

Marie Curie Care at Home Scotland North West Support Service

Marie Curie Hospice
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Unannounced

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Service provided by:
Marie Curie

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About the service

Marie Curie Care at Home Scotland North West provides a care at home service to adults with life limiting conditions in their own homes. The service is provided across the North of Scotland with the registered office being in Glasgow and includes the following areas: Grampian, Highlands, Argyll & Bute, Ayrshire and Arran, Glasgow, Orkney, and Western Isles.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 28 and 31 October during the hours of 9:30 and 17:30. 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 17 staff and the management team
- spoke with 3 external professionals
- reviewed documents and observed daily life
- obtained feedback through surveys and email questionnaires from 13 staff, 13 external professionals and four people using the service.

Key messages

- People and their relatives spoke highly of staff professionalism and their compassionate approach.
- Individuals' health benefited from comprehensive assessments and effective communication with other health professionals.
- Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to teamwork and mutual support which underpinned the delivery of safe, compassionate, and responsive care.
- The service was well led and managed by responsive and accessible management with robust quality assurance processes in place.
- The service evidenced a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Care plans were flexible and adapted as circumstances changed, reflecting the nature of end-of-life care.

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 leadership?	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?

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.

We did not get the opportunity to speak to people directly who use the service due to their life limiting conditions. We did, however, seek their views through our online survey, in conjunction with the 'Patient experience surveys' undertaken by the service.

People described staff as kind, reliable and supportive. They expressed feelings of relief and peace during the most difficult times of their lives, and felt they were treated with respect, dignity and compassion. Families and relatives shared confidence in the care being provided, with one person stating, "I can highly recommend their care, compassion, supportive and helpful calm manner."

This feedback reflects the service's strong commitment to upholding the principles of the Health and Social Care Standards.

During the inspection, staff demonstrated awareness of up-to-date policies and procedures relating to health and wellbeing, medication, Adult Support and Protection, health and safety, and infection prevention and control. This ensured that people were protected, and their rights and choices were respected.

People should be involved in planning their own care and support to ensure it is right for them. Staff had access to detailed personal support plans prior to the commencement of care, allowing them to deliver informed and tailored support. People felt respected and listened to as their wishes and preferences shaped how they were supported. The personal plans were used effectively to report, assess and review changing needs. Through the knowledge, training and experience, staff were able to recognise any changes in someone's health and act promptly.

Health professionals were highly complimentary of the service and its commitment to delivering high quality end of life care. Comments included, "An excellent, holistic service, playing an integral role in allowing patients to fulfil their last wishes to die at home in dignity." Another said, "The care provision is well planned and carried out with professionalism at all times."

How good is our leadership?

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.

People should expect a service that is well led and effectively managed. A range of robust quality assurance processes were in place, enabling the management team to maintain oversight of care delivery.

Safety was prioritised through effective recruitment practices, with a strong emphasis on values-based selection. There was a clear alignment between the needs of people using the service and the skills and experience of recruited staff. Relevant checks were undertaken to verify qualifications, experience and background. Staff registration with the Scottish Social Services Council was appropriately maintained, ensuring regulatory compliance.

Staff reported that they benefited from a comprehensive induction programme which equipped them to meet the needs and outcomes of those they supported. Training compliance was high, with one staff member commenting, "Training is intense, only because there is so much of it and lots to learn."

Regular team meetings and supervision sessions provided valuable opportunities to monitor progress and address learning needs. Observations of practice were guided by a competency framework, ensuring high standards of care and promoting wellbeing. We suggested that constructive feedback could be more routinely provided in order to enhance learning and development further.

Relevant policies and procedures were in place for recruitment, supervision, and lone working. Staff felt well supported and protected, with one person stating, "Managers very much value healthcare assistants and nurses and ensuring that our safety is paramount."

The service used a Demand and Supply model to allocate staff based on assessed need and implemented a Prioritisation tool to determine access to services based on clinical and social criteria. Although some areas of the service had recently been decommissioned, managers closely monitored safe staffing incidents and unmet needs, reporting findings to commissioning bodies. At the time of inspection, there had been no negative impact on service delivery. This evidenced a commitment to continuous improvement and responsible governance.

The Quality Continuous Improvement Plan was both insightful and comprehensive, reflecting a structured approach to quality assurance, clinical governance and service development. A positive culture of continuous improvement was evident, with learning drawn from complaints, incidents and feedback.

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.

Staff were well-trained and competent in palliative care, and feedback from external professionals and relatives confirmed that care was delivered in a way that safeguarded dignity and privacy. Practice aligned with best practice guidance and Marie Curie's policies, and record keeping was of a high standard, with daily handover notes written professionally and sensitively.

People were supported to have as much control as possible over their care. Assessments were robust, ensuring personal care, medication and nutritional needs were managed effectively. Given the nature of end-of-life care, plans were flexible and adapted as circumstances changed.

Referrals typically came from District Nurses, who developed care plans in partnership with individuals and their families. Marie Curie staff worked closely with District Nurses, using shared care planning and risk assessment documents to allocate appropriate staff. Communication between teams was strong, with daily contact ensuring changes or requests were addressed promptly. District Nurses were consulted whenever additional information was needed, ensuring care remained responsive and tailored. As a result, people received care and support that met their needs and wishes.

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
1.3 People's health and wellbeing benefits from their care and support	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement is led well	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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