

Sycamore Services Tayside - Auchterhouse Care Home Service

Auchterhouse

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
7 November 2025

Service provided by:
Aberlour Child Care Trust

Service provider number:
SP2010011118

Service no:
CS2021000004

About the service

Sycamore Services Tayside – Auchterhouse (also known as Red Squirrel) is provided by Aberlour Child Care Trust. The service 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 of living accommodation for young people

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 4 November 2025 between the hours of 09:50 and 17:45. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with three people using the service and one member of their family;
- spoke with four staff and management;
- observed practice and daily life;
- reviewed documents; and
- spoke with visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Young people felt loved and cared for.
- Young people enjoyed warm, trusting, and nurturing relationships with those caring for them.
- Staff were exceptionally good at developing committed, meaningful and enduring relationships with young people.
- Young people had excellent opportunities to be supported in interesting, and often life changing experiences.

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

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| How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing? | 6 - Excellent |
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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 rights and wellbeing?

6 - Excellent

We made an evaluation of excellent for this key question. We found important strengths throughout the service that had a direct, significant and positive impact on children and young people's experiences.

Young people living in Red Squirrel were cared for by a committed team of adults who showed skill in understanding the needs of young people. They were aspirational when supporting young people in identifying and achieving outcomes. We observed warm and enduring relationships which were developed through a skilled understanding of young people's needs. Adults were warm, compassionate and showed a genuine interest in the welfare of all young people. There was a relaxed and loving atmosphere in the house and we observed adults supporting young people in a nurturing and trauma informed way.

Young people told us they felt loved by adults who cared for them. This was evident in video information that we viewed and in comments made by young people.

Plans and decisions centred around an understanding of young people's needs, and their views, hopes and goals. Adults caring for young people provided the structure and security that allowed young people to share their wishes and fears, and to collectively make positive and hopeful plans. There had been outstanding examples of when the service had strongly, and successfully, advocated for young people's choices and rights, leading to exceptional outcomes for those young people. We observed an excellent example of staff supporting young people working well with school to prevent a young person experiencing a poor outcome while travelling to school. This included staff ensuring the changes to daily life were updated immediately.

Activities centred around new interests and exciting opportunities, supported by knowledgeable adults who genuinely enjoyed the company of the young people, and who wanted to see them grow and develop in everything they did. Young people flourished, and were encouraged by each others' success. Photos of holidays and significant events were shared with us, these included trips and activities young people had been part of. We read about clubs and activities young people were involved in.

Young people were kept safe by adults who had excellent understanding of child protection guidance and procedures, supporting young people to be safe and make positive choices and manage risk.

Young people were supported with individualised plans and activities which they helped to plan. We looked at examples of these and suggested they could be written in a more child friendly way, however the provider had already identified this as a priority for improvement. Young people were supported to build emotional and literacy strategies by adults and this was supported by a clinical psychologist.

There was a sense of community within the house and there were excellent examples of young people forming friendships and accessing school and community groups independently. This included evidence of a broad range of activities young people had taken part in that met their interests and ambitions. This extended to young people assisting neighbours within their immediate community.

Young people were doing exceptionally well in education, supported by the manager of the service and other adults. They acted as strong advocates for young people, ensuring they received the best they could from education. Young people had made huge progress, enabling them to return to mainstream education.

Young people had excellent contact with advocacy workers and staff worked hard to ensure this continued with education, clinical psychology and other services. This meant outcomes for young people in terms of education were excellent.

Maintaining young people's contact with families was hugely important and meant young people's relationships with family were sustained and had developed. Young people spoke about the significant effort that was made to ensure important connections with their family were supported and valued, irrespective of distance.

We spoke with adults who clearly understood how to support young people who had experienced trauma. The service had adopted an approach to increase consistency of adults and rarely used agency workers and adults who may be unfamiliar to young people. Young people were involved in vetting prospective staff prior to recruitment.

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

To keep young people safe and promote their wellbeing the provider should improve recording of medical records to ensure that they are accurate and consistent. This should include but is not limited to training in the management and recording of medical information.

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

'I have confidence in people because they are trained competent and skilled' (HSCS 3.14)

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2023.

Action taken since then

The provider had made significant improvement to the medical administration recording. We viewed records of two young people and found these to be accurate.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure that quality assurance processes are effective and consistent the provider should improve evaluation and monitoring processes. This should include but is not limited to a revision of the medical auditing procedures and all staff having a clear understanding of these.

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

'I benefit from from a culture of continuous improvement with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.' (HSCS 4.19)

This area for improvement was made on 6 December 2023.

Action taken since then

The provider had excellent evaluating and monitoring systems in place to ensure records were accurate.

Complaints

Detailed evaluations

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| How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing? | 6 - Excellent |
| 7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life | 6 - Excellent |

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