

Bramble Cottages Care Home Service

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Type of inspection: Unannounced
Inspection completed on: 22 September 2017

Service provided by:
Angus Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000043

Care service number:
CS2003000358

About the service

Bramble Cottages is a care home service for children and young people provided by Angus Council.

The service is located in new purpose-built premises on the outskirts of Arbroath. It comprises of two cottages, Logan and Rowan, set within extensive grounds. The service is registered to provide care for up to nine young people at any one time, with four in each cottage and the potential for an additional placement in the annexe to Logan cottage which can be used for assessments, family visits, and independent living preparation.

The aim of the unit is to:

- Provide a high quality, safe, secure, and stimulating environment in which children and young people are able to develop their full social, emotional, and educational potential.
- To work in partnership with children, young people, families/carers, other agencies, and departments.

This service has been registered since 1 April 2002.

What people told us

At the time of this inspection four young people were staying at Bramble Cottages. We met briefly with all four of them during the inspection. All expressed a generally positive view of the service. They were comfortable in their rooms and they mostly got on well with staff. One young person mentioned having a very good relationship with their key worker. All said that they enjoyed the food and had plenty of choice.

We also met with the relative of one of the young people who was visiting the service. She said that she thought that the service was "wonderful" and felt that she and her family had received excellent support. Communication was open and honest and she felt confident about raising issues with staff. She said that she "couldn't praise the staff highly enough".

Self assessment

A self assessment form was not required for this inspection.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	2 - Weak
Quality of environment	not assessed
Quality of staffing	2 - Weak
Quality of management and leadership	2 - Weak

What the service does well

Sadly, in recent months, the quality of experience for most young people had been adversely affected as a result of the circumstances which culminated in the closure of Rowan Cottage and the disruption of their placements, with little notice or preparation.

As described under 'What the service could do better', there is an urgent need for the service provider to develop strategic plans to avoid such a situation recurring in future.

However, it is also the case that during this inspection we found that many of the established systems and processes, as well as the positive commitment of the manager, depute and the staff team, had enabled some young people to make progress.

Care plans were individualised, reflecting a depth of knowledge and understanding of the young person and their needs. Pen pictures presented a positive view of young people and their strengths. Records of one-to-one sessions reflected a high standard of direct work on both a planned and responsive basis.

Transition plans had been developed and implemented in partnership with young people and at a pace which met their needs. This, and the commitment of staff to providing support on an outreach basis, had led to successful moves to independence for young people who had recently left Bramble Cottages.

Staff established caring, supportive relationships with young people. They continued to visit and support those who had recently moved, providing continuity of care. They recognised the importance of preserving friendships between young people and had facilitated visits both inside and outside of the cottages. They worked closely with families, welcoming them into the service and making very good use of the annexe to provide space and time for meaningful family contact.

There was evidence of a nurturing approach to care. For example, with gentle bedtime routines, even in the midst of some extremely challenging episodes. There were regular shared mealtimes with healthy, well cooked food. Staff recognised the importance of rhythms and routines to provide a sense of security and there were signs during the course of the inspection that they were beginning to re-establish these with the young people who remained in the service.

Although staffing had been extremely stretched in recent months, the commitment of the skilled core staff team is commendable. They had worked flexibly to cover shifts and provide continuity of care. They valued the leadership and support provided by the manager and depute, who had also worked to cover shifts and had continued to provide supervision and informal support.

We looked at a number of management reports which evidenced very good oversight and analysis of the service, including the challenges posed by unplanned and emergency admissions and the staffing needed to meet these safely.

What the service could do better

At the beginning of August, due to insufficient staffing, Rowan Cottage was closed with little consultation or preparation with the young people. Young people's placements were disrupted, with moves from one cottage to another and three young people being placed outwith the service. A young person had extended home leave to create space during the relocation process.

Some young people were very distressed and the group of young people who remained at Bramble Cottages had been anxious and unsettled. Some had lost their close friends and were unsure of their own place within the service. They displayed their concerns through deterioration in behaviour, including challenges to staff authority and staying up all night.

While it was not the purpose of this inspection to investigate the cause of this major event, we identified a number of key issues which must be addressed by Angus Council, as the service provider, to avoid the recurrence of such an incident in future.

Staffing

The closure of Rowan Cottage was precipitated by the precautionary suspension of two members of staff pending investigation. While allegations were found to be unsubstantiated following investigation, and the suspensions were lifted, staffing levels were already stretched due to high levels of staff sickness absence and the fact that there were four vacant posts which were in the process of being filled.

In addition, a staffing analysis carried out by the manager at the end of 2016 had highlighted that the staffing establishment was insufficient to cover all shifts. A proposal to increase staffing was made but was not progressed by the service provider.

A request to employ agency staff was made but authorisation came too late for the service to be able to deploy staff quickly enough to avert the closure of Rowan Cottage.

The service provider must take urgent action to ensure that optimum staffing levels are maintained at all times and that appropriate strategic plans are in place to avoid the service reaching a critical point **(see requirement 1)**.

In order to support responsive planning, the service should keep a record of staffing requirements on a four-weekly basis, taking into account the complex needs of young people **(see requirement 2)**.

Admissions

Three emergency admissions had taken place within the space of a few weeks. Although two of these young people had previously stayed at Bramble Cottages, their placement, without proper assessment of risk and suitability, had compromised their safety and wellbeing and that of young people already living at Bramble Cottages.

In order to reduce the risk to young people and the service as a whole, the service provider must review and implement the admissions procedure, with specific reference to how emergency admissions will be managed **(see requirement 3)**.

Other issues

A number of other pressures had contributed to a very challenging and unsettled period for the service. The service was working with some young people who displayed extremely challenging behaviour, which included numerous assaults on staff. This had clearly had a negative impact on the health, safety, and wellbeing of other young people and staff.

In addition, most young people were not in full-time education, which meant that during the school day, staff were fully occupied in devising and engaging them in educational activities.

As well as the additional demand this placed on limited staff resources, it is a matter of concern that the young people arguably most in need of high quality educational input were getting so little. As a matter of priority, Angus Council, as the service provider, should review whether it is meeting its responsibilities as a corporate parent in respect of education for young people at Bramble Cottages **(see requirement 4)**.

Other areas for improvement were identified as follows:

- Develop a strategy to manage smoking in a way which promotes the health and safety of young people.

- Make sure that expiry dates for prescribed medication are recorded.
- Improve the way that complaints from young people are handled, including formal written responses, where appropriate.
- Make sure that notifications are made timeously in line with the Care Inspectorate's guidance on notifications.
- To support continued development, the service should maintain the frequency of team meetings and should continue to develop the effectiveness of quality audits.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 4

1. In order to make sure that the health, safety, and wellbeing of young people is consistently supported, the service provider must ensure that, at all times, there are sufficient suitably qualified and competent persons working in the care service.

This is in order to comply with:

The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, (SSI 2011/210) Regulation 15(a) – Staffing.

Timescale: 31 October 2017.

2. The service provider should keep a record of the assessment that identifies the minimum staffing levels and deployment of staff on each shift over a four-week period. This will take into account aggregated information about the age and stage of development of the young people living there, the mix of ages, the layout of the building, the support needs of each young person, the skills and experience of the staff, and any additional information which may affect the staffing needs, over and above the minimum requirement.

This is in order to comply with:

The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, (SSI 2011/210) Regulation 4(1)(a) – A regulation regarding the welfare of service users.

The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Registration) Regulations 2011, (SSI 2011/28) Regulation 4(1)(a) – A regulation about record-keeping and notifications.

Guidance on the details of records which registered services should keep can be found in 'Records that all registered care services (except childminding) must keep' and guidance on notification reporting V.2 – Publication code: OPS-0212-119 on www.careinspectorate.com.

Timescale: by 31 October 2017.

3. In order to promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of young people, the service provider must implement an admissions policy which includes an assessment of suitability of the placement for the young person, as well as considering the impact of new admissions on young people who are already living in the service.

This is in order to comply with:

The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, (SSI 2011/210) Regulation 4(1)(a) - A regulation regarding the welfare of service users.

Timescale: 30 November 2017.

4. The service provider must review the provision of education to young people in Bramble Cottages and ensure that each receives sufficient educational input and support to enable them to achieve their academic potential.

This is in order to comply with:

The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, (SSI 2011/210) Regulation 4(1)(a) - A regulation regarding the welfare of service users.

Timescale: 30 November 2017.

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	
16 Sep 2016	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	5 - Very good
		Staffing	Not assessed
		Management and leadership	Not assessed
28 Apr 2015	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	4 - Good
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good

Date	Type	Gradings	
15 May 2014	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	5 - Very good
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
14 May 2013	Unannounced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	4 - Good
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good
15 May 2012	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	5 - Very good
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good
18 Oct 2010	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	Not assessed
		Management and leadership	Not assessed
9 Jul 2010	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	5 - Very good
		Staffing	Not assessed
		Management and leadership	Not assessed
16 Feb 2010	Unannounced	Care and support	2 - Weak
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	Not assessed
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good
15 Sep 2009	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	5 - Very good
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good
29 Dec 2008		Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	Not assessed

Date	Type	Gradings	
23 Sep 2008	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	4 - Good
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and leadership	4 - Good

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