

Howard House Nursing & Residential Home Care Home Service

13 Howard Street
Kilmarnock
KA1 2BP

Telephone: 01563 532 499

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
19 February 2026

Service provided by:
Gate Healthcare Limited

Service provider number:
SP2003001705

Service no:
CS2003010268

About the service

Howard House is registered to provide a care home service for 40 older people, including four places for adults. Sanctuary Care are the registered provider.

Howard House is a three-storey building located in a residential area of Kilmarnock. There are 39 bedrooms. Most have en-suite toilet and shower facilities, some only have toilet and wash basin. Access between the floors is by lift and stairs. The accommodation on the ground floor has some bedrooms with patio doors and access to the outdoors. The spacious conservatory has access to a small, pleasant courtyard garden.

At the time of the inspection, there were 39 people living in the service.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 17, 18 and 19 February 2026, between the hours of 08:00am and 17:00. 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 people using the service and nine of their family; we also had 14 completed questionnaires from people and three from their family
- spoke with 17 staff and management; we also received five completed questionnaires
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals

Key messages

- Staff cared for people with kindness and compassion; they had developed warm relationships with the people they support.
- People experienced care that was safe, compassionate and informed by good practice.
- Staff were confident in their roles and worked in a calm, person centred way that promoted comfort, dignity and choice.
- Managers knew the strengths and areas for development of the service well and used effective quality assurance to drive good practice.
- Family members felt involved and well informed, telling us they were very satisfied with the standard of care and support provided.
- People benefitted from personalised and responsive support in addition to good communication and involvement.

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?	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.

1.1 People experience compassion, dignity and respect

People experienced their care and support with compassion, dignity, and respect. We saw warm, encouraging, positive relationships between staff and people living in the care home.

People were treated as the individuals they are and supported to achieve their individual outcomes in a way that makes sense to them.

People felt respected and listened to because their wishes and preferences were used to shape how they are supported, including if they wish to decline an aspect of their support.

People's wellbeing and sense of worth was enhanced by staff who are knowledgeable about and value their contribution, for example they join in chores around their home.

We saw the activities worker spend time with groups of people and also on a one-one basis where that was their preference. People had their rights respected to the utmost and were encouraged to take part in activities that promotes independence, dignity, privacy, and choice.

They told us they felt connected, as they were enabled to maintain and develop relationships within and outside the care home. One person told us she got out and about a lot; she also enjoyed her daughters' visits with her dog. Another person said he liked having 1:1 time to get out locally as well as with his peers.

Staff supported residents to build relationships with their neighbours by delivering letters to let them know about upcoming building works.

1.2. People get the most out of life

We evaluated this key question as very good because there were major strengths in how the service supported people's health and wellbeing, and these had a significant positive impact on outcomes.

People experienced care and support to a high standard, with a strong focus on treating them as individuals entitled to personalised care. The quality of people's day-to-day experiences was enhanced because staff knew them well and used the information in personal plans to shape both the care provided and the social interactions offered.

People who were able to communicate their views told us they were supported to make decisions and choices. This meant they were able to achieve their wishes and aspirations. People also shared that they felt safe and protected. Individuals chose where and how they spent their time and benefitted from opportunities to maintain and develop their interests and what mattered most to them.

Visiting was open, we saw families coming and going during our inspection. Families told us they felt welcome and here were opportunities to connect with family and friends.

Families and relatives expressed confidence that the service was meeting people's needs and supporting

them to achieve positive outcomes.

We saw many examples of the variety of activities people had been enjoying. During our visit, we observed people taking part in seasonal and cultural events, such as enjoying pancakes for Shrove Tuesday and choosing from themed dishes to celebrate Chinese New Year. There had also been a friendly and competitive "bake off" event, where several care homes visited each other to showcase their cakes, an activity that generated a strong sense of fun, connection, and community.

Within the home, people had plenty of opportunities to enjoy the company of their peers through crafting sessions, quizzes, and other group activities. Staff also made effective use of the Oomph! platform, which provides ready-made activities that support reminiscence, encourage conversation, introduce new topics such as technological changes, and stimulate cognitive engagement.

Opportunities for meaningful activity and involvement were plentiful, including both group based sessions and outdoor activities offered at different times of the day and throughout the week. Staff sought people's preferences regularly to ensure choices reflected their interests and aspirations.

There was clear recognition of people's individual interests, culture, personal histories, and important relationships, including their spirituality. Staff demonstrated an understanding that these elements were significant to each person and supported their wellbeing.

People benefit from regular interactions and engagement from staff, and experience support that promotes independence, dignity, privacy and choice. This includes encouragement and resources to take part in meaningful occupations that validate a person's identity. It also involves providing opportunities for people to feel included and attached to others, thus promoting their sense of wellbeing.

1.3. People's health and wellbeing benefits from their care and support

We evaluated this key question as very good because there were major strengths in how the service supported people's health and wellbeing, and these had a significant positive impact on outcomes.

People consistently experienced care that was safe, compassionate and informed by good practice. Staff were confident in their roles and worked in a calm, person centred way that promoted comfort, dignity and choice.

Comments from people and their families included- "The staff are all great." "There is always something happening." "I was unwell recently; they looked after me very well; this is the place to be if you are unwell."

Families we spoke to said, "We are very pleased with the level of care mum's been getting." "The team are great; they look after her very well." "Manager is brilliant. We have no concerns at all; they communicate with us if there is any change in mum."

People benefited from robust and proactive approaches to assessing and monitoring their health. Personal plans contained detailed and up-to-date information across key areas including communication, personal care, mobility, continence, emotional support and skin integrity. Regular clinical assessments were completed and supported by an electronic care planning system that alerted staff when checks were overdue. This ensured timely responses when needs changed and provided managers with real-time oversight of risk and emerging trends. As a result, people experienced stable, well-coordinated and person-centred care.

Medication management was safe and well organised. Staff followed clear protocols, and medication storage areas were clean, orderly and regularly audited. Records were accurate, and staff acted promptly when minor documentation issues were identified. These systems ensured that people received the correct medication at the right time and contributed to strong clinical governance.

Visiting healthcare professionals confirmed that staff communicated effectively and escalated concerns appropriately. This supported timely access to healthcare interventions and contributed to very good outcomes for people.

People experienced warm, positive mealtime experiences that promoted dignity and wellbeing. Staff created a relaxed and sociable atmosphere, offering people choices about where to sit, who to sit with, and what they wished to eat and drink. Meals were served promptly in the dining rooms, helping to maintain food quality and allowing people to eat at their own pace. Individuals who required support with eating received this in a planned, unhurried and respectful manner. Interactions were kind, attentive and sensitive, helping people to eat well and feel valued. We saw evidence that the chefs had met directly with people to discuss menu choices and alternatives, ensuring their preferences and any specific dietary needs were met.

Throughout the inspection, people, relatives and visiting professionals consistently spoke highly of the care provided. Their feedback aligned with our observations of skilled, respectful and person centred practice. Taken together, these strengths demonstrated that the service consistently delivered very good health and wellbeing outcomes for the people who lived there.

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.

Staffing arrangements were responsive to people's needs and supported continuity of care. The service regularly reviewed individual time requirements and adjusted schedules to ensure that support was delivered effectively. Carers were given autonomy to organise their rounds in ways that best met people's preferences and outcomes, which enhanced flexibility and responsiveness.

People consistently praised the continuity and compatibility of their care teams. This was particularly important for individuals living with dementia or complex needs, where familiar staff contributed to feelings of safety and trust. Observations confirmed that staff interactions were compassionate, respectful and person-centred, which supported emotional wellbeing and strengthened relationships.

We received consistently very good feedback about staffing from people and their families. Comments included: "It's a nice home, we are always made to feel welcome, there is a good staff presence. The team are all very welcoming and it's the same consistent faces we see." "This is reassuring for us as a family." "We feel listened to and not made to feel a problem." "They are always respectful and do a great job".

Staff demonstrated strong teamwork and communication. Office staff were knowledgeable about service users and played a key role in coordinating care and ensuring quality assurance. Feedback from staff and service users was actively used to inform staffing decisions, and managers were open to suggestions for

improvement.

The link between the safety of people and the wellbeing of staff delivering the service. Increased staff wellbeing may reduce sickness absence, burnout and work-related stress, meaning the staff are available to care for people. Healthy, engaged staff are better able to provide safe and high-quality services. Staff may be working in challenging environments such as lone working, which can increase risks to their personal wellbeing.

We assessed the service's safe recruitment practice and processes and found that they were safe and in line with guidance. This helped to maintain people's safety and confidence in the service.

Training, supervision, and competency checks were well-structured and regularly completed. Staff felt confident and supported, and there was evidence of reflective practice and a strong team ethos. This contributed to high-quality care and positive outcomes for people.

We saw several opportunities for development being offered to staff who had shown ambition. The service was also responsive in adapting systems and processes to aid staffs development; they also utilised the support of nursing and quality leads.

Overall, staffing arrangements were well-managed, flexible, and person-centred, supporting very good outcomes for people and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

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

The provider should ensure that people's care plans set out how their health, welfare and safety needs are to be met and are regularly updated. To do this the provider must ensure that all residents have personal plans which:

Reflect a person centred, outcome focused approach and are developed in line with the Health and Social Care Standards.

This ensures care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards, which state:

"My support plan (sometimes referred to as a 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)

This area for improvement was made on 15 April 2024.

Action taken since then

Personal plans had improved greatly; they had been updated setting out people's health, welfare, and safety needs. They now reflect a person-centred, outcome-focused approach and are developed in line with the Health and Social Care Standards. They were also updated six-monthly as required by legislation.

This area for improvement was met.

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
1.1 People experience compassion, dignity and respect	5 - Very Good
1.2 People get the most out of life	5 - Very Good
1.3 People's health and wellbeing benefits from their care and support	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together	5 - Very Good

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Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

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