

Step Up (Housing, Employability & Community Support Services) Housing Support Service

Lock 9 Cottage
The Maltings
Falkirk
FK1 5BW

Telephone: 01324 465 000

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
22 September 2021

Service provided by:
Step Up (Housing, Employability & Community Support Services) Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2013012130

Service no:
CS2013319314

About the service

Step Up (Housing, Employability & Community Support Services) was registered by the Care Inspectorate on September 2013 as a combined Housing Support and Care at Home service.

The service has office premises situated in Falkirk and in Alloa. Since the last inspection the service has relocated its premises within Falkirk. The service's office premises are convenient to local transport links. At the time of the inspection the service was supporting individuals with varying levels of support, depending on assessed need.

The service's conditions of registration were varied in 2018; the current conditions of registration are as stated below.

- To provide a service to people over the age of 16 who may be at risk of becoming homeless, and adults who have mental health issues, physical disabilities and older adults living in their own homes.
- The support will be provided by two staff teams and where there are any subsequent changes Care Inspectorate will be informed.
- The provider shall inform service users and their representatives that the care service is registered with the Care Inspectorate and shall ensure that they are made aware of the name of the registered service with its contact details, as it appears on this Certificate.

The service states its mission is to: 'Enhance people's quality of life by providing meaningful, personalised support in their own home and in the community'.

The service states its aims are as follows:

'Step up aims to enhance people's wellbeing by providing opportunities to improve and enhance their life quality, their living environment and their personal relationships.'

In both our housing support and community care service, we aim to provide excellent advice, high quality care and dignified support to adults who may be at risk of becoming homeless or who may have mental health issues or physical disabilities that could impact their ability to live independently.'

'Through our housing support service, we aim to reduce our young people's barriers to employment and reduce their experience of social exclusion and poverty. We do this by supporting them to develop the skills required to live independently, by building relationships built upon mutual respect and by empowering the people that we support to participate fully in the wider community.'

The service states its objectives are as follows:

Promoting personal support needs.

Promoting inclusion.

Supporting a quality and nurturing environment.

Developing people to be effective contributors.

What people told us

It should be noted that this inspection took place during the COVID 19 pandemic restrictions and therefore followed a revised procedure for conducting inspections in those circumstances.

We visited the service on 12 August 2021 as a short notice announced inspection. Following our visit we spoke, by telephone, with five people being supported by the service. We attempted to speak with three other individuals but we were unsuccessful.

People we spoke with described a positive experience of being supported within the service and we found people felt the staff support helped them to take better care of themselves and generally develop their skills in independent living. People we spoke with made the following comments:

'I had support managing money, applying for benefits and trying to keep on the right track. I'm in a flat organised by Step Up and I like it. I know the manager and can go to the staff if I have a problem. I get support every day. They come and see me regularly. When I first had the support I didn't pay attention, now I do listen to them as I know they are trying to help me, I know they're preparing me to live independently. My life has changed. I now know I can live on my own ... Its helped me grow up a bit. They've helped me prepare to live on my own.'

'I'm getting help with shopping and making food. I feel the support is helping me ... Staff are respectful and I feel comfortable with them. I'm better at taking care of myself and I now maintain my home better. The accommodation is fine, I got new carpets and its clean and comfortable ...They are going to help me build up to going to college - so am building up my confidence first. Can't think of anything I'd like staff to do differently.'

'I've had quite extensive support. They come out twice a day to see me ... Thursdays I get house inspections and I get food money so I can go shopping for food. At first they went shopping with me, now they don't ... I've got a flat to myself. Its well maintained and well furnished. I get on good with staff. I have a good relationship with them ... I've met the manager who is very lovely and supports me as well ... feel I could go to the manager if I wasn't happy. I like how open staff are and how I can just talk to them. They were there for me during the pandemic, it was helpful ... Nothing comes to mind they need to change - they've been a great help to me. I feel better.'

'Staff treat me well ... Staff have advised me how to stay safe during the pandemic. I was pleased with the accommodation - it feels safe and it was clean and well maintained. I can't think of anything they need to change.'

'My support worker has just brought me some nice goodies. I get support from staff, they do shopping, and check what I need. It's usually the same staff member who comes to see me. My support worker is very helpful and can always spot when something needs done ... I appreciate the support from my support worker and from and from Step Up. My support worker is good, have never had a single problem.'

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
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How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support people's wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

We spoke with people being supported by the service. We also received feedback from professionals who worked in partnership with the service. People being supported told us that staff listened to and respected their views, including their views on the support needs they identified. Staff had shown regard for people's dignity by respecting and taking on board people's views when planning their support. Support was provided on both a practical and emotional level, depending on the needs of each individual.

We found that there were child and adult protection policies and procedures in place and that staff had had training on how to implement them. We were therefore satisfied that there were the necessary measures in place to minimise risks related to individuals being supported within the service.

We observed that the service had access to useful outdoor space within the service grounds. At the time of the inspection, due to pandemic conditions, the service had not yet made full use of the outdoor space it had available. The service had plans to purchase outdoor furniture to allow people being supported to benefit from the outdoor space and the relaxing surroundings at the premises. The staff were able, where appropriate, to escort people being supported on activities or outings of their choice. From speaking with people being supported and from reading their support plan records we found that the staff had assisted people to pursue their interests and to identify and access clubs and activities in their local communities.

We read a sample of files held by the service for people being supported and we found that regular and detailed notes had been compiled for each individual receiving support. We noted that support plans were reviewed to take into account changes in identified support needs. We found that there were generally detailed risk assessments and risk management plans in place for individuals being supported. However, for those people receiving community care support the risk assessment/risk management plan was less detailed. These issues were discussed with the service manager who has agreed to implement a revised risk assessment/risk management template for community care clients which will include a range of relevant risk factors. This will ensure that all risk factors are considered and addressed for all individuals being supported within the service.

We found from speaking with people within the service, and from reading their support planning records, that the support provided was structured. During the pandemic young people had been encouraged and supported to access education, training or employment, depending on their wishes. We heard from professionals in partner agencies that young people had been supported to prepare for and attend job interviews. We found that the service had been pro-active in supporting young people to maximise their income.

We noted from reading service records and from speaking with both young people and professionals who worked in partnership with the service, that the staff had supported young people to develop their skills in independent living. This had included support in relation to budgeting, shopping, cooking and door control, as appropriate. We also heard, from young people and professionals in partner agencies, how staff supported young people to bid for properties and then to prepare for a move into their own tenancies. We were therefore confident that the service was supporting young people to get the most out of life.

We found from speaking with people being supported and from reading their support plan records that people had been supported to attend for dental and doctor's appointments. Staff we spoke with were familiar with relevant available resources in the local community which could be accessed to meet the support needs of the individuals within their service. Staff's specific knowledge then informed the tailored support provided to each individual being supported.

As stated previously, this inspection took place during the global pandemic. We found that the service had maintained regular contact with people being supported during the pandemic and, in particular, during periods of lockdown. This helped to maintain people's well being by reducing the possible isolating effects of lockdown. The service had also supported people being supported to keep up to date with, and, understand the ongoing changes to government guidance in relation to COVID19 restrictions. We were therefore confident that people's health and wellbeing benefitted from their care and support.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

Staff we spoke with told us they had confidence in the service manager's ability to consider and implement quality assurance and improvement within the service. Staff described feeling comfortable approaching the service manager to raise any concerns they had. We heard from staff that they felt they were listened to within the service. Fairly recently the service had created an online staff forum which had helped by providing an additional opportunity for the staff team to discuss issues and make suggestions. These arrangements meant that improvements within the team were informed by a range of views from across the staff team. At the previous inspection we had identified that there was scope for improved communication across the organisation. We were confident, from speaking with staff at this inspection, that there had been significant improvement in this area.

We heard from staff that during the pandemic they had received Covid guidance, with email updates on a regular basis, in response to any changes in government guidance. We heard from staff that they had been provided with regular supplies of PPE and that they had received relevant training on how to use, wear and dispose of this equipment. Training completed by staff had also included Covid awareness training as well as training on carrying out Covid tests. Staff told us that the training they had received meant that they felt confident about using PPE and coping with working, as safely as possible, under pandemic conditions. We found that staff had access to regular testing. We also heard from staff that the service had consulted with them over arrangements related to changes in work location during the course of the pandemic. The service was therefore committed to implementing measures geared to infection prevention and control.

Staff we spoke with told us they appreciated that staff rotas were planned and shared well in advance. This helped staff to be able to forward plan as they knew when they would be on shift. This contributed to staff being able to plan generally and to effectively organise structured support to people within the service.

We discussed some continuing concerns regarding a level of staff turnover since the last inspection, albeit that there had been some improvement in this respect. We explored this issue during this inspection, as further improvements in staff retention could contribute to further enhancing the quality of care and

support in terms of supporting stability of relationships which service users built up with staff. We found that, since the previous inspection, a review of staff terms and conditions had taken place. We were informed that changes being implemented to staff terms and conditions, following that review, were intended to contribute to supporting staff retention. The service should continue to work on improving on staff retention within the service. Progress with this work will be followed up at the next inspection.

The service employed a designated Quality Manager who developed and maintained quality assurance systems within the service. The arrangements for staff supervision and staff training and monitoring of professional development (discussed in more detail under 'How good is our staff team') all reflect that quality assurance and improvement are well led within the service.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

Although this inspection was carried out during a global pandemic we found that people had confidence in the support they received as staff had received the necessary guidance and training they needed in relation to working during the pandemic (discussed in more detail previously in this report, under 'How good is our leadership'.)

Staff we spoke with during this inspection were knowledgeable and presented as insightful regarding the support needs of the people they supported. We found that staff were caring and that they were motivated in their role by seeing individuals they supported make progress towards their goals. We found that people being supported in the service spoke positively of staff and the relationships they had built up with them. People being supported knew the different staff members by name and were familiar with the service's registered manager whom they also referred to on first name terms. The following comment by an individual being supported in the service reflected the strong relationships staff established with people being supported in the service:

'I feel that I've got people I can trust - the staff. They are respectful and they listen to me. The staff have helped me to cope with the pandemic. They brought food to me during lockdown, I was anxious about going out. They helped me apply to college ... I feel I'm learning to take care of myself ... The best thing is the staff, they are lovely, they are so supportive. Am planning to stay put. At first I was scared during lock down and I hated not having my friends. Staff helped me cope with that.'

We found from speaking with staff within the service that they worked together closely as a team in order to ensure they were providing effective support to people within the service. We heard, from a number of different staff members, that the strength of the teamworking had improved since the start of the pandemic. Staff had all been provided with devices which meant they were able to communicate with each other remotely.

We found from speaking with professionals in partner agencies that the staff team worked in close partnership with them. This partnership working had helped to streamline the supports being provided to individuals from different agencies. The following comments made by community based professionals we spoke with, who had worked in partnership with the service, reflected that the work carried out by the Step Up team is valued by these agencies:

'They provide strong robust support to young people when required - amazing in terms of joint working, in terms of ensuring care plan and goals are achieved and they are amazing with communication - they update you promptly, we get regular updates on progress issues and challenges and plans for the week ahead. They are very thorough. They strive to maintain high standards ... There is a high level of detail in

support planning. We don't have anything else in this area. I hope the service remains for some time as we rely heavily on them. I think they've been amazing.'

'The staff are well trained. The referral process means the service has the relevant background information. There is a caring culture which comes from the management team. They are on the ball. They have got their finger on the pulse in terms of practice development - interview preparation, budgeting, managing mental health and addiction.'

Staff within Step Up told us they were supported in their professional development in terms of ongoing access to training relevant to their roles. We found, from speaking with individual staff who had had conditions on their Scottish Social Services Council registration related to achieving relevant qualifications, that they had been supported by Step Up to achieve these qualifications. We noted that some support staff had progressed internally within the organisation. We found that staff had good access to a wide range of training which included training on safeguarding, trafficking, autism awareness, epilepsy, eating disorders and professional boundaries.

At the last inspection the service had agreed to explore staff training opportunities on sexual exploitation and on the administration of naloxone (an opiate blocker which when administered in the event of overdose can be life saving). Since then the service has sourced a relevant staff training programme which included sexual exploitation and has since been delivered to the staff team. This ensured that staff have the knowledge and awareness to contribute to safeguarding individuals from related risks.

We found that the service now included naloxone training within their mandatory training programme and that the current staff team have completed it. Staff had also had training input on overdose prevention. This helped to reduce the risk of harm to people being supported within the service. Since the last inspection the service has designed a training schedule which covers key mandatory training which staff were required to complete by the end of their induction period. Additional training completed by staff was phased over the first year of employment. Staff we spoke with told us that they felt they had received the training they required to perform effectively within their professional roles.

Staff told us they felt supported by their organisation and that they found their supervision sessions helpful. We found that staff received regular supervision as well as Annual Development Reviews. Staff told us that supervision was an opportunity to discuss ongoing training while Annual Development Reviews provided an opportunity to receive structured feedback on professional performance and to explore and agree development goals and future training required. These measures helped to support staff members' ongoing professional development. We found from reading the service's recruitment records and from speaking with the Human Resources that the service was practicing safe recruitment. These measures helped to ensure that staff had the right knowledge, competence and development to care for and support individuals within the service.

How well is our care and support planned?

5 - Very Good

We found from reading support planning records for individuals being supported that they included specific actions required to help individuals achieve their desired outcomes. People we spoke with told us that they were involved in identifying the support they wanted in order to meet the goals they had identified.

We heard specific examples of assessment and planning reflecting people's outcomes and wishes. One individual was being supported to obtain their CSCS card, (which is a requirement to work within the building industry). This goal was identified by the individual being supported and plans were made for this

individual to be supported to work towards this goal. We heard another example where one young person had identified getting a job as a goal. This young person was supported by their mentor to create a CV and to set up an online account on a job search website. After applying for, and being offered, a job this young person was, at the time of the inspection, said to be enjoying working in that post.

The following comments from people we spoke with who were being supported by the service reflected that they felt their wishes informed the support they received:

'They come shopping with me and support me with my mental health, if I need that. I'm enjoying the support and I get on well with the staff. If I had concerns (which I don't have) I feel I could contact the manager to discuss and I feel it would be dealt with.'

'The support is making me more confident. They are helping me with an activity agreement to build up my confidence. I've got a plan in place and I contributed to identifying my goals.'

'It's a relief knowing someone's there if I need help, I feel like someone's got my back ... Staff listen, I've got a support plan and I contributed my views to that. I'm currently looking for a job. Step up staff are sending me links for jobs - I get them on my phone.'

A professional who worked in partnership with the service considered that the staff were particularly effective at engaging young people and maintaining working relationships with them, as reflected in the following comment: 'Young people stay with the service for a long time compared to what young people normally do. The young people are involved in deciding the support and the service they get.'

We were therefore able to be confident that assessment and personal planning reflected people's outcomes and wishes.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
1.1 People experience compassion, dignity and respect	5 - Very Good
1.2 People get the most out of life	5 - Very Good
1.3 People's health and wellbeing benefits from their care and support	5 - Very Good

How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement is led well	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
3.2 Staff have the right knowledge, competence and development to care for and support people	5 - Very Good

How well is our care and support planned?	5 - Very Good
5.1 Assessment and personal planning reflects people's outcomes and wishes	5 - Very Good

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