

# Balmore Children's Unit Care Home Service

Glasgow

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Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
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**Service provided by:**  
Glasgow City Council

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## About the service

Baltimore Children's Unit is a Care Home service for Children and Young people. The service is owned and managed by Glasgow City Council and children and young people using the service are Looked After and Accommodated by the local authority. The service is registered to accommodate up to eight children and young people and at the time of this inspection, the service was at full occupancy.

Located between the Ruchill and Milton part of the city, the service is close to all main transport links. The property is a purpose-built double storey house comprising two lounges, a large dining/kitchen, laundry room and ensuite bedrooms over both floors. There is an office space for staff. Outdoor space is minimal due to the location, but there is an enclosed patio area to the front.

The aims and objectives of the service include a commitment to 'Strive to provide an open, honest and safe environment for young people, giving them the opportunity to have experiences that will encourage them to develop and grow into independent young adults. All young people will be respected, valued and included in the decision making process. All young people will be encouraged to make informed choices about their own lives'.

## What people told us

We spoke with two young people during the inspection visit and received survey responses from a further three young people.

Young people spoke about their care and support in a very positive manner. They told us that carers had patiently supported them through difficult times, that they felt safe and that carers were good to them. Young people said that carers advocated for them, to ensure their views and rights were upheld and where other professionals tried to speak for them, young people said they were able to do that for themselves. For those ready to move on from the service, they were clear that this was happening at the right time, with the right support in place.

Young people also spoke with us about their aspirations to learn to drive and attend college or work in their chosen industry and how individual budgets helped them to shop and cook for themselves, in preparation for a life beyond the service.

Three other young people completed the survey which we issued to inform the inspection. All responses were positive. All agreeing that carers listened to them and tried to spend time with them, including the manager of the service. All felt that they could be involved in the local community and all felt they were involved in leading on their own care and support.

We spoke with parents who told us that they were very happy with the supports for their child. Although initially wary, one parent said carers were 'brilliant' and that they were '100% happy with the service'.

## 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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
How well is our care planned?	3 - Adequate

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 evaluated this key question as good overall, where a number of important strengths clearly outweighed areas for improvement, though the service's performance was evaluated as very good in two of the three quality indicators we reviewed.

Relationships were based on rights, compassion and love. We observed affectionate interactions between young people and carers, which appeared to offer reassurance, encouragement and comfort. It was evident that children and young people were looked after within a respectful environment. This was similarly demonstrated in the inclusive manner of recordings, where the young person's perspective was always prominent.

Young people were supported to express themselves and exercise their choices to the fullest extent, in an environment that was also nurturing and enabling. Where matters were more complex or contentious, good use was made of independent advocacy support.

Collaborative work with external partners was strong. Examples of genuinely collaborative practice ensured transition plans were comprehensive and adaptable to meet evolving needs and wishes of young people moving on from the service. One young person told us "I am ready to move on now, and I have the right supports around me, I have had my own shopping budget and am organising my furniture for my new home, I am really excited". For others who had recently moved on from the service, we found continued commitment to supporting their wellbeing, through emotional and practical supports.

The service also worked with partners where significant risk behaviours were most evident for young people. Despite high quality interventions and some success through detailed risk management

approaches, some young people had been involved in a range of significant risk situations, with aspects of these continuing to impact some young people. Carers worked hard to help young people make positive choices by consistently demonstrating warmth and a good knowledge of trauma informed approaches. Carers remained highly attentive and responsive to emerging circumstances, but we remained concerned about some young people's safety and wellbeing. We identified the need for all carers to receive updated Child Protection and Adult Support and Protection training.

Positive mental health supports were well evidenced for young people who experienced adversity and trauma and these were carried out sensitively. To further enhance strong collaborative practices, the service secured specialist resource input, to improve upon existing supports. We found positive outcomes, with some young people experiencing reduction in risk behaviours, increased resilience and improved overall wellbeing. It was noted through recent analysis of carers training needs, that additional training relating to specific conditions and behaviours, would benefit the care and support of young people living at the service.

However, for those most at risk, emotional regulation was elusive at times when it mattered most. This created increased risk and eventual restrictions to their lives. Carers supported tirelessly, despite continuous safety concerns and there was acknowledgement from some carers, that they could not keep all young people safe. In such instances, the importance of strong leadership and partnership approaches was most evident.

Young people were engaged in various forms of education, most suited to their needs and interests. Adapted timetables encouraged those of a younger age to attend school, while others, attended college, participating in chosen courses. The outdoor resource centre, also encouraged young people to participate in alternative educational experiences, where they learned practical skills through adventure pursuits, which promoted physical and mental wellbeing. In addition, a wide range of enrichment activities were clearly evidenced, some of which involved young people planning and participating in holidays of their choice.

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure young people have confidence in the service providing their care and support, the provider should ensure all carers complete updated training relating to Child Protection and Adult Support and Protection.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

## How good is our leadership?

**5 - Very Good**

We evaluated the performance of the service for this key question as very good. We found major strengths in the support of young people and identified no areas for improvement.

Managers demonstrated strong leadership principles and high level commitment to securing appropriate quality inputs from those involved in young people's care and support, both internal and external to the service. This included highly effective links with partner agencies and senior managers, who spoke highly of the dedication demonstrated by managers and carers, to improving experiences and outcomes for those living at the service. Additionally, during the inspection visit and from survey responses, young people expressed their appreciation for the support they received from managers and carers.

In support of quality assuring the experiences for young people, managers also met with those responsible for reviewing and enabling young people's care experience. This provided for focused discussion on young people's rights and choices and these opportunities meant that care plans for young people, remained relevant.

Young people's voices also helped to inform the service improvement plan and this meant that young people knew what to expect from the service. The plan was dynamic and could be shared with all involved with the service and regular review ensured it remained focused on improving experiences and outcomes for young people. We advised that further analysis would have helped to determine how much progress had been made toward identified objectives.

Managers and carers championed the rights of young people through positive role modelling and it was clear that managers created the circumstances for carers to optimise the experiences of young people. Young people also took on leadership roles, including planning activities and chairing meetings. Carers likewise took responsibility to lead on a range of key roles which improved experiences for young people.

Information regarding young people's needs and wishes was routinely shared between managers and carers and development sessions were conducted with carers to support increased understanding of the needs of young people in their care. Other forms of self directed learning highlighted the positive culture and nurturing approaches which were so keenly demonstrated within the service.

### How good is our staff team?

### 4 – Good

We evaluated the performance of the service for this key question as good. We found a number of important strengths which had a positive impact on young people's experiences and outcomes.

Despite the impact of Covid-19 related absences, the service had maintained consistent support for young people through flexible approaches by managers and carers. Strong commitment and a positive morale, where carers felt valued and respected for their contribution to young people's experiences, offered stability and reassurance to young people throughout unprecedented times. Whilst we were satisfied that the number of carers on duty was sufficient, we advised that the service should more clearly evidence ongoing assessment of how many carers, the skill mix and deployment of those carers, are required to meet the needs of individual young people.

Carers worked well together, adapting to changing need and circumstances. Risk management practices were critical to promoting the safety and wellbeing of those in their care and for some carers, despite their most concerted efforts, they recognised that they could not always keep young people safe at all times.

One important aspect of supporting young people involved food preparation. As the dedicated cook was absent from work, carers routinely prepared meals for and with young people. This helped to develop young people's skills, but some carers felt that this took them away from spending time with young people in other supportive ways. We agreed with this view and advised the provider to ensure that catering personnel were made available at all times.

Carers were experienced and confident, constituting a balanced team with diverse skills and interests. It was evident that they were well supported by managers and supervision records showed a strong commitment towards encouraging staff to develop and improve their childcare practice. This was exemplified with some carers being given the opportunity to undertake, "training for trainers" courses, while other staff had been appropriately identified to receive further training on trauma informed approaches.

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure young people receive high quality nutritious meals, the provider should address long standing concerns, expressed by young people, about their experiences of food. In addition, the provider should find an early resolution to daily food preparation tasks for carers, where their time spent with young people, may be better utilised.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'My meals and snacks meet my cultural and dietary needs, beliefs and preferences' (HSCS 1.37).

## How good is our setting?

### 5 - Very Good

We evaluated the performance of the service for this key question as very good. We found major strengths in the support of young people and identified no areas for improvement.

The house provided a welcoming, homely environment for young people, who at all times, were reminded that they were loved and valued by carers who supported them each day. Young people also supported one another, where their talents were recognised as contributing to the local community. An example included young people attending a gallery to view artwork produced by their peer.

Young people were proactively supported to spend time with family members who were important in their lives. This included brothers and sisters and shared care arrangements. To further sustain positive experiences, the service was also now planning for relatives and friends to visit, now that pandemic restrictions were being lifted.

Young people benefited from positive role models, with carers encouraging them to reflect on their choices and develop new coping skills, when communicating their needs and wishes. A former worker of the service told us: 'The staff in Balmore were amazing with the young people, they knew how to get the best out of them by telling them that they have potential and they were always very encouraging'. This view was endorsed by partner agencies, who completed the survey for inspection or who spoke with us, to inform the evaluations.

Another strength of the service was the continued high quality emotional and practical supports for young people who had moved on from the service, to live in other forms of accommodation. This meant that those young people also benefited from the continuity of relationships with the people who mattered to them.

The local area offered opportunities for cycling, fishing and walks along the canal. Young people also participated in cultural and learning events in the city, while photographic evidence showed that during the pandemic when young people's lives were impacted by lockdown, they were informed about world wide events. Bringing the world to young people, whose everyday lives had changed so significantly, was important to their sense of place in the world and appreciation of the impact on everyone, from the pandemic.

**How well is our care and support planned?****3 - Adequate**

We evaluated the performance of the service for this key question as adequate. We found that some strengths had a positive impact, but key areas of performance needed to improve.

We established that over the previous twelve-months, for a period of three months, no independent reviews took place for some young people, whose plans were sampled during this inspection. Decisions had been taken to determine that alternative multi agency meetings for those young people, were held to mitigate the impact of these gaps. However this was not a substitute for regular independent external scrutiny. We were unable to determine the outcome this may have had on planning for young people. The service needs to be assured that external independent scrutiny of young people's plans always takes place within statutory timescales. The provider must ensure that formal independent review occurs at least once in every six months, in order to comply with regulations. We have made a requirement regarding formal review of young people's care and support needs.

Robust assessment of young people's needs was clearly evidenced through a range of strength based approaches, including detailed risk management plans which took account of complex risk taking behaviours. In some instances, there was reduced risk to young people. Despite this, detailed care planning strategies, aimed at reducing risk, did not always translate into young people's personal plans. Plans could have better evidenced SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) objectives, identifying more clearly, how young people's needs and wishes were supported. We have identified an area for improvement regarding personal plans.

Young people were involved in planning and leading on their own care and support. One young person told us that their plan was easily understood and that they 'felt in control about what was happening in the future'. In this instance, this was fully supported by multi agency transition planning, which took considerable care to identify supports required to mitigate risk and promote young people's successful transition to future accommodation.

**Requirements**

1. By the 31 May 2022, the provider must implement a consistent process for formal review and independent scrutiny of all young people's plans to ensure the health, welfare and safety needs of young people.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(b) (Welfare of Users) and Regulation 5(2)(b) (Personal Plans) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' (HSCS 1.15).

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure care and support for young people is delivered effectively through personal plans, the provider should implement care planning strategies, detailing SMART objectives which allow for high quality evaluation of young people's progress.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19), and 'My needs, as agreed in my personal plan, are fully met, and my wishes and choices are respected' (HSCS 1.23).

## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

## Areas for improvement

### Previous area for improvement 1

Given the comments of young people during this inspection, we advised of the need to consult with all young people, to determine a detailed understanding of their experiences. By listening to young people, the service will develop an improved understanding of their current views.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards that state, 'I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me, at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs', (HSCS, 2.8).

**This area for improvement was made on 9 March 2020.**

### Action taken since then

We found evidence of young people being routinely listened to and consulted about their care and support.

### Previous area for improvement 2

The service should review current practices in respect of planned activity, aimed at enhancing young people's health and wellbeing.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards that state, 'I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors', (HSCS, 1.25).

**This area for improvement was made on 9 March 2020.**

### Action taken since then

We found evidence of a range of enrichment experiences for young people, despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.



### Previous area for improvement 3

The provider should explore how current concerns and experiences relating to the quality of food can be resolved. A sizable number of young people commented negatively about food dishes and as a recurring theme from inspection, this should be addressed.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards that state, 'I can choose suitably presented and healthy meals and snacks, including fresh fruit and vegetables, and participate in menu planning', (HSCS,1.33).

**This area for improvement was made on 9 March 2020.**

#### Action taken since then

Some matters remained unresolved and we have therefore identified that further work is needed to explore how improvement can be achieved, with regard to young people's experience.

### Previous area for improvement 4

Although we could assess a range of good outcomes for young people and that aspects of personal plans evidenced their involvement, there was a need for plans to better evidence progress toward identified outcomes. By ensuring that there is regular evaluation of young people's experiences, plans will more effectively highlight the quality of identified outcomes.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards that state, 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as my care plans) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choice', (HSCS, 1.15).

**This area for improvement was made on 9 March 2020.**

#### Action taken since then

We acknowledged a range of positive outcomes for young people, but we have once again identified an area for improvement with regard to evaluation of SMART objectives in young people's personal plans.

## 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).

## 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	5 - Very 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	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
3.3 Staffing levels are right and meet children and young people's needs, with staff working well together	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Children and young people can be connected with and involved in the wider community	5 - Very Good
How well is our care planned?	3 - Adequate
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects children and young people's needs and wishes	3 - Adequate

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