

East Lothian Council - Homeless Section Housing Support Service

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Type of inspection: Announced (short notice)
Inspection completed on: 22 February 2018

Service provided by:
East Lothian Council

Service provider number:
SP2003002600

Care service number:
CS2004062564

About the service

The service is provided by East Lothian Council. The Homelessness Section within East Lothian Council consists of three parts:

The response team who have a statutory duty to assess housing needs for people within two months of becoming homeless.

The Accommodation service providing temporary accommodation and support.

The Prevention Team who provide flexible support to individuals and families with accommodation difficulties and support needs to prevent homelessness. This includes support to prevent homelessness for resettlement and to people who are currently living in bed and breakfast accommodation. People experiencing housing difficulties who are not in high priority housing groups receive assistance to find appropriate accommodation in low cost housing schemes and with private landlords. Although this inspection considered the whole of the service, we concentrated on the prevention team element.

The literature held by the service states that the purpose of the prevention team is to offer an effective service to those who are threatened with homelessness within approximately two to six months, with a view to trying to help prevent homelessness occurring or re-occurring.

This involves a detailed assessment of housing and other needs. Where other needs are identified, a range of advice and support can be offered as well as appropriate referrals to specialist support and advice agencies.

What people told us

Prior to our inspection, we asked the service if people receiving support would like to talk to us. We made contact with six people by telephone. We also saw that regular surveys were issued to service users for feedback but there was a low return of these.

Overall people were very positive about the service and support they received from the prevention team. In particular, people felt they were listened to, supported well in a number of areas and also felt their named key worker was caring and supportive. No one we spoke with had suggestions for any improvements and stated they thought the service was offering everything they needed and was at the right level. Comments included:

"I don't know where I would be without the support"

"My key worker has been so supportive and given me sound advice"

"I have had a lot of support sorting out my finances"

"The service has helped me keep my tenancy."

"Nothing is any trouble, I can call or text and know I will get the help if I need it."

"Fantastic service, not like before when I had a tenancy I now have more support "

"No one judges, they listen and help. Brilliant."

We were able to look at information with regard to the development of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and how people were consulted to ensure the strategy reflects local concerns, needs and aspirations. The following information is highlighted in the documentation that was provided to us.

Consultation for East Lothian has taken place during the period 2014 to 2017 with events held in a variety of locations. These comprised large scale formal events, small focus groups tailored to the needs of individuals, full day drop in events, day and evening events and broadly covered four themes.

Housing Forums - Three large scale full day Housing Forum events were held, to which over 200 stakeholders and their service users were invited to consider key housing issues and challenges, draft priority outcomes and actions and a vision for housing in the LHS. Two of these events were advertised to the general public,

Vulnerable Groups - Approximately 20 focus groups were held to consider the key housing issues and challenges in relation to vulnerable groups and potential actions for inclusion in the LHS. The events were widely publicised to the general public, carers, the third sector etc. targeting specific particular needs groups.

Community Planning - Engagement with Community Planning is emphasised in Guidance, with a requirement for Community Planning Partners to agree to both the strategic direction of the LHS and their role in the delivery of key outcomes. A community planning event was held mid 2017 to raise awareness and consult with key stakeholders in relation to the draft LHS.

Consultation on Housing Need and Demand - Work was undertaken across Scotland in partnership with other Local Authorities to consider how housing need and demand can be best met and across all tenures. This involved large scale consultation events, virtual events and surveys with the feedback received used to inform need and demand figures as required by the Scottish Government.

The formal consultation period ran for a seven week period from 19 January 2018 until 9 March 2018. The Council will provide a link to the consultation and this will be promoted via the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts. An invitation to respond to the Consultative Draft East Lothian LHS will be sent to members of the East Lothian Housing Forum (comprising of approximately 200 members) and their service users. This comprises of a diverse range of statutory organisations, third sector organisations, tenants and residents.

Self assessment

We no longer ask services to submit a self assessment. We spoke with the management team about the development of the service going forward.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	5 - Very Good
Quality of staffing	5 - Very Good
Quality of management and leadership	not assessed

What the service does well

We assessed the service to be performing at a very good level. We concluded this after we looked at the type of support they provided to people and how the service was delivered. We also took into account what service users told us.

We saw from care plans held by the service that there was a good understanding of the difficulties people could face who are homeless, or who are at risk of losing their tenancy. We saw that people were assisted with their

finances and any benefit claims and could be signposted to more specialist services should this be required. People were assisted with obtaining essential goods required for a home. Health issues were recorded, with consent, so people could be fully supported to receive any financial entitlements, but also so that people were provided with any other professional health care support they needed. We noted that regular contact took place with key workers and service users, and also there was an agreed minimum contact of once a month once initial support needs were met. We also noted when appointments were changed or cancelled by service users, this was accommodated and contact was then provided flexibly. This demonstrated that the changing needs of service users were understood and considered and people were supported as and when they required it by using a person-centred approach. We also heard from service users that they appreciated the monthly contact by their key worker, as sometimes they found it hard to ask for help or make contact. This told us that people were able to be supported at times even when they did not initiate contact. Again, this demonstrated a very good understanding by the service of people's needs.

We spoke with a variety of staff across the service. We concluded that the team were highly motivated, caring individuals who strived to keep people from losing their homes. We also saw that the training undertaken by the staff alongside housing qualifications included adult support and protection, mental health, domestic abuse, money advice and fuel poverty. All staff were kept up to date with legislation and new policies. We felt that staff demonstrated a wide variety of professional knowledge and were able to assist people who had multiple needs. They also were able to refer people to other agencies or professionals and link in with this work so that their knowledge of a person's circumstances was up to date. We saw that staff attended regular meetings and also worked with other local authority departments, such as social work and the main housing teams. This ensured good communication across the teams with regard to individual circumstances.

Staff were pro-active with regard to their training needs, and we saw that requests had been made to shadow colleagues across other departments so they were aware of other procedures, for example, adult support and protection conferences. Staff spoke highly of the team leader and manager and felt very well supported in all aspects of their work.

What the service could do better

The service currently use surveys to gather the views of people accessing and using services provided. However, in agreement with the service there is not a high return of these. We discussed that technology could be used more in this area, and given the majority of service users were contacted by use of mobile phones, this could be another way to gather views regarding satisfaction of the service or suggested areas for improvement.

We looked at the analysis of feedback gathered regarding the service, and it was not highlighted what the return percentage of surveys were based on the amount sent. This meant when highlighting what people had stated, it did not reflect overall if this was a small, average, or large consensus. The management team took this on board.

We noted that regular reviews/supervision were held with staff in relation to the people that were supported, whereby care plans and engagement was discussed alongside any areas of concern. Although we thought this was good practice, we did not see anything in the regular supervision that identified how staff were being developed in terms of their role, or what was discussed in terms of training needs relating to their posts and how this informed their practice. We did acknowledge that the staff and management team discussed training and development usually at meetings or on an informal basis but some staff agreed that protected supervision time every three months in this area could be beneficial.

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
11 Jan 2016	Announced (short notice)	<div>Care and support</div> <div>5 - Very good</div> <div>Environment</div> <div>Not assessed</div> <div>Staffing</div> <div>5 - Very good</div> <div>Management and leadership</div> <div>5 - Very good</div>
18 Feb 2014	Announced (short notice)	<div>Care and support</div> <div>5 - Very good</div> <div>Environment</div> <div>Not assessed</div> <div>Staffing</div> <div>5 - Very good</div> <div>Management and leadership</div> <div>5 - Very good</div>
5 Mar 2013	Announced (short notice)	<div>Care and support</div> <div>4 - Good</div> <div>Environment</div> <div>Not assessed</div> <div>Staffing</div> <div>4 - Good</div> <div>Management and leadership</div> <div>4 - Good</div>
21 Feb 2011	Re-grade	<div>Care and support</div> <div>Not assessed</div> <div>Environment</div> <div>Not assessed</div> <div>Staffing</div> <div>4 - Good</div> <div>Management and leadership</div> <div>Not assessed</div>
12 Mar 2010	Announced	<div>Care and support</div> <div>4 - Good</div> <div>Environment</div> <div>Not assessed</div>

Date	Type	Gradings	
		Staffing Management and leadership	3 - Adequate Not assessed
12 Mar 2009	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good

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