

## **Bramble Cottages Care Home Service**

James Chalmers Road  
Arbroath  
DD11 3LR

Telephone: 01241 875207

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
2 August 2018

**Service provided by:**  
Angus Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000043

**Service no:**  
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 purpose-built premises on the outskirts of Arbroath. It comprises 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.

At the time of this inspection, three young people were staying in Rowan Cottage and two in Logan Cottage. Although registered as a single service, the two cottages are currently operating as two distinct houses, with dedicated staff teams.

The aim of the service 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

Before the inspection, we received three completed Care Standards Questionnaires (CSQs) from young people. Of these, one 'agreed' and two 'strongly agreed' that they were happy with the quality of care they received at Bramble Cottages.

We met informally with three of the young people who were currently staying in the service. None of them were keen to get involved in any discussion but two said that they liked it and one said that "it's a good place".

We met with the family of one young person and the parent of another. They presented a very positive view of the service. They said that they were made to feel welcome and that the staff were "brilliant". One commented that the new manager was "very good". They were very happy with the house and the facilities. One parent commented that they felt that the service had supported their child to "improve". They felt they were more grown up and better able to listen and understand what was expected of them.

## Self assessment

We did not ask the service to submit a self assessment form for this inspection.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

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

## Quality of care and support

### Findings from the inspection

We found that the service was operating at a very good standard, demonstrating major strengths which supported positive outcomes for children and young people.

Since the last inspection, the service had implemented a robust admissions policy which meant that children were being admitted on a planned basis with sufficient information being gathered at the outset to assess whether the placement was right for that young person and for the other young people in the house. Even with crisis admissions, tight timescales and clear expectations of partner agencies helped to ensure that plans were made quickly, taking into account the needs of all young people. This had resulted in a much calmer and safer environment in which young people settled quickly and were making good progress.

We found evidence of well planned individual work which promoted children's safety and wellbeing, and which had resulted in positive progress, including reduced offending, improved attendance and attainment at school, and increased ability to manage difficult emotions.

Staff adopted an individualised approach which took account of young people's age and stage of development. For example, they used illustrated worksheets to help explore feelings, therapeutic play (some staff were trained in Theraplay), and some very direct conversations around risk taking behaviours for those who could engage in this way. Alongside this, a key strength was the quality of work being done with young people's families, including supporting positive experiences with siblings and direct parenting work.

Very close attention was paid to making sure children were healthy. There was good liaison with the looked after and accommodated children (LAAC) nurse who carried out health assessments. Young people were supported to attend appointments and follow courses of treatment. They were encouraged to eat a balanced diet at sociable mealtimes and to participate in a range of physical activities with the enthusiastic involvement of staff.

A major success had been the introduction of a no smoking policy, developed in line with current good practice guidance, which was discouraging young people from smoking and had helped them to reduce their nicotine intake.

We noted that strong partnership working, actively pursued by the service, had led to several initiatives which were supporting good outcomes for young people. This included joint working with families, direct input into schools, and co-working with the permanence team to take forward transition planning.

There were very few areas for improvement and most of those we found had already been identified and actioned by the service. These were:

- Further development of staff knowledge about child protection procedures and child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- Clear and consistent recording of one-to-one work.
- Clarification of initial personal plans within 28 days of admission to the service.
- Amendment of minor medication issues as discussed at inspection.

## Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

## Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 5 - very good

## Quality of environment

### Findings from the inspection

We found that this was a high quality environment; clean, bright, spacious, and in a good state of decoration and repair.

Young people had been closely involved in choosing furniture, furnishings, and equipment for the shared areas of the houses. Their bedrooms were really nicely decorated to their individual taste, including decoration, wallpaper, and soft furnishings.

A play room had been created for a younger child and it was encouraging to hear that some of the older children had been involved in organising this. During the inspection, we noted that the younger child was very relaxed and enjoying their room.

Throughout both houses, young people were encouraged to use the space and play. For example, two young people were having a lot of fun building a den out of cushions. The large kitchen/dining rooms were ideal for shared, sociable mealtimes to which young people contributed, helping with food preparation and setting and clearing tables. Again, this contributed to the homeliness of the cottages.

Originally, the two cottages shared a large open site. However, this had recently been divided with an attractive fence, which helped each cottage to feel self contained.

The development of the garden was continuing with extensive planting and was being well used for active physical play with the addition of trampolines, bikes, and football goals.

A comprehensive range of risk assessments and health and safety checks contributed to a safe and secure environment. We found that improvements had been made to the security of the environment in response to a robust risk management process.

Central property services ensured that key systems (such as water, power, heating, and fire safety) were regularly serviced and maintained. The manager confirmed that requests for repairs and maintenance were responded to promptly.

During the inspection, we noted that some fridge and freezer temperatures were too high and that some were missing shelves etc. However, we were assured that replacements had been ordered.

We advised that there should be handwashing soap in the laundry.

Overall, though, we found that the quality of the environment was very good and provided a safe, comfortable, and, thanks to recent improvements, a much more homely environment for young people.

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 0

**Grade:** 5 - very good

## Quality of staffing

### Findings from the inspection

Following the difficulties of the previous year, when levels of staff absence through sickness and internal investigations caused the service to close one of the cottages, the service provider has worked hard to support the establishment of a stable staff team with the aim of providing children and young people with safe and consistent care.

At this inspection, we found that there were sufficient staff to safely meet young people's needs and that there was ongoing recruitment to maintain optimum staffing levels. Staff were recruited safely in line with Angus Council's staff recruitment procedures. There was an effective system in place for monitoring registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Staff who had recently been recruited were undergoing a structured and supported induction.

The manager regularly carried out and recorded an assessment of staffing requirements based on young people's needs. We found this to be a thorough process which realistically assessed staffing needs. However, we thought that the system could be improved by recording the number of staff required on the record of assessment where there was a variance from 'normal' staffing levels.

We observed some very positive interactions between staff and young people, with staff actively engaged with young people at all times. We could also see that there had been some effective, well recorded direct work with young people. However, the quality of this varied and we felt that there was scope to improve the consistency of quality of staff input into direct work through further training and development.

Staff had had some relevant and good quality training. Comprehensive e-learning was available. Senior staff had opportunities to develop enhanced skills. For example, as a Crisis, Aggression, Limitation, and Management (CALM) trainer and a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) assessor. The service was responsive to individual training needs and provided bespoke development opportunities, for example in child protection.

We found it difficult to get an overview of staff training. There was no overarching training plan, however, this is something the service is planning to develop. There is a central record of staff training which was accessed during inspection. There needs to be some work done to amalgamate the individual training recorded in supervision records alongside the council's system for recording training.

The service has made significant progress towards establishing a stable staff team through a process of ongoing recruitment, well structured reflective supervision, and effective performance and absence management. There had clearly been a need for the staff team to recover from the challenges of the previous year and for newer staff to become fully integrated into the service. The team was now in a stronger position to move forward and build on the strengths identified at this inspection.

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 0

**Grade:** 4 - good

## Quality of management and leadership

### Findings from the inspection

The new manager and deputy were highly skilled and experienced and, with the support of the external manager and the service provider, have had a significant positive impact on the quality of the service which has improved in all aspects since the last full inspection, as reflected in the improved grades across all quality themes.

From an initial responsive action plan, there is now a clear culture of improvement and the management team have worked systematically to develop and improve the service.

Clear delineation of responsibilities between the manager and the deputy has meant that the quality of care, the quality of staffing, and the quality of environment have all been able to progress at a steady pace.

Staff felt well supported. They expressed confidence in managers and felt able to contribute their ideas and skills.

Managers made very good use of supervision to monitor staff practice and to support the development of high professional standards. Effective implementation of departmental procedures in relation to absence management and staff performance have contributed to greatly improved stability in the workforce. An ongoing programme of staff recruitment was underway to maintain optimum numbers of staff within the team.

The service currently had in place a range of systems to monitor the quality of the service. This included case file audits, medication audits, and environmental checks. We recommended that the service develop a quality assurance framework to cover all aspects of quality monitoring within the service with clearly defined timescales and lines of accountability.

We also suggested that the service should review its system for keeping records of incidents, which could potentially lead to child protection procedures, and the process for notifying the Care Inspectorate of these.

The manager's links with the wider social work department had increased opportunities for the service to become more integrated into the wider context of social work and social care. This had led to improvements. For example, by increasing pocket money for young people in residential care in line with those in foster care. It had also provided staff with access to enhanced training and development opportunities.

We found that the service had been very effectively managed and led at both strategic and service level and that this had resulted in the service being in a position to provide children with a positive, safe, and nurturing care experience.

This level of performance is essential to support the continued development of the service.

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 0

**Grade:** 5 - very good

**What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection**

## Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

**What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection**

## Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this care service since the last inspection.

## Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
14 Mar 2018	Unannounced	Care and support Not assessed Environment Not assessed Staffing Not assessed Management and leadership Not assessed
22 Sep 2017	Unannounced	Care and support 2 - Weak Environment Not assessed Staffing 2 - Weak Management and leadership 2 - Weak
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
15 May 2014	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment 5 - Very good Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 4 - Good



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

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Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

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