

# Caithness Care @ Home Service Support Service

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Telephone: 01955 604 486

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
24 February 2026

**Service provided by:**  
NHS Highland

**Service provider number:**  
SP2012011802

**Service no:**  
CS2016347514

## About the service

Caithness Care @ Home Service provides support to people in their own homes. The service provides personal care and support to people living in Caithness and there are two teams, one based in Wick and one in Thurso. The service covers both town and rural areas. The service provider is NHS Highland.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 16 and 20 February 2026. 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 15 people using the service and nine of their family/representatives
- Spoke with 14 staff and management
- Observed staff practice
- Reviewed service documents
- Reviewed feedback questionnaires sent prior to the inspection visit

**Key messages**

- People said they were pleased with the service's support
- People and families praised staff members
- People liked and were comfortable with the staff who visited them
- Care and support was of a high standard
- Management and office staff were helpful and easy to contact
- Management had a positive approach and were improving the service

**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 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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good. There were a number of important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

People were positive about the care and support provided by the service. Staff were commended on their respectful and friendly manner. Whether people got a few visits per day or one, they said the support made a big difference to them. It helped them get on with their day, be comfortable and be independent.

People had a variety of needs. The service made sure it had the right information for those with complex needs and for those needing only minimal care and support. People's care and support needs were written in sufficient detail and in a clear way. Where people had medication support needs then there were instructions for staff to follow. This all helped staff to provide care and support in a safe and appropriate way. Importantly, people wishes were sought, particular preferences were known, and the service aimed to follow these as much as possible. People can have confidence their care and support is right for them.

This service communicated well. People and families confirmed this. Partner agencies, external professionals and staff members all reported confidence in the service's communication. Management and seniors were quick to respond to any contact. If staff, for example, had a concern for a person, or some difficulties with the practical arrangements in providing care and support, then they would raise this appropriately with their line supervisors. Working together with people, families, external professional and others all helped in ensuring people got suitable care and support. People trusted their care and support to be well organised and reliable.

People had regular review meetings where it could be checked that their care and support was suitable. Family members could attend these if required as well. People's wishes and needs were discussed at review and if some changes were necessary then this could be agreed and put in to place. People and/or their representative were listened to.

The service had made some use of surveys to gain insight and information on how well it was providing care. This was good as it allowed the service to ask important questions and examine itself in a robust way. Management also had audits for checking the service provision. These types of exercises could enable the service to see if it was meeting people's wishes, being person centred, being well organised and achieving targets it had. The manager gained information in this way and took a very responsible approach towards improvements when they were needed.

Management and seniors had daily meetings about the service provision to make sure everything was on track, people's care visits were all organised and any last minute changes could be addressed. People and families were comfortable phoning into the office and discussing any care and support matters. The service was responsive and people had confidence in it. People experienced a smooth running service.

There were some aspects of the care and support to still improve. Some people felt staff only had limited time for their visits and had a lot to do. Travel time and the visit schedule were also reported as a concern at times. We noted an important improvement being made to people's medication support and would expect this will lead to even better medication support for people. The service had also sometimes been slow to advise the Care Inspectorate on incidents that were notifiable to us and we went over the purpose and importance of sharing this information as doing so could lead to positive benefits for people.

## How good is our staff team?

## 4 - Good

We evaluated 'How good is our staff team?' as good. There were many positives about the staff team and staffing arrangements.

The service had safe recruitment processes in place. Staff's suitability was carefully checked and, generally, they got a good induction to the role and care at home. People can trust they have staff members who have been recruited appropriately and assessed as suitable for providing care and support.

Staff had strong motivation to provide people with a high quality of care and support. People's wellbeing was their focus and they spoke in compassionate and caring ways about people they supported. Staff valued their role and the support they provided. People can have confidence that their staff members have a responsible and kind approach when providing care.

Staff consistently reported that they felt part of a team and that their team of fellow carers worked well together. Communication was good, staff would be flexible when they could be and strove to meet people's needs and wishes.

Overall, staff members reported being well supported by the management and office. They could share information and concerns easily and would get an opportunity to discuss through matters, gain advice or have specific help when needed. Regular team meetings were in place. To do their role effectively and positively, it was important that staff felt supported, and this was the case here. Staff's morale and understanding of their responsibilities benefitted. People's care and support was provided well, in a person centred way and was carefully thought about.

People and families had no hesitation in praising the staff members who visited for care and support. They liked them and enjoyed their visits.

Some comments were:

- 'Absolutely perfect.'
- 'All staff have been brilliant.'
- 'You can get a laugh and brightens your day.'
- 'They do everything well and go over and above.'

Management were fully aware of various recruitment challenges and it would be beneficial that if any actions that could make the process more efficient and quick then this should be supported. This will help people have confidence that staffing levels are right in the service.

Staff had a range of set training to undertake. There were, also, some good examples of staff members getting specific training for certain health conditions that people had. Having the right training enabled staff to do their care and support well and safely. That said, there were some gaps in training records for some staff. There could be delays in training due to distance to attend it or availability and it was evident that this meant some arrangements were not ideal for staff. Training, in general, needs further attention and review. We have made an area for improvement regarding this (see Area for Improvement).

As said before, staff did get good support but we noted some staff supervisions were behind schedule. This, also, was the case for bank (relief) staff. Supervisions help ensure staff are providing support to a high standard to people. We have made an area for improvement in relation to this (see Area for Improvement 1).

Staff's feedback reflected the importance of feeling appreciated as an important part of what helps them do their job well. It was noticeable how professional and self motivated staff were and anything to support this is important, including timely and positive communication with and from the management team. We saw, for example, some improvements now brought in by management around communication when there was challenging weather. Management and staff also found the out of hours cover and support arrangements for staff insufficient, and suitable steps to address this were important and planned.

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure that people can have confidence in their staff members, including bank staff, the service provider should ensure they are supported, trained, competent and skilled to meet people's health and care needs.

This should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) annual professional development plan meetings to enable staff to reflect on their practice and discuss their work related wishes and plans
- b) that staff complete training that will enable them to meet people's health and care needs and
- c) supervision meetings take place regularly at suitable intervals.

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

## 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 ensure that people can have confidence in their staff's practice and the arrangements for their medication support, the service provider should ensure they examine closely people's medication records and the practical arrangements. Where concerns are identified, improvement actions should be taken.

This should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) people's MAR records, as much as possible, are clear and easy to follow and only completed by staff members and
- b) people's medication is available for them at all times

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

**This area for improvement was made on 6 February 2025.**

#### Action taken since then

This was met. The service had taken actions that addressed this area for improvement. It was clear that improvements to arrangements that were introduced led to safer practice by staff. People medication needs were well supported. Steps taken to ensure the ordering and collecting of medication were timely meant people's support with medication was right for them.

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure people can be confident that staff practice's was monitored and supported to aid staff abilities and development, the service provider should ensure staff are supported on a regular basis to improve their knowledge and skills.

This should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) regular and effective practice competency observations which provide staff opportunities for learning and
- b) and annual professional development plan meetings to enable staff to reflect on their practice and discuss their work related wishes and plans.

This is in order 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) and the Scottish Social Services Council's Code for Employers of Social Service Workers to 'Support workers to meet the standards in their Code of Practice and not require them to do anything that might prevent that from happening' (SSSC 2.9).

**This area for improvement was made on 6 February 2025.**

#### Action taken since then

This was not met. Whilst progress had been made with this, some further actions were needed to make sure that these aspects of support for staff were happening as planned. We have repeated, with some changes, an area for improvement in regards to this. See under 'How good is our staff team?' in the main body of the report.

#### Previous area for improvement 3

To ensure that people can have confidence in their staff members, the service provider should ensure they are supported, trained, competent and skilled to meet people's health and care needs.

This should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) that staff complete training that will enable them to meet people's health and care needs and
- b) supervision meetings take place regularly at suitable intervals.

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

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### Previous area for improvement 4

To help make sure people's wishes and decisions are followed and their independence is promoted whenever possible, the service provide should make sure, where possible, the information it holds on Adult with Incapacity matters for people is up to date.

This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am empowered and enabled to be as independent and as in control of my life as I want and can be' (HSCS 2.2) and 'If I am unable to make my own decisions at any time, the views of those who know my wishes, such as my carer, independent advocate, formal or informal representative, are sought and taken into account' (HSCS 2.12).

**This area for improvement was made on 6 February 2025.**

### Action taken since then

This was met. The service had taken decisive action to ensure it had all necessary information, when possible, in relation to a person's Adults with Incapacity matters. The service management monitored this on an ongoing basis.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://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 staff team?	4 - Good
3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together	4 - Good

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