

Key - Highland (Lochaber, Inverness and Nairn) Support Service

Key
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
2 March 2026

Service provided by:
Key Housing Association Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2003000173

Service no:
CS2004079340

About the service

Key - Highland (Lochaber, Inverness and Nairn) is a care at home service that provides practical and personal support, advice and guidance, to help people live fully in their own homes. The service is primarily for people with a learning disability or a mental health concern.

The service is managed by the area manager. The staff team includes two support and development managers, four team managers, two enhanced support workers and 44 support workers. The staff team offices are based alongside the core and cluster accommodation in Fort William, Inverness and Nairn. Support is provided within these tenancies and also in the surrounding communities. Additionally, the service offers a respite and short breaks service based in Nairn.

The service is committed to ensuring the provision of responsive support that helps people achieve positive outcomes, celebrate their successes, and help address the health or wellbeing challenges that people can experience.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 24 and 27 February 2026. 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 12 people using the service and 13 of their family, friends or representatives
- spoke with 21 staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with and received feedback from three visiting professionals.

Key messages

- People supported said the service helped them with daily life, to maintain connections and to remain active in the community.
- Positive, trusting relationships had been established between people using the service and their families and the staff and management.
- There was evidence of regular monitoring of health and care needs, and communication with health and social care professionals.
- Care plans reflected regular assessment and reviewing which provided regular and meaningful contributions from people using the service and their representatives.

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

In this part of the inspection we considered one quality indicator. 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.

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

People were treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. Through home visits, telephone calls, and questionnaires, we saw that individuals benefitted from positive relationships with staff. Care and support was tailored to each person's needs and choices, promoting independence, privacy, and wellbeing. Feedback from people using the service and their families/representatives was very positive. Some of the comments were:

- 'staff are kind and they don't rush me'
- 'key is a great service, it's about choice'
- 'the staff are brilliant'
- 'they use gentle coaching to encourage [name] and we have complete trust in them'.

People were supported to maintain important relationships and stay involved in their community. They had access to social opportunities that encouraged physical and mental wellbeing. Support was person-centred and flexible, with examples of meaningful experiences such as trips, holidays, and help achieving personal goals.

Many people participated in 'The advisory group' (TAG), a group designed to enable people with learning disabilities to have a stronger voice in the services they use and in their local communities. This group meets regularly and has a strong voice in the design and improvements that could be made to the service. People we spoke with were very proud of their involvement and the achievements of this group.

Staff knew people's preferences well, and consistent carers helped build trusting relationships. People appreciated being informed about any changes. We observed warm, compassionate interactions, often shared with humour.

Personal plans were created with individuals and their families and contained helpful information about needs and preferences. Daily wellbeing notes were kept, and regular reviews were carried out as circumstances changed or at least every six months.

Where people were being supported with medication needs, staff were trained and there were clear procedures in place which were reviewed. When something had gone wrong, it was clear that actions had been taken to ensure that the individual was reviewed by a health professional and actions taken to prevent reoccurrence.

Staff identified health concerns and contacted relevant professionals, with actions clearly recorded. Working collaboratively helped support people's health. Feedback from three health and social care professionals highlighted strong person-centred care and positive outcomes. Some of the comments included:

- 'They are not a one size fits all service, they are inclusive and quite unique'
- 'They are very person-centred in how they support people'
- 'staff seem very caring and supportive'.

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

In this part of the inspection we considered one quality indicator. 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.

Quality Indicator: 3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together

People were confident that they would be supported and cared for sensitively by staff who knew them, their needs, strengths and preferences. We found that the staffing arrangements were determined by an assessment of people's support needs. Whilst there were challenges in recruiting new members of staff, the service provided was from a stable team who knew the people well and were able to highlight when there were changes and liaise with other health and care professionals.

Staff were trained, competent and skilled. The service offered a range of training and development opportunities via classroom training, online training programmes and from external professionals. Staff spoke positively about the training opportunities and support from their managers.

We found that the staff team had planned opportunities to discuss aspects of their work, development and wellbeing through team discussions, reflective accounts and formal supervisions. There were also regular opportunities for staff to meet together in their own areas to share practices and discuss care provision.

We found that the management team were motivated to deliver a high quality service that represents the values of the provider, Key. Both people using the service and staff members referred to management as approachable and caring. There were high levels of trust that management had people's best interests at the centre of the service.

We concluded that the staff team worked well together. At every level of the staff team, we found that there was a strong commitment to working as a team in order to provide good outcomes for people.

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

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