

Barnardo's Caern Project Care Home Service

Edinburgh

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 December 2025

Service provided by:
Barnardo's known as Barnardo's
Scotland

Service provider number:
SP2003003405

Service no:
CS2007145138

About the service

Barnardo's Caern Project is a residential short break service for children with additional needs. It is based in a purpose built accommodation in a rural area on the outskirts of Edinburgh. The residential service is based on the ground floor and has a number of communal rooms and an enclosed garden with play equipment.

The service states 'We aim to support the children and young people to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives'.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 8 and 9 December 2025. 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:

- spent time with eight people using the service
- spoke with nine staff and management
- spoke with one external professional
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- reviewed survey responses from external professionals, parents and members of staff.

Key messages

- Young people were supported to feel physically and emotionally safe when visiting the project.
- Young people were supported by a knowledgeable and responsive staff team, who understood their needs well.
- Young people enjoyed warm and nurturing relationships with the members of staff caring for them and were treated with respect.
- The service has acknowledged within their development plan a need to further develop young people's participation and involvement in the service and their own care planning.
- Children and young people benefitted from detailed but concise individual support plans which promoted wellbeing and development.

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? | 5 - Very Good |
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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?

5 - Very Good

We found Children and young people visiting Barnardo's Caern Project were kept physically safe and supported to feel emotionally secure. All staff had received appropriate protection training. One parent told us: "Our child's needs and challenges change, and we feel Caern staff adapt to this to make sure our child is safe, feels secure and has the opportunity to have new experiences." This contributed to consistently positive short-break experiences.

Young people benefitted from warm and nurturing relationships with the people caring for them. Staff demonstrated a thorough and genuine understanding of each child, confidently describing their needs, personalities, and preferences. As a result, parents felt reassured about their children spending time at Caern. One parent shared: "Our child struggles with being separated from the family at times and can feel insecure, especially at night. However, he seeks out certain members of staff who help him feel more settled."

Young people were supported to relax and take part in activities they enjoyed. They had fun while also experiencing the predictability needed to feel safe. We were pleased to hear about the success of new initiatives, such as the Better Breaks project, which enabled some young people to access supported holidays with familiar staff and peers, and the development of a woodland walk on adjoining land. The service continues to be creative in offering new experiences and opportunities.

Young people were treated with respect and understanding. They were encouraged to help plan their stays and make choices about activities and meals. This included non-verbal young people, who were thoughtfully supported to participate in day to day decision making. The service has identified the need to further strengthen young people's involvement in the service and in their own care plans, and we look forward to reviewing progress at our next inspection. Steps have also been taken to involve parents more fully as key advocates in planning and service development.

Young people's individual interests and goals were well understood and championed. Staff recognised the importance of supporting young people to develop and try new experiences, and this was reflected in clearly articulated, individualised goals within their plans. Achievements were celebrated. One parent told us: "They have been a great help in my child's development and she has come a long way."

Young people were well supported to maintain engagement with school during their stays. Link workers attended school care planning meetings, enabling consistent information sharing and aligned approaches across settings.

All young people benefitted from a detailed yet concise individual support plan, which complemented the multi agency Child's Plan to promote wellbeing and development. Behaviour support plans helped ensure consistency across home, school, and care environments. The service is currently reviewing and refreshing these plans to make them more outcomes focused and child centred, and we look forward to seeing the updated format at our next inspection.

The service continues to support young people until they move into adult services, offering support up to their 19th birthday to aid transition. Staff contribute to transition planning and share their knowledge with new services to minimise disruption and promote positive outcomes, even after young people have left Caern.

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 promote positive group dynamics the provider should further improve admissions process.

This should include but is not limited to ensuring admissions assessments consider the impact on other children using the service for short breaks.

"My care and support meet my needs and is right for me" (HSCS 1.19).

This area for improvement was made on 8 September 2023.

Action taken since then

Over the past two years, the service has worked extensively to strengthen admissions assessments. A new referral and matching process has been introduced and is now used for all new referrals. Staff shared mixed views on this approach, and some indicated they need additional support to build confidence in this area, which was accepted by the service managers. Overall, we found admissions and matching assessments to be strong. The process now actively considers the needs of other young people in the service, which is well documented in the paperwork. This assessment informs individual support plans and service delivery planning. The identified area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support staff retention, the provider should ensure staff are well supported.

This should include but is not limited to, analysing the reasons for staff turnover, reviewing induction procedures and ensuring regular team meetings take place.

This is to ensure that practice is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that:

"I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed" (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 8 September 2023.

Action taken since then

Staff retention in 2024 and 2025 improved compared to previous years. Exit interviews were conducted to understand staff experiences when they left. Induction processes have been reviewed, and new team members reported positive experiences, though this will require ongoing monitoring to maintain quality. Regular team meetings were held, but attendance was inconsistent. The rota has since been adjusted to enable full-team meetings once a month. In addition, two team development days took place in 2025. Staff we spoke to felt well supported and confident in the service's management.

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

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| How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing? | 5 - Very Good |
| 7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life | 5 - Very Good |

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