care inspectorate

Four Square (Scotland) - Follow up
Housing Support Service

Four Square Hub
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Inspection completed on: 19 July 2017

Service provided by:
Four Square (Scotland)

Service provider number:
SP2004005793

Care service number:
CS2004062575

HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

About the service

Four Square (Scotland) is a voluntary organisation with forty years of experience working with those affected by homelessness. It provides a broad range of support and practical assistance to service users affected by homelessness.

Four Square - Follow Up provides tenancy and complementary support to people who have experienced homelessness and are setting up and maintaining their own home. Currently Four Square - Follow Up is the lead agency in a consortium of housing support providers (WISH) in south-west Edinburgh.

The service comprises of a manager and six tenancy support workers. The service is available Monday to Friday 8:00am to 8:00pm, although earlier or later appointments may be arranged. The service also provides occasional Saturday and Sunday support if required.

At the time of the inspection Follow Up was supporting around 50 service users.

The stated aims of the service are:

"To provide appropriate, good quality housing support for vulnerable individuals who are homeless or at risk from becoming homeless".

What people told us

We received four completed Care Standards Questionnaires (CSQs) from people using the service. During the inspection we met five people in their own homes and we spoke with seven by telephone.

All those we heard from were very happy with the service, would recommend it to others and said that the support had made a big difference to their lives. People valued the knowledge of staff and the consistency of support workers. Most people knew just one or two staff members and even people returning to the service after some time would have the same worker they were familiar with. People said that the way in which Follow Up staff engaged with them was better than other services they used and was key to its success. For example, visiting them at home rather than expecting them to attend appointments, understanding that some days were better than others, not cancelling the service if they missed a few meetings.

Comments from service users included:

- "My support worker has done a lot for me and I look forward to her visits. I have nothing but praise for her. She helped with phoning and meeting people like my doctor, rent worker, cookery class worker, DWP and anything or anyone who I need help with. She's been like a rock to me as I don't have any family around. She's kept me from taking my life. If it wasn't for her I'd be dead or living on the streets. She's kept me on the straight and narrow. When she visits I can get things off my shoulders and we can make phone calls. I don't have a bad word to say about Four Square. I hope the support lasts a lot longer for my sake".

- "It's fantastic, I don't know where I'd be without the weekly visit. Sometimes I don't open my mail. My worker sits with me and deals with it and she encourages me to deal with it. She asks me to make a list of the next steps and to try to do some of these. I get advice and information about budgeting. My support worker is lovely, I don't know what I'd do without her. She is very patient and knowledgeable. The visits brighten my week, it's wonderful. She has been an amazing emotional support, my lifeline. Weekly visits are good and I know she's at

the end of the phone if I need to speak to her. I feel it's a wonderful service, a lifeline. I'm very grateful for the support".

- "I could not fault my support worker. She was more than happy to help, she's lovely. I had help with housing issues, filling in forms. She came with me to meet a new landlord, and to other meetings. If she didn't know the answer she'd go away and find out and call me back. It is always the same person, they are friendly, welcoming, and I was never made to feel silly asking anything".

- "Talking about worries helps me to get things into perspective and feel confident about going to an activity which I would probably drop out of. A recent example is an art group which I did not feel confident about going to. However the support worker was able to attend several meetings which I now feel able to go to independently. I feel safe because the worker is not aggressive or bossy. I don't feel anxiety, e.g. about my flat not being totally tidy. There isn't fear of sharp or critical comments. I think the staff are respectful and non judgemental, also they seem interested in my art and writing activities (which the social worker and housing manager did not). The staff will work around my health setbacks in a thoughtful way. I don't know much about the training. My worker does a good job. I can compare this with another support agency who did not offer a high standard. I would not like a change of staff, however I expect the new person would have the same level of experience and training. My worker has often given extended visits to give more time for deep cleaning of my flat as well as changing times in order to go to a hospital appointment or interview. If I could change anything it would be to make the service more long-term".

- "They are doing an excellent job. The staff are knowledgeable, helpful, they helped with my pension and my rent arrears. My support worker does a lot a lot of leg work, organises things with other people. She's been really great. I've no issues".

- "Follow Up support is really good, they are doing a really good job helping me and others. I received nothing but help and was treated with respect. I get on with my support, I can speak to them. They are brilliant. They are putting me in touch with all sort of things. I'm getting the support I need".

- "The service has been good to me. I had support from the service before and I chose to have support from Follow Up again. They are much better than the housing advisors".

- "Follow Up are good, I put a friend on to them".

- "My support worker is perfect, a real angel. The support makes a big difference to me".

- "I have lots of problems, I'm trying to get a transfer. I just clicked with my support worker. I can talk to him and if it hadn't been for him I don't know where I'd be. He's very important and he doesn't realise how good he is".

- "My GP got me on to Follow Up and they are brilliant. My support worker really cares about me. He helps with bidding for houses, he makes sure they are suitable. He knows I like a quick visit because I can get agitated. He's such a god guy, and funny too. He helped with getting a clothing grant. I feel comfortable talking to him. There's nothing I would change about the support. One day I didn't get paid, he was so good he helped right away, he sorted it out for me and my money arrived within a couple of hours. He has all the numbers in his phone".

- "They've been great. I am quite new to the service. I see my worker once a week and he is very helpful with everything and anything. He's great, he knows a lot and if he doesn't know something he's quick to find out and get back to me with forms or websites. He came with me to a meeting with my MSP. I would recommend Follow Up to others".

We contacted a number of **professionals** for feedback on the quality of the service. Comments included:

- "I have received referrals from three workers over the past 18 months. All three appear to give a high level of support to their clients whether in attending initial assessment appointments or accompanying them to classes if required. This makes a big difference to the outcomes as we have a high number of 'no shows' due to client anxiety, mental health issues or chaotic lifestyles. The support from Follow Up workers is invaluable in supporting the clients through the process and contributes to a higher than average success rate for client engagement. Follow Up workers have always been reliable, easily accessible where required and very knowledgeable about their clients and the support systems that are available to them. They appear to take a holistic approach to working with their clients and offer flexible, person centred support".

- "My experience of the service has been very positive. Communication with the worker from Four Square has been very good, he has been accessible and very responsive at all times. I have found that he has built up a very strong, trusting and positive working relationship with the clients and has gained a huge amount of knowledge from this which, with the client's permission, he has shared where appropriate. This has proved very useful and helpful to support people to identify their own personal outcomes, in order to match them up with the support that they feel will help them to move towards achieving them. The skills and knowledge of the Four Square worker assisted in this. I feel that their work and input is definitely contributing to improved outcomes for their clients. I am impressed by their flexibility and responsiveness to the client's needs. I also feel that the worker's skill and knowledge base is wide and again, this has proved extremely helpful. The worker has put me in touch with several service providers that have proved to be useful. In relation to adult protection issues, I feel that the service has worked well in sharing information and knowledge appropriately and I feel confident in this. All in all I have found Four Square to be a valuable service and I feel that we have formed a good working relationship that is proving to have a positive effect on the developing support for the service users. In my experience, a person who has the benefit of having a worker who is there for them, who is a good listener, who doesn't judge and is able to work in a truly person centred way, is much more able to move forward at their own pace focusing on the issues that are important to them. I believe that Four Square is providing this well".

- "The WISH consortium is performing well in delivering outcomes for people in terms of helping people get or keep accommodation and not present as homeless for up to 12 months after receiving the service. We look at case studies, quarterly reports and take into account service user feedback. We have a new pilot project for people in bed and breakfast accommodation. Four Square have taken responsibility to link in with a number of bed and breakfast units to carry out assessments to help people with housing applications or access specialist services. When the service was without a manager the person acting up was able to hit the ground running. She took part in building service user participation in a consultation about the future of services. The service is flexible to meet the varied needs of this client group".

Self assessment

We are not asking services to submit a self-assessment for this inspection year. Instead, we will ask services for their improvement or development plan and discuss any improvements they may have made or intend to make since the last inspection.

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 4 - Good

What the service does well

People received high quality housing support which was focussed and person-centred. People were fully included in directing how they wanted to be supported and in reviewing their support. The service prioritised building a relationship with each person and listening to and fully understanding their wishes and needs. In this way the support was individual, responsive and effective.

Typically people received a weekly visit. Support times were agreed in advance when people needed support to attend appointments/meetings, but there was also a great degree of flexibility. This meant that a worker might phone and say "I'm just passing, put the kettle on" which worked well for people who might get anxious about meetings.

People experienced a high level of consistency in who provided their support. They were supported by compassionate, knowledgeable and skilled staff who worked to high standards, often in difficult circumstances. We observed warm, genuine and respectful interactions conducted at a relaxed pace. Care practices were rights based and in keeping with the principles of the new health and social care standards, available at: http://www.newcarestandards.scot/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/NCS-Principles-Feb-2016.pdf

The quality of support plans and risk assessments had improved. These included the agreed priorities, aspirations, risk management and information about how each person was to be supported. The service was responsive so that support was adapted when people's needs and choices changed. The service maintained good daily records and records of regular reviews of support. Records detailed people's progress in achieving their goals. Some included an 'outcomes star' to provide a visual record of progress.

There was a high level of satisfaction with the service. The feedback the service gathered was positive and matched what people told us about their support.

People's overall wellbeing improved through the respect, encouragement and persistence of the team. This had an impact on sustaining housing and preventing homelessness.

People told us of the positive impact it was having on their lives, such as:

- feeling more secure about money, help to navigate all entitlements, help to attend appointments,
- having more confidence and ability to tackle correspondence and debts,
- reduced anxiety,
- better physical and mental health,
- support to make and get to appointments,
- encouragement to make goals, start to learn new skills, making connections and participating in activities in the community,
- getting to a place where they could make life changing decisions,
- training for a new career.

The Follow Up team worked very well together and with external professionals and agencies, to the benefit of clients.

We were satisfied that staff had a good understanding of adult protection matters.

The manager was registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Support workers will begin to register from October 2017.

Follow Up had an open and receptive approach to improvement and worked well with us.

What the service could do better

- We would expect the provider to have a service development strategy and improvement plan.
- The service had operated for some months without a manager. In the interim a support worker had been appointed as a temporary support supervisor. A new manager took up post in April, however he also held senior management responsibility for Four Square's hostel based services and some of its other projects. The service should make plans for the day-to-day support of staff.
- There was low morale and staff felt undervalued. The provider should consider carrying out a staff survey.
- We were told that development and training opportunities took place as appropriate but we saw no evidence of any training since 2015. Individual supervision was only just getting back on track. The SSSC has set out a Code of Practice for employers of social service workers. Providers must offer support and good quality learning and development opportunities for staff to do their jobs effectively and to meet the ongoing conditions for registration. See SSSC Codes of Practice: 2 and 3. The codes are available at: http://www.sssc.uk.com/about-the-sssc/multimedia-library/publications?task=document.viewdoc&id=239
- Staff would benefit from adult protection training at level 2/3 with the Council, as previously suggested.
- The Adult Support and Protection policy should include a detailed procedure which clarifies roles, responsibilities and timescales. This should reference the most up to date local inter-agency guidelines.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

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	
18 Sep 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support	5 - Very good

Date	Type	Gradings	
		Environment Staffing Management and leadership	Not assessed 5 - Very good 5 - Very good
9 Aug 2013	Announced (short notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 5 - Very good 5 - Very good
16 Aug 2011	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed 5 - Very good Not assessed
29 Oct 2009	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed 5 - Very good Not assessed
23 Jun 2008	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good

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