

Ayr Housing Aid Centre SCIO Housing Support Service

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
15 November 2024

Service provided by:
Ayr Housing Aid Centre SCIO

Service provider number:
SP2019013442

Service no:
CS2019378601

About the service

Ayr Housing Aid Centre SCIO is registered to provide a housing support service to adults who are threatened with homelessness in their home and in the community. This was the first inspection since the service was re-registered on 1 October 2020.

The service operates from its office base which is within walking distance of the town centre of Ayr. At the time of inspection, 20 people were being supported by the service.

The charity aims are: 'To provide free, accredited, independent, information, advice, advocacy, representation and engagement services to those who are homeless, threatened with homelessness and/or are in housing need and alleviate poverty.'

The Tenure Sustainment Housing Support Service can internally access the specialist, type III accredited housing advice, advocacy and representation promoting human rights and equality.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13, 14 and 15 November 2024. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

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

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with three people using the service and took account of feedback
- spoke with four staff and management
- reviewed documents
- reviewed Care Inspectorate surveys returned by three people using the service, two staff and three professionals.

Key messages

- Staff went above and beyond in their care.
- The team had an excellent knowledge of local and national supports.
- The service clearly demonstrated its commitment to continuous improvement.
- The service had robust quality assurance processes.
- Staff reflected on their practice and learned from each other.
- The level of detail in people's notes was of a consistently high standard.

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 people's wellbeing?	6 - Excellent
How good is our leadership?	6 - Excellent
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support people's wellbeing?

6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent, where performance was sector leading with outstandingly high outcomes for people.

During the inspection we sampled case files. We were able to see initial referrals and key detailed information about people supported. People supported had a service agreement which set out the terms of what they should expect from the service. The service's primary aim was to support people with rent arrears, preventing homelessness at crisis point and budgeting. People were supported to make informed choices based on the information and advice provided and options available to them.

Despite budget cuts, the drive to deliver high-quality supports had not been impacted. We were able to see where additional funds had been sourced in order to continue to provide the support that people needed. This included gaining access to a fund which allowed the service to support people at the time they needed help. This was done by using the fund to provide items such as cookers, phones, flooring, security devices, food and fuel vouchers. By providing these, daily financial burdens and stresses were alleviated. This meant people were able to focus on their main issue which was their rent arrears. We heard various examples of where staff had gone above and beyond in their care. An example of this was where a staff member sourced an item for a person supported, which enabled them to feel included in their community and benefitted their wellbeing and their sense of self. It was clear that the service provided support in a person-centred way that took account of people's whole situation.

People were involved and supported in the way that was right for them. Support was provided on a one-to-one basis through home visits, meeting in community settings such as going for a coffee, through email, text and phone calls, as well as meeting in the office. Staff would go to the person which enabled those in rural areas to receive support. Where people did attend the office base, transport costs were paid for by the service. This flexible approach allowed people to choose the support that was right for them.

Staff had built excellent relationships with people supported. Independence was promoted and the team encouraged people to make positive choices about their financial situations. People receiving support told us, "They always go above and beyond," and "Their support has been life changing." This demonstrated the value of the service and the impact it had on the lives of those supported.

We found that the team were responsive to people's health and wellbeing needs. Where referrals to other services or health professionals were required, this was carried out. We saw examples where staff recognised and prompted people to attend health appointments whilst also providing support to attend these, if required.

Every person supported had an allocated worker who was fully informed of their circumstances and needs. Staff had an in depth knowledge of sources of funding that people were able to access and apply for depending on their individual need and supported people with this process. The team had an excellent knowledge of local and national supports and utilised these in a way that supported people to get the most out of life.

The service recognised the importance of people having advocacy and support at the right time. We saw various examples where staff had attended court with people. This meant that they had an appropriate advocate where they had been unable to access other services. This ensured people felt supported, had all

the right information and reduced their levels of stress and anxiety.

It was clear the service would go to any length to support people with any needs that they had. This was evident from the innovative, holistic and person-centred ways that supports were provided to people and the drive to increase funding to use this to support those who needed it.

How good is our leadership?

6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent, where performance was sector leading with outstandingly high outcomes for people.

The service benefitted from a stable management team who had worked in the service and the sector for a number of years. One external professional told us, "The stability in terms of leadership has been a huge asset to this organisation. There is continuity and real understanding of the challenges facing local communities."

The service had a detailed development and improvement plan in place. This was informed by information gathered through robust quality assurance processes, discussions with staff and team meetings. This demonstrated a team approach and shared responsibility of the improvement and development of the service.

The management team had excellent quality assurance systems in place and ensured that audits evaluated and monitored the service. There was a statistical system in place which enhanced the quality monitoring of the service. The service clearly demonstrated its commitment to continuous improvement.

There were a range of audits carried out on case files. These looked at targeted areas, such as running notes, use of third parties, case diary notes, actions required, recordings of monies recovered, outcomes, and when people had been referred to other professionals, such as health professionals. Where actions were identified, clear detailed action plans were put in place with set responsibility, clear set timescales and a record of when the action had been completed.

Annual reports were collated to provide clear and detailed oversight of cases, outcomes, feedback, staff wellbeing and case studies. This provided a clear overview of service provision.

The service carried out detailed case study reviews which provided clear overview of the support people had received. These included what support people had been given to access grants, get repairs made, the impact on people's mental health whilst preventing homelessness, and improvements made to people's financial situations.

Service user feedback was gathered in a variety of ways to ensure people could be involved in the improvement and development of the service. Information gathered was analysed and a service user feedback report was created. This included how many people provided feedback, overall percentages, what was going well, what people felt could be improved and what the service had done to action these improvements. Overall feedback gathered by the service was very positive and it was clear that any feedback was used to continue to strive to improve the service they delivered to people.

Although the staff team will go to meet the people supported at the place that is right for them, they recognised that people may prefer to attend the office base to meet with their allocated worker. In order to

ensure the office base was accessible to everyone supported, the service had a sensory audit of the building carried out. Actions were highlighted and completed to improve accessibility for people. Some of these actions included colour contrast of furniture and doors, signage and access to ramps. This ensured that the office base was accessible to all service users and independence was promoted.

The service had built an excellent knowledge of grants and funds that could be applied for and the eligibility criteria for each. This was a live document that was continually added to. This informed staff of who could be contacted depending on the person's need, experience and personal circumstances. The team continued to add to this bank of knowledge.

The management team were dedicated to continually looking for new and innovative ways to increase funding available. This assisted people with daily living expenses or food/utility costs, which in turn made it easier for the service user to maintain a repayment plan whilst staff were working on their case.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Staff had their own caseloads and managed their time to suit the needs and availability of those they were supporting. This included evenings where needed, which ensured that the service was accessible to people.

We were able to see that the number of people supported at any time was proportionate to the size of the service and the support they could offer people. This ensured that those who used the service consistently got the level of support they required.

Staff told us that they worked well together as a team to meet the needs of people supported. This included where there was any absence. The team used an electronic diary system. They could see clearly what was needed for people on particular dates and ensured supports were in place. This meant that where there was any absence, people supported were not impacted by this.

We were able to see that staff took part in regular supervisions, team meetings, case reviews and case studies. This enabled staff to reflect on their practice and learn from each other.

Any communication between staff members in regard to case discussions or advice was logged within the person's file. This demonstrated the team approach to providing the right support for people.

Staff had access to a range of training relevant to their role. This was both online and face to face. Staff told us if there was any training they felt they would benefit from then this would be sourced. Each team member kept a log of the training they had undertaken. A new spreadsheet had recently been created to track refresher dates to ensure there was a clear log of when staff were due to complete training.

How well is our care and support planned?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

The service used an electronic system for people's personal plans and case notes. This system was easy to navigate and specific to the needs of the service.

During the inspection, we sampled personal plans and case notes. Each of these had all the information needed. The level of detail in people's running notes was of a consistently high standard. We could clearly track all interactions, support offered and provided as well as progress made for each individual.

There was a very good assessment process in place which clearly established people's needs and what support could be provided to them. This was completed in a person-centred way, allowing information to be gathered at the service users' pace.

The service had recently introduced an outcome measurement tool which people were fully involved in. This tool provided a visual representation of where they were at the start of their journey with the service. As this was newly implemented, they had not yet been reviewed to measure people's progress, although progress could be tracked through the running notes. We look forward to seeing how this has developed at the next inspection.

There were appropriate risk assessments in place which highlighted any risks to people supported or staff providing support. This ensured appropriate measures were considered and put in place to reduce identified risks.

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

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	6 - Excellent
1.3 People's health and wellbeing benefits from their care and support	6 - Excellent
How good is our leadership?	6 - Excellent
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement is led well	6 - Excellent
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	5 - Very Good
5.1 Assessment and personal planning reflects people's outcomes and wishes	5 - Very Good

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