

Sycamore Services Tayside - Auchterhouse Care Home Service

Auchterhouse

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 September 2021

Service provided by:
Aberlour Child Care Trust

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2021000004

About the service

Sycamore Services Tayside – Auchterhouse (also known as Red Squirrel) is provided by Aberlour Child Care Trust and is registered to provide placements for up to three young people, aged between eight and 18.

The house is in a rural location close to Dundee with a large garden area and plenty living accommodation for young people.

Aberlour's philosophy of care is:

"We care for children with love, compassion, understanding and patience. We will strive to make the best decision for the children in every situation."

And the house aims are:

"Our house aims to provide a quality, safe and nurturing living environment where everyone can grow and develop physically, socially and emotionally".

At the time of our inspection, three young people were staying in the house.

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 these circumstances.

What people told us

We spoke to three young people staying in the house. All three were keen to tell us about their experiences living at Auchterhouse. They were enthusiastic about life there and spoke very positively and fondly about the staff that cared for them.

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 children and young people's wellbeing?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How well is our care planned?	4 - Good

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

How well do we support children and young people's wellbeing?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question. We observed a number of strengths however there were some areas that were not yet embedded in practice.

We observed positive interactions between children, young people and staff. Staff were able to use both physical touch and verbalised emotional support to support young people. We saw some staff utilise this to calm, teach and have fun with children and young people. Whilst this was the case with more experienced and confident staff, we saw that less experienced staff lacked confidence to deal with some situations and relied heavily on their more experienced colleagues. With suitable training and support already in place staff were supported to ensure they were able to support children and young people which meant they experienced strong and supportive relationships with key staff members.

The service provided children and young people with access to a wide range of activities, these were planned and unplanned and meant that young people enjoyed active lives. Children and young people were able to use one to one time with key staff, as identified in their personal plans.

We found evidence of choice in aspects of children and young people's day to day care, such as choosing meals or input into the wider planned activity schedule. This meant that children and young people were able to try new things and to participate in new experiences.

Most staff were able to explain their understanding of child development and trauma and there were examples provided in how they applied this knowledge to understanding the individual needs of young people. This allowed young people to benefit from behavioural and emotional support which was individualised to them.

Young people's participation in care planning was evident and all children and young people were able to discuss their plan with us. Some documentation could have been more detailed with more evidence of, for example, trauma informed practice. With further training already in place and more experience we would expect to see more evidence of this in the future.

Children and young people's health needs were met, and this was supported by specialist health professionals with whom we had an opportunity to speak. The management of medication was good.

In summary, there were a number of strengths, particularly in staff relationships with young people. These strengths will increase as new staff members become more confident in their role and further training becomes more embedded into practice.

How good is our leadership?

3 - Adequate

We made an evaluation of good for this key question. Whilst the strengths had positive impact, there were some areas that required further development.

The service had been operating for five months prior to the inspection. There had been an issue with the previous manager, which the provider had dealt with appropriately. A senior member of staff was acting manager, suitably supported by more senior colleagues within the organisation. During the inspection, the provider appointed a manager from another service to oversee the management of 'Red Squirrel'. We saw this as a positive appointment to support the acting manager in the development of the new service and the development of new staff.

Systems were in place to monitor service delivery and the impact this had on children and young people's experience of care. We saw evidence of this in documents relating to the development of the service however at the start of the inspection there was not a service development plan in place. During the course of the inspection a plan was developed which was suitable to the service and included views of staff and young people. Staff reported that the service included their involvement in wider improvement and children and young people also told us their wishes were taken in to account.

The acting manager and senior staff worked well with staff, especially less experienced staff to support them and were viewed as positive role models. We observed, at times, that there was an expectation for children and young people to sit in the office and seek out permission or opportunities to speak with the acting manager rather than going directly to care staff. The acting manager had identified this as an issue and was developing strategies to ensure children and young people interacted with all staff appropriately.

In summary, the provider did demonstrate that a quality assurance system was in place which identified key improvements that needed to take place.

How good is our staff team?**4 - Good**

We made an evaluation of good for this key question. We found some strengths that had a positive impact on care.

There were a number of staff new to the service, having only opened five months before the inspection. The acting manager tried to ensure there was a blend of experienced and less experienced staff on duty at any one time however there were times when this proved difficult.

We found during the inspection there was a good mix of staff within the service from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. We saw positive relationships within the staff group and there was good communication amongst themselves. Staff expressed high levels of motivation and care for the children and young people and a desire to spend as much time with young people as the demands of the role allowed.

As noted in key question 2.2, there was an over reliance of children and young people to seek out the acting manager for decision making however we saw she worked hard to ensure decision making was discussed with the staff on duty and that they were included in any decision making.

In summary, the staff group were enthusiastic and had much to offer from their background and previous experiences and worked well together. The provider should continue to commit time and resources to support the development of staff and senior staff within the service.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question. While the strengths had positive impact, there were some areas that needed to improve.

The service had developed good links with the local community, with staff frequently taking children and young people out to complete activities. Staff and young people's descriptions of activities suggest that they were enjoyable and that staff used these excursions as learning opportunities and to model pro-social behaviours.

The accommodation was in a large modern house set in a large garden. It was very homely and kept in good order. Children and young people were eager to show us their rooms and take us on a tour of the house. They showed a sense of pride in the house. They told us they were allowed to personalise their rooms and one young person told us they were asked for suggestions before the service opened as they would be the first young person to live there. Stakeholder feedback was of a welcoming and inclusive service where staff were friendly and inviting of other professionals into the space.

The garden area could be a real asset to the service however significant work was required as there were areas requiring attention. The acting manager told us work had been delayed due to restrictions during the pandemic however it would have been good to see more input from children and young people into what they wanted the outdoor area to look like when work was able to commence.

In summary, staff, children and young people took pride their home and enjoyed living there. Children and young people took part in community-based activities on a regular basis and enjoyed outings with staff.

How well is our care and support planned?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question. We noted sufficient strengths in care and support and some good signs of staff using their training to good effect. The matching process had been used effectively to ensure a good mix of children and young people.

Children and young people were fully engaged in their personal plans and spoke to us about some positive outcomes they had achieved. It was good to hear examples from staff about some of the positive interventions they had been involved in and we could see the acting manager's influence starting to show in the way staff wrote up records and interacted with the children and young people. The service could further develop personal plans to ensure younger children were supported to better understand the content, for example pictorial input.

Plans were reviewed regularly and the evaluation and recording of children and young people's development and progress was good. The manager took an active role in this process and was supporting staff to develop their skills and take a more active role in planning.

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 children and young people's wellbeing?	4 - Good
1.1 Children and young people experience compassion, dignity and respect	4 - Good
1.2 Children and young people get the most out of life	4 - Good
1.3 Children and young people's health benefits from their care and support they experience	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	3 - Adequate
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	3 - Adequate
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
3.1 Staff are recruited well	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
4.3 Children and young people can be connected with and involved in the wider community	4 - Good
How well is our care planned?	4 - Good
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects children and young people's needs and wishes	4 - Good

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