

Inspection report

City of Edinburgh Council - Temporary Accommodation Team Housing Support Service

Services for Communities
1 Cockburn Street
Edinburgh EH1 1BJ

Inspected by: Saartje Drijver
(Care Commission Officer)

Type of inspection: Announced

Inspection completed on: 13 November 2006

Service Number

CS2004069180

Service nameCity of Edinburgh Council - Temporary
Accommodation Team**Service address**Services for Communities
1 Cockburn Street
Edinburgh EH1 1BJ**Provider Number**

SP2003002576

Provider Name

City of Edinburgh Council

Inspected BySaartje Drijver
Care Commission Officer**Inspection Type**

Announced

Inspection Completed

13 November 2006

Period since last inspection

12 months

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Introduction

The Temporary Accommodation Service provides a housing management and a housing support service to homeless customers for whom it has identified a need to provide temporary accommodation. During the assessment process for temporary accommodation all customers' need for housing support is also assessed. Where a need for housing support is identified this service is offered.

At the time of the inspection 424 customers were in temporary accommodation at the time of the inspection. It is estimated that at any one time 25% of customers who are in temporary accommodation are in receipt of a housing support service. The service is provided by housing officers and wardens, both of whom also provide the housing management service to customers.

The housing support service is available from 8:30am – 5pm on Mondays to Thursdays and from 8:30am -3:40pm on Fridays. The service also includes the Leith Street Project which comprises of 30 individual flats. Here customers have access to support 24 hours per day. Customers receiving the service are dispersed throughout Edinburgh. The support is available until customers have moved to more permanent accommodation; most commonly this is for a period of 3-4 months.

The Temporary Accommodation Service is part of the City of Edinburgh Council's Services for Communities Department and is based in Central Edinburgh.

The housing support service provided by the Temporary Accommodation Service was registered with the Care Commission in September 2004.

The aims and objectives of the service state that:

"...Temporary Accommodation staff offer appropriate advice and assistance to Homeless people to assist them in making informed choices about their housing options..."

Basis of Report

The inspection was announced and was carried out by Care Commission Officer Saartje Drijver.

This service was inspected after a Regulation Support Assessment (RSA) was carried out to determine what level of support was necessary. The RSA is an assessment undertaken by the Care Commission Officer which considers: complaints activity, changes in the provision of the service, nature of notifications made to the Care Commission by the service, action taken upon requirements etc.

This service was required to have a medium level of support that resulted in an inspection based on the national inspection themes, the core National Care Standards for the particular service type for the inspecting year and any recommendations and requirements from previous inspections, complaints or other regulatory activity.

Before the visit:

The service returned an annual return containing information about the service.

The service also returned a self-evaluation which related to the standards to be inspected.

Staff members returned 9 questionnaires giving their views of the service.

A random selection of customers was sent a questionnaire asking their views of the service,

4 were returned.

During the inspection which was announced and which took place between 13th November and 7th December 2006, the Care Commission Officer spoke to:
the managers of the service,
6 members of staff individually and a further 3 in a group setting,
and the manager of the Leith Street Project.

The Care Commission Officer also looked at a range of policies, procedures and records including the following:

Communities Scotland Report dated April 2006,
Customer Survey dated July – September 2006,
12 customers' support plans and records,
Staff training record,
and the Temporary Accommodation Service information leaflet.

The Care Commission Officer took all of the above into account and reported on whether the service was meeting the following National Care Standards for Housing Support Services:

National Care Standard 2 – Your Legal Rights
National Care Standard 3 – Management and Staffing Arrangements
National Care Standard 4 – Housing Support Planning
National Care Standard 6 – Choice and Communication

The Regulations of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 and associated Regulations were also taken into account.

During this inspection the theme Safer Recruitment was also taken into account.

Action taken on requirements in last Inspection Report

No requirements had been made following the previous inspection.

Comments on Self-Evaluation

The service returned a self evaluation relating to the standards against which it was being inspected. This included an account of the service's strengths and areas of development that were currently being progressed.

View of Service Users

The return rate for the questionnaires that were sent to customers was low. In discussion with the service managers it was acknowledged that the service often had a low return rate for customer feedback and that this could be attributed to the short amount of time that customers had contact with the service and the difficult situations that they may be in.

Of the 52 questionnaires that the Care Commission sent to customers only 4 were returned. These gave mixed opinions of the support that they received. It was difficult for the Care Commission Officer to ascertain whether the views related to the housing support service or to the provision of accommodation and to the housing support aspect of the service.

The service had conducted a customer survey between July and September 2006 during which contact was made with 252 customers. In depth interviews were also held with a

further 10 customers. The survey concluded that many customers found the support that they had received beneficial and that it helped them to maintain their tenancy. Most customers responded positively to being asked whether staff were polite.

View of Carers

The views of carers were not sought during this inspection.

Regulations / Principles

Regulation :

Strengths

Areas for Development

National Care Standards

National Care Standard Number 2: Housing Support Services - Your Legal Rights

Strengths

The service's information leaflet explained issues relating to the service's terms and conditions as well as its commitment to customer care and its service standards.

Customers completed a Support Plan with staff which gave brief details of the support to be provided. Customers signed a statement regarding the terms and conditions of the service.

The service's commitment to confidentiality was explained to customers as well as its position regarding the sharing of information with other agencies. Customers were asked to sign a statement giving their agreement to these procedures.

The service had a complaints leaflet that was available in different formats and languages. It included the Care Commission's details. This information was also available in the service's information leaflet.

Customers were informed of the availability of the Care Commission's inspection report.

Areas for Development

The support plan was brief and often did not reflect the level of support that was described in customers' case files. The service should consider how the support plan can be used as a meaningful document that accurately describes the support that customers agree to (see Recommendation 1).

National Care Standard Number 3: Housing Support Services - Management and Staffing Arrangements

Strengths

The service was supported by a comprehensive set of policies and procedures as provided by the City of Edinburgh Council. Locally produced policies and procedures were reviewed regularly.

There was an induction programme in place to assist new staff to become familiar with their work. Staff confirmed that this had been helpful and that learning was a continual process.

Staff received regular supervision which they appreciated. They stated that senior staff were readily available for advice at other times.

The service had compiled an audit of the training that staff had recently attended. This showed that staff attended courses on a variety of topics relevant to their work. Staff confirmed that they were given appropriate training opportunities and that there were a variety of ways in which they could gain information pertinent to their work.

The service was in the process of considering a training plan to comply with registration with the Scottish Social Services Council.

In discussion it was clear that senior staff were keen to encourage staff to further their professional development. This was appreciated by staff.

Staff confirmed that they found their team colleagues and senior staff to be supportive.

Staff showed a commitment to the welfare and to the rights of their customers.

The service had clear procedures in place to ensure the safety of staff when working in the community. Risk assessments were carried out on a number of aspects of the service and these were updated regularly. From discussions with staff and from the recordings in customers' case files it was evident that risk assessments were taken into account.

Staff maintained a high degree of accountability to their line managers.

The service conducted an annual customer survey to gather the views of its customers. This and the recommendations made in the Communities Scotland Report were used as the basis of an action plan to develop and improve the service further.

The service had successfully received accreditation regarding its customer focus.

The service had links with other agencies to share best practice and a city wide approach to meeting the needs of homeless people.

Areas for Development

An audit of the Provider's safer recruitment policies and procedures, as implemented across the City of Edinburgh Council has been carried out by the Care Commission resulting in requirements and an area for development highlighted in this report.

The requirements resulted from an audit of the following file sampling exercise:

Health and Social Care Department 117 files
Children and Families Department 103 files
Housing Department 21 files
Culture and Leisure Department 4 files

The number of files audited were selected in proportion to the number of registered services per department following the Care Commission national guidance for safer recruitment

themed inspections. The evidence supporting the three requirements was provided by the sampling exercise undertaken in respect of three of the four departments. There was no evidence in the 4 files sampled from the Culture and Leisure Department to support the three requirements. The requirements made were based on evidence from files showing posts filled after 1 April 2002. The requirements are made of the provider as a corporate entity (see Requirements 1, 2 and 3).

It is suggested that best practice is followed by introducing a system to recheck Enhanced Disclosure Scotland Checks. National Care Standards, SSSC Codes of Practice – Employer

National Care Standard Number 4: Housing Support Services - Housing Support Planning

Strengths

The detailed recordings in customers' case files showed the range of issues with which customers received support. There was frequent contact between staff of different agencies supporting customers and referrals were made to other agencies appropriately.

All relevant customer details were on an electronic case file for the use of staff.

All customers had at a minimum fortnightly contact with staff.

Areas for Development

The service's customer survey highlighted the need for customers to be better informed of the housing process.

Support plans were brief and did not reflect the range and sometimes high level of support that customers received from the service as recorded in the case files. Staff confirmed that support plans were not referred to often and that the support provided was not always made explicit between customer and staff (see recommendation 1).

There was no evidence that support plans were reviewed to ensure that the support provided continued to meet the needs of customers. Staff acknowledged that changes to the support provided evolved as situations arose rather than discussed explicitly (see recommendation 2).

In discussion with the service managers it was acknowledged that the minimal use of support plans may be due the service's primary role as accommodation provider/manager and to the difficulty that some customers have in acknowledging the support that they need and receive.

National Care Standard Number 6: Housing Support Services - Choice and Communication

Strengths

Details of other services were available to customers within the reception area where many customers had their initial contact with the service.

Staff showed a broad knowledge of other services and stated that they shared this information with customers and made referrals on their behalf when appropriate.

Customers' case files showed that staff had contact with a range of other professional on behalf on customers.

Staff showed respect for the choices made by customers.

Areas for Development

The service managers acknowledged that although the service had a commitment to keep customers informed of their progress in attaining permanent accommodation their information system did not make this information available until an offer of accommodation was made.

Enforcement

The Care Commission has not taken any enforcement action against this service.

Other Information

None.

Requirements

1. All staff working in registered care services must have an enhanced level Disclosure Scotland check carried out.

This is to comply with SSI 2002/114 Regulation 9 (1) Fitness of employees

2. There should be system to record that, where appropriate, the employer has checked qualifications.

This is to comply with SSI 2002/114 Regulation 19(2) (a) Records

3. Recruitment records should evidence that 2 satisfactory references were sought for each person employed.

This is to comply with SSI 2002/114 Regulation 9(1) Fitness of employees; SSSC Codes of Practice – Employers

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the service considers its use of support plans to ensure that they are a meaningful document that more accurately describes the support that customers agree to.

National Care Standards – Housing Support, Standard 2 – Your Legal Rights and Standard 4 – Housing Support Planning.

2. It is recommended that support plans are reviewed to ensure that the support provided continues to meet the needs of customers and that changes to the support provided are agreed between customers and staff.

National Care Standard – Housing Support, Standard 4 – Housing Support Planning.

Saartje Drijver

Care Commission Officer