

West Highland Housing Support Service

Housing Support Service

Social Work Services
Old Corry Industrial Estate
Broadford
Isle of Skye
IV49 9AB

Telephone: 01471 820 507

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
NHS Highland

Service provider number:
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About the service

West Highland Housing Support and Care at Home Service delivers care and support to adults in their own home.

The service covers Wester Ross and the Isle of Skye. Service delivery is supported by one registered manager and there are teams based in different locations for organisational and service provision purposes.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 28 November and 5 December 2025. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors 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 24 people using the service and 7 family members
- Spoke with 11 staff and management
- Observed practice
- Reviewed service documents and people's care plans
- Spoke with visiting professionals

Key messages

- Many people we spoke with, as well as family members, reported their full satisfaction with the support provided
- People were comfortable and happy with the care staff who came into their home
- The service made a big difference to people's days and to their health and wellbeing
- Management had a good overview of the support provided and what adjustment in service provision were needed
- The management and office team were contactable and approachable
- There were challenges with staff levels as there were a number of vacancies

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?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
How well is our care and support planned?	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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. An evaluation of good applies to performance where there are a number of important strengths which, taken together, outweigh areas for improvement.

People appreciated the care and support they received. It had a positive impact and allowed people to get on with their day, keep as comfortable as possible and benefitted their health and wellbeing.

People's independence and abilities were respected. Whilst acknowledging they needed some care and support, people aimed to keep their independence as much as possible. Some people were striving to regain ability as they were recovering from ill health or an accident. Service staff understood people's wishes and supported accordingly. People were respected.

People found the service reliable. Care and supports were usually at times that suited people. Staff were said to be punctual or, if running significantly late, would phone ahead to let people know.

Where people had complex health needs and very specific guidance had to be followed, people and their families were confident that the service knew about this and that staff were following the advised good practice. This gave them reassurance and they trusted staff's care and support.

People and families said that communication with the management or office worked well. Information was passed on as necessary and the service was flexible as much as it could be. People and families felt listened to. Concerns were taken seriously and responded to when needed. Whilst it was generally known the service had staffing difficulties, it was thought that it was doing as well as it could. Staff and management were viewed as caring and professional.

Working with partner agencies and professionals is important to ensure people experience well organised care and support. This service was seen to do this very well. Communication was reported as being of a high standard. If any concerns arose for a person the service would be very responsive and, for example, when needed, be in touch with the necessary agencies and family members. The service being alert for any concerns and having very good lines of communication helped people to keep safe, well and happy.

Overall, this service was doing well. Some areas to improve in do exist and the service recognised this. The service provided support in a community facility which potentially could make confidentiality and privacy for people more difficult. We advised this should be considered further to ensure best practice is followed. Also, some staff requested more clarity between what care and support is appropriate within the communal tenancy setting and why this could be different when in people's home in the local community.

How good is our leadership?

4 – Good

We evaluated this as good. The service had a positive approach to quality assurance and improvement.

There were various ways the service tried to make sure that care and support met people's needs and wishes; this was provided in a safe way and improvements were identified and made. Communication with people and families worked well. Day to day and longer term adjustments were made in a responsive way, helping people to experience reliable and quality care and support. Management had taken stock of the service's current position, what were challenges, what was working well and what would help ensure the service functioned in a smooth and organised way for people. Activities like these made the service more robust. People trusted the service to meet their expectations.

It was evident that, as well as the manager, other key staff provided leadership and enabled the service to run well, be responsive and meet people's needs. Leadership at different levels was a positive in the service and benefitted people.

There was sufficient communication within the service. The manager was in touch with what was going on and kept informed by her team. Care staff in the community also had opportunities to report matters, discuss concerns, have meetings and generally ensure key information was shared. The strong caring values within the service helped to make sure that matters of concerns were addressed and improvement actions happened whenever possible. People can be confident that staff and management know and have a focus on high standards of care and support.

The service had a service improvement plan (SIP) and this was detailed, with realistic, achievable targets. Timescales were set and suitable as well. The manager for the service monitored this and it aided ensuring the service had direction and that improvements and sustaining quality were not lost sight of. People's service was well led.

We saw that some of the service's intended quality assurance activities had not been happening. This was largely due to staff levels, specifically vacancies and absences. The manager was fully aware of what quality assurance was not happening and had put other measures in place to try to minimise any negative consequences of this. There was also a plan to revise the quality assurance activities to make them more targeted. This was good, however, we decided to make an area for improvement for quality assurance as it still needed to improve and at the previous inspection it was highlighted that improvement was needed. See Area for Improvement 1.

The service management had not been informing the Care Inspectorate of certain events, for example, some incidents and accidents for people, which it is legally expected to inform us about. This was an oversight on the part of the service and did mean certain events and concerns went unreported to the Care Inspectorate. This could, and did, present a misleading picture of what was happening in the service. We discussed this with the manager and saw that some changes could help improve the reporting of these matters. See Area for Improvement 2.

Areas for improvement

1. To support good outcomes for people, and effective service delivery, the service provider should ensure that there are a range of checks and appropriate quality assurance procedures in place to identify any areas where improvements are needed.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.' (HSCS 4.19).

2. To promote people's safety and wellbeing, the service provider should ensure that the Care Inspectorate are informed of all notifiable events and incidents in accordance with best working practice and legislation. This is to assist in keeping people safe and well.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I benefit from different organisations working together and sharing information about me promptly where appropriate, and I understand how my privacy and confidentiality are respected' (HSCS 4.18).

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good.

People liked their staff and had developed a good relationship with them. Staff knew different people's preferences and the ways they liked to be supported. People were at ease and comfortable with their staff members.

Some comments on different staff were:

- 'Glad for all the help they provide.'
- 'They come out in all weathers.'
- 'Absolutely no complaints, only praise.'
- 'Just love them all.'
- 'Very helpful, make sure I'm alright, and always say anything else they can do before they leave.'

New staff had gone through suitable recruitment processes and checks before they started. They got a good introduction to their work role, including training and shadowing opportunities. People can have confidence that the service aims to recruit the right people for working in health and social care. These steps help make sure people were protected and assisted to keep well.

Staff felt supported by colleagues and the management team. Communication within the service worked well. Office staff, seniors and care at home officers were available to advise and pass on information as needed. All staff were seen as flexible and understanding of the team work approach. Often care at home staff work on their own and having the right support is important. People can be assured their staff were well supported by the organisation.

We found there were some opportunities for team meetings. However, this was not a consistent picture across the different areas of the service. The service covered a very wide geographic area and there were four different office bases. Management were aware of the team meeting situation and took some steps to minimise any negative impacts from this. It was the case as well, though, that informal opportunities to discuss concerns, consider matters and share information were reported on positively by staff.

Overall, staff's training was satisfactory. New staff's completion of their set training was good and most staff were completing the necessary training and refresher training for carrying out care and support. People can have confidence that staff have the right knowledge, values and approach to support them well.

The service management were practical and realistic when considering the current staff recruitment challenges. The organisation, NHS Highland, were also giving attention to the challenges around recruitment for this service. The service management considered carefully how staff levels impacted on service provision and made suitable arrangements so that this did not affect staff or people negatively. Staff were able to keep a focus on people supported and their needs and wishes.

An area for improvement made at previous inspection in 2024 regarding supervision and team meetings for staff will be repeated. A number of staff, for instance, were not receiving regular formal supervision and this meant they were or could be missing out on opportunities to further consider their practice and their development as health and social care practitioners. See Area for Improvement 1 below.

Areas for improvement

1. To support positive outcomes for people, the service provider should ensure all support staff have opportunities for supervision, appraisals, and to develop their reflective practice.

To achieve this the service provider should make sure:

- a) all staff have regular opportunities for protected time with their line manager to discuss their practice, training and support needs;
- b) staff have regular opportunities to attend staff meetings and discuss practice issues.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that:

'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources.' (HSCS 4.27)

How well is our care and support planned?

4 - Good

This key question was evaluated as good.

People's health and care needs and wishes were carefully assessed. The service developed care plan documents for each person and this provided tailored information for staff to follow.

People had regular review meetings for their care and support arrangements. Other key people in their life, for example, a family member were invited or able to contribute if needed. These meetings helped to make sure people's care and support suited them and were meeting their needs and wishes.

The service liaised with important other health and social care professionals and agencies such as G.P.s, nurses and social work. The service's co-operative approach helped make sure they had all the right information to meet a person's needs. People can trust that the service aims to be as informed as possible about their needs and wishes. This helped people get responsive and safe support.

When providing care and support, the service staff followed the person's care plan, guidance and recorded their activity well. Having the care plan and other information helped staff practice in a knowledgeable, safe and professional way. Good information helped people to get the right care and support.

For certain, specific, care and support set documents and care plans were used. For instance, medication support was recorded on set forms so that staff had clear instructions to follow, including body chart to highlight which area to apply creams and ointments. Care plan documents like these helped to make sure people got safe, beneficial support.

The service kept paper care plan folders for people as well as electronic records. We advised the manager that the paper folder did not always have the most up to date information, for example, note of the most recent review meetings. However, the electronic documents were up to date. The service should ensure that people's paper folder information was regularly checked and kept up to date.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To support people's wellbeing, the service provider should ensure people's support plans contain sufficient information to guide staff on how to best meet their needs. This should include accurate information on the application of topical preparations including the name of preparation and where, and the frequency with which it is to be applied.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as my care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices'. (HSCS 1.15) and
'Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective.' (HSCS 1.24)

This area for improvement was made on 23 February 2023.

Action taken since then

This was met. The detail in people's care and support plans and information had improved. Topical preparations had sufficient guidance to inform staff of how to apply, how often and where. Improving this type of information was helpful for staff and helped to ensure people got the right support in the right way.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support good outcomes for people, and effective service delivery, the service provider should ensure that:

- there are appropriate quality assurance procedures in place to identify any areas where improvements are needed and
- a service improvement plan should be developed and progress in addressing action points monitored.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 23 February 2023.

Action taken since then

This was not met. We have repeated part of this area for improvement under key question 2. We found that the service improvement plan was now in place and it provided useful information for the effective delivery and development of the service's care and support provision.

However, there were still gaps in the quality assurance measures and not all planned steps for quality assurance were being undertaken. The manager was aware of this and explained the staffing challenges was a main reason for these gaps. The manager did put in place steps for ensuring that more targeted and risk specific quality assurance plan was in place to ensure she and other senior staff in the service were able to be aware of any concerns and adjustments to service provision could be made.

Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure that all staff have the right skills and knowledge for the people they support the provider should:

- a) ensure that mandatory e learning is completed by staff within appropriate timeframes;
- b) continue to develop a plan to enable staff attendance at outstanding refresher training and
- c) develop the staff training plan to include training sessions in specific areas relevant to the health and wellbeing needs of people they support.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes'. (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 23 February 2023.

Action taken since then

Overall, this was met. There were fewer gaps in staff's training information. The service continued to focus on staff's training, including refresher training being completed.

Previous area for improvement 4

To support positive outcomes for people, the service provider should ensure all support staff have opportunities for supervision, appraisals, and to develop their reflective practice.

To achieve this the provider should make sure:

- a) all staff have regular opportunities for protected time with their line manager to discuss their practice, training and support needs and
- b) staff have regular opportunities to attend staff meetings and discuss practice issues.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources.' (HSCS 4.27) and

The Scottish Social Services Council Code for Employers of Social Services Workers which state that an employer will:

'Provide effective and regular supervision that enables workers to develop and improve practice through reflection and feedback.' (SSSC 3.7)

This area for improvement was made on 23 February 2023.

Action taken since then

This was not met. We have repeated part of this area for improvement under key question 3. Staff were not having many opportunities to attend supervision or other meetings.

This is an area the service should improve on. Though this was the case, staff did report having more informal opportunities to discuss matters, and that communication within the service was good and they felt supported.

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?	4 - Good
1.3 People's health and wellbeing benefits from their care and support	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement is led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together	4 - Good
How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good
5.1 Assessment and personal planning reflects people's outcomes and wishes	4 - Good

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