

Inspection report

Unity Enterprise Housing Support Service Glasgow Housing Support Service

Unit 17
Barclay Curle Complex
739 South Street
Glasgow G14 OBX

Inspected by: Tony Valbonesi
(Care Commission Officer)

Type of inspection: Announced

Inspection completed on: 24 June 2005

Service Number

CS2004076038

Service name

Unity Enterprise Housing Support Service Glasgow

Service addressUnit 17
Barclay Curle Complex
739 South Street
Glasgow G14 OBX**Provider Number**

SP2004005409

Provider Name

Unity Enterprise

Inspected ByTony Valbonesi
Care Commission Officer**Inspection Type**

Announced

Inspection Completed

24 June 2005

Period since last inspection

initial inspection

Local Office Address4th Floor
1 Smithhills Street
Paisley

Introduction

Unity Enterprise Housing Support Service Glasgow is registered with the Care Commission and supports people in the community who are at risk of becoming homeless or have previously experienced homelessness. Most referrals come from two Glasgow City Council Community Casework Teams and a homeless assessment centre based in the city. The number of service users accessing the service changes on a regular basis, but on 27 April 2005 there were 248 service users.

The team comprises a service manager, 3 project coordinators and 36 support staff. Management and staff have recently moved to a new office base in the north west of the city. Recently a Head of Service has also been appointed to oversee operations.

The service information leaflet states that the aim is to assist people to achieve a more stable living environment and enable service users to sustain independent living within the community and reduce the possibility of repeat homelessness.

Basis of Report

One Care Commission Officer undertook this inspection. In the course of the inspection, the provider completed a Pre-inspection Return containing information about the service. A completed Self-Evaluation form was also returned. The Officer visited the office and met half of the staff team, the manager and the Head of Service. Unfortunately service user involvement in the inspection was limited and the Officer only succeeded in speaking with one person by phone and received seven service user questionnaire responses. 15 staff questionnaires were completed and one questionnaire was completed by a professional worker who had dealings with the service.

In addition, the Officer looked at a range of policies, procedures and records including the following:

- Policy and Procedure manual
- Training records
- Service Information leaflet
- Staff meeting minutes
- Support plans for two service users
- Protocol between Community Casework teams and the service
- Staff Induction programme

Having taken all of the above into account, the Officer reported on how well the service was meeting the following National Care Standards for Housing Support Services:

- Standard 1 : Informing and Deciding
- Standard 2: Your Legal Rights
- Standard 3: Management and Staffing Arrangements
- Standard 4: Housing Support Plan
- Standard 7: Exercising your Rights

Action taken on requirements in last Inspection Report

There were no Requirements made previously as this was the first inspection for this service.

Comments on Self-Evaluation

The Head of Service completed a self-evaluation form. This focused on the five national care standards under inspection. The self –evaluation indicated a number of strengths and areas for development and was completed in an open and honest way. The Officer’s findings were consistent with the information provided, and identified some additional strengths and areas for improvement.

View of Service Users

Eight service users in total gave their views on the service they received. This was positive feedback in the main. Comments included,

“Very caring and understanding staff”

“Not had to make a complaint”

"Good communication with staff”

“Always on time, never late”

“Always attentive to my requirements”

“My careworker shows determination in exercising his knowledge and skills when dealing with me”

"I found their support invaluable”

"I have found Unity only too happy to go the extra mile without being asked”

View of Carers

No relatives or friends were spoken with during the inspection. One professional worker who has links with the service completed a questionnaire. This indicated satisfaction with the service provided by Unity Enterprise.

Regulations / Principles

National Care Standards

National Care Standard Number 1: Housing Support Services - Informing and Deciding

Strengths

The Housing Support Service provided some useful written information about the global aim of the service and what was available.

Staff provided verbal information to service users about how the service operated and how it could be used.

Service user feedback indicated that they were kept well informed about the service.

Areas for Development

There was scope to provide a more detailed and informative Welcome Pack of written information to service users to back up verbal advice given by staff. This should be considered in relation to information highlighted under Standard 1: Informing and Deciding, of the National Care Standards for Housing Support Services. It should also be written in plain English. Where English is not understood or a another format is required, this should be accommodated. (See Recommendation 1)

The service information leaflet needed updated to reflect the relocated office address and contact number.

A specific statement of Aims and Objectives should be developed for the housing support service clearly highlighting who the service is for, how it would be provided and on what basis.

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

Strengths

Staff verbally inform service users about the service that will be provided to meet their needs.

Service users responses suggested that they were satisfied that their rights were upheld by staff practice and conduct.

Areas for Development

The Self-Evaluation form and Head of Service confirmed that a written agreement which clearly defined service provision was needed to be formulated and that this would receive attention within a three to six month timescale following the inspection. (See Recommendation 2)

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

Strengths

Service users confirmed that staff acted appropriately in their supportive role. Those who provided additional comments clearly had a high regard for their keyworkers and the positive relationships which had developed.

Staff and management relations were good and provided a firm base from which to take the service forward. The new Head of Service, manager and staff team were taking stock of service provision and had identified a number of areas where improvements needed to be made.

Staff were supported by regular opportunities for formal supervision, communication and training.

A rolling programme of vocational training helped to raise workers' understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their own work practices and underpinning values.

Staff had received a copy of the Scottish Social Service Code of Practice and were familiar with the National Care Standards.

Areas for Development

Staff sickness absence was significantly high and had a negative effect on continuity of care. For example, in a recent three month period, 608 hours had been lost to sickness. The Officer was reassured that this issue had been identified by the provider and was an area which was currently receiving urgent attention. Progress to bring down staff sickness levels will be reviewed during the next inspection.

An effective appraisal system needed to be introduced. (See Recommendation 3)

Training opportunities were good. Future improvements to the training programme ought to include a more coordinated approach linked to individual and team needs. There was scope to consider training opportunities in the light of all the specific housing support tasks staff are expected to perform. Staff training in the area of prevention and detection of abuse was an area in need of particular attention.

It was recognised that there was a need to develop the policies and procedures specific to housing support service along with associated training, for instance, in the area of Child Protection. Progress with this will be reviewed during the next inspection. (See Recommendation 4)

The Manager was advised during the inspection to consult with the Scottish Social Services Council on what would be considered to be satisfactory qualifications for his position.

New staff received appropriate support through a coordinated induction programme. In the Officer's opinion, a staff handbook giving easy access to policy and procedural guidance to compliment the induction programme, should also be formulated and introduced.

Restricted office space and equipment was raised as a concern by staff. Reports suggested that pro-active steps were being taken with the landlord to rectify this.

In some cases, new staff commenced work prior to disclosure checks being carried out. The

Officer was assured that in such cases new staff were always supervised. Where ever possible staff should not commence work until the provider had received notification of a clear disclosure check.

Quality assurance systems related to the whole organisation. There was a need to develop quality assurance systems specific to the housing support service and which placed service user involvement at the centre of the process. (See Recommendation 5)

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

Strengths

Service users felt they were supported in a professional and appropriate manner.

Support Plans were in place to identify, record and promote individuals' housing support needs.

Areas for Development

There was a need to further develop the support planning paperwork and to introduce a system of ongoing review involving the service user. (See Recommendation 6)

Support plans lacked a formal assessment of need by the service to inform the more limited referral assessment provided by the referring agency.

Monthly evaluations of support plans were not evidenced in documentation sampled.

Where appropriate service users should be offered a copy of their Housing support plan and sign the paperwork to indicate agreement with contents.

Risk assessments in support plans seen focused on risks to staff in relation to lone working visits. Risk assessments should also include personal risk assessments related to the service user.

Staff and management unanimously raised concerns regarding the poor relations they experienced in their dealings with some referring agencies. This was leading to a detrimental effect with ongoing partnership working and support planning. A protocol on partnership working had been devised, but was not being followed in practice. Senior management needed to urgently review and address the deficiencies in current systems of partnership working to ensure protocols, roles and responsibilities are known, agreed and applied, and service user housing needs are not unduly compromised. (See Recommendation 7)

National Care Standard Number 7: Housing Support Services - Exercising Your Rights

Strengths

Service users consulted did not raise any issues with regards to their rights. Responses were positive and suggested that staff worked hard on individuals' behalf to ensure their rights were considered by other agencies, for example, housing departments.

Paperwork on the service users was kept securely and confidentially in the office base.

The Officer did not find any contra-indications to indicate that service users's rights were not being respected.

Areas for Development

Management recognised the need to review support plans and that this should include how well support plans explained what the individual can expect from housing support staff and vice versa.

The recommendation in this report regarding a written agreement, should be actioned.

Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this service.

Other Information

None identified during this inspection.

Requirements

Recommendations

1. A comprehensive introductory Welcome Pack in suitable languages and formats should be devised. (Standard 1: Informing and Deciding) 2. A written agreement should be formulated for service users. (Standard 2: Your Legal Rights) 3. An effective appraisal system should be introduced, training better linked to individual staff and team needs and training on the prevention and detection of abuse prioritised. (Standard 3: Management and Staffing)

4. Gaps in formal Policies and Procedures for the housing support service should be addressed with associated training for staff. (Standard 3: Management and Staffing)

5. Quality assurance systems, specific to the housing support service, should be devised and should involve the service user in the process on an ongoing basis. (Standard 3: Management and Staffing) 6. Housing Support Plans should be further developed particularly in the areas of assessment, review, personal risk assessment and service user involvement. (Standard 4: Housing Support Plan)

7. Senior management should urgently work with relevant agencies to address the current problems in partnership working to ensure protocols, roles and responsibilities are known, agreed and applied, and service user housing needs are not unduly compromised. (Standard 4: Housing Support Plan)

Tony Valbonesi

Care Commission Officer