based in Dunoon town centre, with an additional office in Rothesay. The service provides housing support for young people aged 16-25 years who experience homelessness, who are at risk of becoming homeless or to care leavers.

The mission of the service is:

"To help vulnerable young people to access and sustain a tenancy and to provide support that will enable them to have a high quality of life and be able to play an active part within the local community."

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 6 - Excellent

Quality of staffing - Grade 6 - Excellent

Quality of management and leadership - N/A

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 inspected the service 24 May 2016 between 10:45am - 3pm and again on 16 June between 10am - 5:15pm.

During this inspection we gathered evidence from a range of sources including relevant sections of policies, procedures and other documents. These included:

- Registration and Insurances Certificates
- Employment programme
- Young people's progress reports
- Young people's feedback forms
- Activities programme
- New tenant information
- Staff team meeting minutes
- Housing support paperwork
- HELP Support Agreements
- Young people's plans
- Risk assessments
- Activity Agreements
- Staff supervision notes.

We spoke with:

- Six young people
- The manager
- One senior staff member
- Three members of staff

- Employment Co-ordinator
- Administrator
- External consultant.

We sent out 30 Care inspectorate questionnaires to young people and received 28 responses. In all instances, young people were complimentary about the support provided by the service.

We also reviewed feedback from:

- One housing association
- Two education providers
- One employment agency
- One youth services worker.

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.

Every year, all care services are required to submit a self assessment form, telling us how they think their service is performing. We check to make sure this is accurate.

We received a completed self assessment document from the service provider. We agreed with their assessment of the quality of the overall service. We were made aware that people using the service had been involved in self assessment processes.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

We met with six young people using the service. There was overwhelming evidence of excellent standards of support being given to young people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Young people, who contributed to this inspection process, spoke extremely highly of the service and often commented about how their lives had significantly improved as a result of their involvement.

Other evidence produced from a recent impact study, contained the views of a further 12 young people, who equally positive about their experiences. Comments from some of these young people are contained within the body of this report.

Taking carers' views into account

Not applicable for this type of service.

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: 6 - Excellent

Statement 3

"We ensure that service users' health and wellbeing needs are met."

Service Strengths

At this inspection, we found that the performance of the service was excellent for this statement. We considered how the service encouraged the involvement of young people in meaningful activity, aimed at improving their health and well being, while promoting positive outcomes, to assess this statement.

There were a number of elements to the service which address the needs of young people. These include, housing support, employment and health and well being. Much of the support for young people was geared around building skill and confidence and it was recognised that the health and well being of young people can be improved by encouraging involvement in activity which supports better outcomes.

We met with six young people using the service and asked them to tell us how HELP supported them in their lives. Some young people spoke of their involvement with groups, such as a music group, where they played an instrument and socialised with others. For one young person the most important thing was that:

"I can play my guitar and be myself."

Other young people commented about how their lives had significantly improved since securing a tenancy and full access to benefits, which allowed them to pay bills and feel more secure and confident about their future. When we met with young people, they said:

"They're terrific. I really don't know where I'd be if it wasn't for their support. This is kind of a safe place for me. I've been with HELP for a long time so I come in all the time. They're a lifeline."

"They're the best thing ever. I would be in real trouble by now."

These comments helped to demonstrate the value placed upon the service by young people who needed support to cope with significant challenges, which led to them access the service.

We found that improvements to the employment programme, run by the service, meant that an increased number of young people had successfully completed the 12 week programme, preparing them for employment. Opportunities to attend job fairs and network with potential employers had raised the profile of young people and we found that some had as a result, gained employment with local businesses. By operating from a strengths based perspective, the service helped young people to make the most of their abilities in becoming more self reliant and confident. This was true for many young people, including one young person who had approached HELP because he was homeless and in need of guidance. By participating in the employment programme, he had been encouraged to attend college where he achieved a national qualification. He was then supported to apply for and secure work within the hospitality industry, where he gained in confidence and experience. Further to this, the young person undertook a First Aid at work course and went on to provide First Aid at events in the local hospitality trade. This was one example where the service had improved the overall well being of a young person, by identifying their strengths to secure a more prosperous future.

A key component of support for people using the service included the keen awareness of the emotional support necessary to bring all aspects of young people's lives together. We found that when young people developed an improved self esteem, they were more likely to sustain a tenancy and similarly, when young people met regularly with staff, they were more empowered to make positive choices. Examples of this included young people coming to parents group where they learned how to care for and educate their child, through the use of activities such as Book Bug and messy play, while others were supported to navigate the welfare benefits system and achieve full entitlements to allow them to decorate their homes and become members of their community. We visited young people in their homes and they told us that with help from staff, they had become more independent when managing their money and looking after themselves. An example was shared by one young person who told us:

"I'm a totally different place with their help. I feel more settled and confident that I can manage things. They've all been really great."

In our discussions with staff, we were informed about the range of supports given to young people to promote their health and well being. We heard about young people who had initially referred themselves to the service and who had been supported to develop their skills and adopt a leadership role with peers at the weekly cooking classes. We also heard about young people whose circumstances had led to them experiencing mental health difficulties and following a period of instability, with support from staff, had been supported to create positive routines, including attending health appointments. This helped one young person to secure a more positive future for themselves and their new family. Personal care packs were made available by the local nurse and the service had negotiated free access to local leisure facilities, which allowed young people to swim and attend the gym, to promote their health and fitness and links with a national football initiative, encouraged young people to feel inspired to make positive change in their lives.

A new development since the last inspection, involved links with the local grammar school to promote early intervention for young people who were still attending education, and who were at risk of homelessness. The service had implemented a drop in service at the local school. This contribution to supporting vulnerable young people throughout the local area, had allowed some young people to receive advice and guidance in relation to their experience of drug and alcohol misuse and through trusted relationships with staff, some young people had agreed to access health services to support their understanding and awareness of the impact on family relationships.

In conclusion, records sampled showed that extremely high numbers of young people stated that they were more motivated, felt more involved in physical activity, were more able to cook a healthy meal and were generally more confident, since becoming involved with HELP.

Areas for improvement

The service should continue to evidence the excellent standards achieved for this quality statement.

Grade

6 - Excellent

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Statement 5

"We respond to service users' care and support needs using person centered values."

Service Strengths

At this inspection, we found that the performance of the service was excellent for this statement. We looked at how the service promoted the individuality, independence, choice and rights of young people, to assess this statement.

As a person led service, young people's individual circumstances and preferences determined the range of supports provided. A recent independent evaluation of the service, conducted in May of this year, highlighted that young people felt that there was a strong commitment to listening to them, treating them as individuals and just being there for them and these factors were the key elements which explained why young people felt so positive about using the service. When asked what difference the service had made to their lives, strong themes relating to increased confidence, emotional and practical supports emerged. Young people said:

"They have patience and understanding for people" and

"They don't give up on you."

When we spoke with young people they told us:

"They really listen to you and try to help you move on in your life. I've been coming to HELP for a long time and really trust that they will do what they can to help me when I need it. I've got really good relationships with all of them so I know I can talk to anyone here about anything."

Another theme highlighted by young people, was the importance of meeting up with others. Many young people who had previously felt isolated, as a result of low self esteem and challenging circumstances, commented about feeling more motivated about their lives, further to taking part in activities, such as the Homeless World Cup, an annual competition promoted by a social organisation

which advocates the end of homelessness. For one young person taking part had helped them to identify how they could focus on their ambitions and express their identity.

Equally becoming more independent through participation in group activities, such as, the parents group and cooking classes, gave young people a sense of belonging and helped them to develop skills necessary for adult life. When highlighting how HELP had promoted young people's self worth and self esteem, one young person commented:

"They understand more and make you feel like they're listening to you. You're not just another person to be processed."

This view was confirmed by other young people during this inspection, who told us:

"They've been the best thing ever. I'd be in real trouble if I didn't have their support. I think I've grown up a lot and I'm more independent and capable of making some decisions for myself."

We met with six young people as part of this inspection process and during each conversation we were told that HELP had offered flexible support to meet each young person's needs. Some said that they attended groups which supported their learning and interests, while others commented that they had chosen to be supported in other ways, which better suited their personalities and lives.

Some young people who were too shy to attend groups, were supported in ways most meaningful to them. At times 1:1 support was the preferred option and one young person told us that they found this to be invaluable when faced with the challenges of managing their own home. By offering support at the pace of each individual, those receiving a service were given the opportunity to lead their lives as they wished and be respected for their decisions.

The rights of young people to access supports which helped to improve their life chances, remained a critical aspect of service provision. Invaluable connections with other agencies, including housing, employment, leisure, education and youth services, meant that young people were supported to explore and secure their rights to services. Many young people told us that their lives would be very different if they had not received support from HELP. Some said that they would be homeless, while others commented about feelings of isolation and withdrawal from community life. As a result of being involved with HELP, we saw that over 90% of young people now felt that they were more involved in their community and were more skilled.

Areas for improvement

The service should continue to evidence the excellent standards achieved for this quality statement.

Grade

6 - Excellent

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

Statement 3

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

Service Strengths

At this inspection, we found that the performance of the service was excellent for this statement. We looked at how staff training had enhanced the skills and knowledge of staff and how the service utilised best practice guidance to promote positive outcomes for people using the service, to assess this statement.

All staff working at the service were qualified above the requirement for registration with the Scottish Social Services Council. This extended to administration staff, who along with colleagues, were expected to work in line with the National Minimum Care Standards when supporting young people using the service. This practice demonstrated the commitment of the service, to providing young people with high quality advice and support.

We spoke with the majority of staff during this inspection, including those based at the satellite service in Rothesay, and this helped us to understand how a highly committed and compassionate staff team worked together, to share their knowledge and experience to benefit young people using the service. For example, one member of staff who had previously held a management role in the Department of Work and Pensions and who more recently had attended universal credit training, a new national approach to welfare reform, told us how they were able to provide correct advice to young people and help them to maximise their income.

For one young person who had been made redundant from their job, this support was critical to their continued well being and we noted that by being in full receipt of benefits, this young person had been able to address housing arrears and secure their tenancy.

A further example of staff using their local knowledge and experience, was noted where an invitation was extended to a Speech and Language Therapist, to attend a parents group, due to the staff member's assessment of the limited verbal language of a small child. The parent who been helped to join the parents group as a means of supporting their parenting skills and providing opportunities to socialise with new parents, had trusted the worker to make use of their prior expertise in a children's nursery setting, to influence support for their child. The outcome of this involvement meant that the child was registered with a local nursery earlier than anticipated, to support their communication and socialisation skills.

Our discussion with the employment coordinator identified that by evaluating the experiences of young people, improvements to the 12 week employment programme had resulted in significantly increased numbers of young people successfully completing the programme. This meant that a more organised approach to helping young people to find work, by supporting them to complete CVs, prepare for interviews and participate in foundation training, such as, Health and Safety, had resulted in over 90% of young people stating that they felt more ready for work. Comments made by young people, such as:

"The Employment Group is still fun and so people want to come back to it. It doesn't feel task oriented."

"Staff are really helpful. They make you feel that you have a chance."

This showed that for many young people who found it difficult to sustain involvement with services, it was possible to become more self confident and achieve financial stability through their efforts.

In developing their awareness of national guidance, in respect of employment support and allowances, staff had worked hard to improve relationships with colleagues working in employability services and by creating better links, this

had enabled organisations to put achievable claimant commitments in place, which were more flexible. For example when young people were required to sign on, in order to meet their obligations to receive benefits, and were engaged in activity with HELP, this requirement could be waived, without penalty. An employability colleague summed up this improved approach, by saying:

"It doesn't matter who helps the young person into work, it's the outcome that counts...HELP has become an enabler for Job Centre Plus."

By working together and with other colleagues in housing, employability and youth services, it was evident that the whole staff team made a significantly positive impact on young people's lives. We found that by attending a wide range of training events, including an Habitual Residence course, which supported one young person of Polish descent to rightly receive back dated allowances to support their income, following a period of uncertainty and ASIST, a course aimed improving approaches to supporting young people who presented a risk to their health and well being, staff were equipped to offer practical and emotional support for young people. For one young person, who found their personal circumstances overwhelming, staff worked with them to source appropriate supports, including mental health nursing and maternity benefits. This work had allowed the young person to become more confident in what they could achieve and stabilise their mental health while preparing for their future.

Areas for improvement

The service should continue to evidence the excellent standards achieved under this quality statement.

Grade

6 - Excellent

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

At this inspection, we found that the performance of the service was excellent for this statement. We considered how the values, aims and objectives of the organisation were promoted by staff, to assess this statement.

We found that those working at HELP demonstrated a strong open culture and shared values, including treating people with respect and promoting the rights of vulnerable young people, who are at risk of homelessness. It was evident that the staff team were guided by the experiences of people they support.

Many examples of respectful practices including the provision of activities aimed at encouraging and enabling young people to develop their skills and interests. Excellent examples of young people being involved in meaningful activity, which was at times adapted to suit their needs, showed the significant commitment of the service, to respect the views and abilities of young people in need of support. By listening to and observing young people's responses, the service helped young people to identify what supports they felt they needed. For some, who felt unable to join any of the current groups, such as, alternative sports, music and cooking, alternatives were arranged, with the intention of later integrating young people at a pace that suited them. We chatted with some young people who told us that they did not feel comfortable joining in with others and that staff had set time aside to offer alternative support, which better met their needs. One young person told us:

"I've needed a lot of support and they've listened and helped me. Nothing is too hard."

A positive regard for the wishes and aspirations of young people, was intrinsic to the values of staff and wider organisation.

It was clear also that by adopting a strengths based approach to building on the existing skills, interests and experiences of young people, that staff 'matched' young people to appropriate opportunities. We found examples where this meant that young people became assets in their communities by contributing to environmental projects which enhanced public areas. We visited one project and saw the impact of young people's commitment to improving the local environment and we observed mutually respectful relationships between staff and young people, who worked equally hard to complete the job. From this experience, young people were supported to gain employment with local businesses and support the local economy.

The well being of young people was a key element of this service. It was clear that staff understood the importance of providing emotional as well as practical support for young people. Staff spoke respectfully and warmly about their relationships with young people and highlighted to us their non judgemental and sensitive insight into the challenges facing young people at risk of homelessness. For example they explained how young people's health and well being can be affected by their lack of understanding of how the housing and benefit systems operate and how they spent considerable time with young people and in particular, other agencies to help improve their understanding and raise awareness. One of several professionals from housing services who believed that HELP has had a huge impact on tenancy sustainment, commented:

"If HELP had not been there we would have had lots more arrears and lots more abandonments."

By developing a better understanding and closer working relationships, all agencies could compliment and add value to the experiences of young people.

We met with young people who told us that their lives had improved considerably since becoming involved with the service and that when they needed help, staff were there for them.

Young people commented that they trusted all staff and that they would have experienced further hardship without their help. Some of the words used by young people to describe what they felt about HELP included, "fantastic", "life changing", and "character building". These words demonstrated the value placed upon the service by those in need of support and evidenced the mutual regard between staff and those using the service.

Areas for improvement

The service should continue to evidence the excellent standards achieved for this quality statement.

Grade

6 - Excellent

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Quality theme not assessed

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

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

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

Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

6 Complaints

No complaints have been upheld, or partially upheld, since the last inspection.

7 Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service since the last inspection.

8 Additional Information

There is no additional information.

9 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
25 Mar 2015	Unannounced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	6 - Excellent
		Management and Leadership	6 - Excellent
6 Feb 2014	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	6 - Excellent
26 Oct 2012	Unannounced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	6 - Excellent
		Management and Leadership	6 - Excellent
25 Aug 2010	Announced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	6 - Excellent
		Management and Leadership	Not Assessed
18 Dec 2008	Announced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	6 - Excellent

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