

Priority Families Service Support Service

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Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
22 October 2024

Service provided by:
Action for Children

Service provider number:
SP2003002604

Service no:
CS2018367589

About the service

Priority families state their key aim is to:

'Improve whole family outcomes through the delivery of family interventions support to families affected by complex and multiple issues which have impact on their life outcomes'.

Their Promise plan also states their aim to 'deliver actions and commitments that ensure children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected so they can fulfill their potential'.

The service is part of the Action for Children organisation and provides support to families across Aberdeen City.

About the inspection

This was a short notice inspection which took place at various times, and in various places, between Monday 7 and Friday 11 October 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 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 four young people and nine parents
- spoke with nine staff and management
- reviewed documents
- received questionnaire responses from 14 parents and seven external professionals.

Key messages

- Families benefitted from a motivated and enthusiastic staff team who were solution focussed and had the knowledge and skills to support them to achieve positive outcomes.
- Families experienced flexible, need led support.
- People were empowered to have a greater level of control over their own lives and to focus on achievable solutions.
- Staff had a very positive and practical 'can do' approach which saw staff 'rolling up their sleeves' and helping with household improvements as readily as they used their professional knowledge and skills to develop strategies of support.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

How well do we support people's wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

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

Young people and parents were recognised as experts in their own lives and experiences. Families told us their support recognised the needs of the wider family, and the individual, so there was the best chance of everyone engaging in their support. They felt the individual time, and coming together, was valuable. Young people described being given choice and options over how they spent their time when they were with their support worker. Some of this time centred around building relationships, enhancing their social skills and enjoying new experiences, and some spent on focussed work on areas they had identified and agreed needed to change.

A comprehensive assessment ensured that staff worked alongside families to understand what was important to them. The assessment identified needs and interventions which would match the desired outcomes. These were agreed and reviewed with families. The team having the flexibility and a willingness to seek the right support, and the time to do this, was a real asset. Families benefitted from staff who were solution focussed and had the knowledge and skills to help them make identified changes.

Some parents and young people we spoke with described an initial reluctance to engage with support until they built a relationship with their support worker. They then described support which was responsive and flexible to changing situations and priorities. Almost all described significant and sustainable progress. Some were anxious about how they would cope when support ended but understood that Priority Families did not offer long-term support, but would endeavour to find the right resources for any family where continued support was needed.

Sustained change was supported by empowering parents and young people. They were introduced to resources in their own community which developed their skills and confidence, and which would be available after their support from Priority families had ended. The sports activator and events at Aberdeen Foyer, supported wider physical and emotional wellbeing and provided practical guidance which contributed to people taking control of their lives.

The range of resources the team offered and could access were of real benefit to families. Parents spoke of developing their own confidence and skills after watching how the team managed situations and difficult conversations with others in meetings. Families therefore developed significant skills which would help them share their own views in settings where they had previously found this extremely difficult.

For some young people and families support was around physical, emotional or online safety. The staff team understood their role in safeguarding young people and adults, and had ongoing training and learning opportunities. Policies and procedures supported good practice. Within the organisation a safeguarding team was available to provide advice and guidance, with auditing and quality assurance processes in place which ensured the safety of people using the service.

Developing social skills and confidence in a range of situations and tasks empowered people to improve their physical and emotional wellbeing, and to focus on positives and achievable solutions. The service occasionally organised group events. Some young people and parents described these as really helpful in

giving them the opportunity to have fun together and enjoy each other's company. Young people also said they benefitted from meeting others who needed similar support as it 'made it seem OK to accept help'.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for families and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Families benefitted from a motivated, enthusiastic staff team, with a shared commitment to supporting them to achieve positive outcomes. A significant number of the team were fairly new in their role within the team, some with previous experience within the service in a different role.

Staff were well supported to ensure a high level of professionalism and development, and also their general wellbeing. They stated that there was excellent peer and managerial support and were confident that there was always someone available for reassurance, guidance and support. Opportunities to learn and develop practice took place via a range of individual and group meetings. This ensured staff had the opportunity to reflect on their practice and provide care and support which was aligned to the values and ethos of the organisation.

A development plan with SMART targets (specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, time-specific) identified key areas such as service delivery, practice improvement, performance monitoring, staff recruitment and retention. The team were involved in the planning and review of the development plan.

Staff described good training opportunities and a culture where learning and development was promoted. The team were able to access training from a number of agencies. The team training plan identified professional development and opportunities for staff to remain motivated by new challenges. The welcome addition of a business support colleague will support better recording of all training staff have completed.

The team had a very flexible and proactive approach. When identified support needed to be adjusted to meet a family's current situation, the team worked alongside families to discuss what they saw as priority. Families and staff described a very positive and practical 'can do' approach which saw staff 'rolling up their sleeves' and helping with household improvements as readily as they used their professional knowledge and skills to develop strategies of support. Families described this approach as central to the trusting relationships they had developed with their support worker, and the confidence this gave them that staff could help them make the changes they had identified.

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?	5 - Very Good
1.2 People get the most out of life	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
3.2 Staff have the right knowledge, competence and development to care for and support people	4 - Good

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