

Birchview Respite Unit Care Home Service

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 March 2026

Service provided by:
Cornerstone Community Care

Service provider number:
SP2003000013

Service no:
CS2003008791

About the service

Birchview Respite Unit is a service provided by Cornerstone Community Care. Birchview provides respite / short breaks for a maximum of four adults with a learning disability.

The service is provided in a bungalow, close to the centre of Elgin. The service has four bedrooms, two of which are en suite with tracking hoists. The other two bedrooms share a bathroom which has a fully accessible bath and shower. There is a large communal kitchen and dining area which leads onto the lounge which has patio doors opening directly into a fully enclosed attractive garden.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place between 03 and 06 March 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 and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke to four people using the service
- spoke with five family members
- spoke to seven members of staff and the management team
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- People experienced respectful and compassionate care from staff who knew them well and built trusting relationships.
- Consistent staffing and a stable workforce meant people benefitted from continuity, reduced anxiety and care that responded quickly to changes in their needs.
- Staff were well supported through effective teamwork, visible leadership and regular supervision.
- Training and competency processes were generally effective, helping ensure staff were confident and well prepared for their roles.
- Personal plans were generally person-centred, but some required updating.
- Formal reviews of people's care were not consistently completed.
- There was room to further personalise people's bedrooms during their stay.

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?	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?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

People and their families, consistently spoke positively about their experiences. One person told us, "I like going to Birchview. Staff are really nice. They are like a family". Relatives also described a high level of reassurance and confidence in the support provided, saying staff "bent over backwards" to meet needs and that they always found the environment clean, calm and welcoming. People showed signs of comfort and connection with staff. This meant people benefitted from care that was dignified, respectful and compassionate.

Staff knew people extremely well and used this knowledge sensitively to support their health, comfort and routines. Engagements observed were respectful, unrushed, and promoted people's choices. For example, staff recognised when individuals preferred quieter activities or familiar routines, and adapted their approach accordingly. This meant people's health and wellbeing benefitted from thoughtful care and support.

Staff demonstrated a very good understanding of people's health conditions and how changes in presentation might indicate distress or illness. They described clear processes for monitoring people's wellbeing, and contacting families, or emergency services if needed. Daily notes showed detailed accounts of people's health, choices, and activity engagement, including how staff responded when someone became anxious or when their routine changed unexpectedly. This demonstrated that the service acted promptly and appropriately to any concerns, thereby protecting people's health and wellbeing.

Medication practice was safe and well organised. Medication administration sheets were completed accurately, and competency assessments for staff showed good attention to detail and a strong understanding of safe medication practice. Staff closely monitored people with complex needs, followed clear routines, and liaised effectively with external professionals such as the Speech and Language Therapist. Records showed appropriate referrals and follow-up where health concerns arose. This meant people's health and wellbeing benefitted from safe and responsive care.

People had regular opportunities to engage in meaningful activities, including baking, games, outings and themed events. However, activities documentation focused more on planning than outcomes. We discussed with the service how this could be strengthened by introducing person-centred thinking tools and gathering feedback after activities to help staff reflect on and track which activities people enjoyed most. The service was keen to explore this. Strengthening this approach will help ensure people get the most out of life during their stay at Birchview.

People experienced a clean and well-maintained environment during their stay at Birchview with one relative describing the home as "Spotlessly tidy". There were some photographs in the corridor of activities people had engaged in and a couple of paintings from people experiencing care on display in the bedrooms which added to the homely feel of the respite unit.

We suggested simple ways the service could further personalise each person's respite experience, such as placing familiar photos, artwork or mementos in the person's room as part of preparation for their arrival, and encouraging families to bring items that hold special significance to the person. This would help create

a more comforting and recognisable environment for people, supporting emotional wellbeing and a sense of belonging. The service had already started exploring ways in which they could undertake this during the inspection.

People's personal plans were generally comprehensive, person-centred and included detailed and appropriate risk assessments. Despite this, some personal plans contained outdated or multiple versions of risk assessments, undated handwritten amendments, or incomplete signatures. This can create confusion that can therefore affect staff's ability to deliver consistent and person-centred care, particularly when staff are new or unfamiliar with the person. The service reassured us that this would be promptly addressed. This will help ensure people receive accurate and reliable support.

Three-monthly informal chats with parents were consistently taking place and offered good-quality, informal updates. However, formal six-monthly and annual reviews had not always occurred as required. Without regular review, there is a risk that people's changing needs may not be fully evaluated or planned for. There was an outstanding area for improvement regarding reviewing and updating personal plans. This had therefore not been met and we will review progress with this at the next inspection. Please see the section on 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection' for further details.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in staffing and how this supported positive outcomes for people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

People benefitted from a highly stable, experienced and committed team who worked well together. There had been no new staff in more than two years, which had further helped the team to develop strong, consistent relationships with people and their families. Families spoke positively about the service and staff, with one relative saying "Staff are amazing people. They know their clients really well" and another noting, "Just really happy with the service. We know our relative is happy and comfortable here which is quite comforting for us".

Staff consistently demonstrated a clear understanding of people's needs, preferences and routines. They were able to describe how they recognised changes in a person's wellbeing and how they would respond. We observed staff interacting calmly and confidently, offering reassurance, choices and respectful support. The team's well developed skills and knowledge meant that the care and support people experienced was very responsive to their needs.

Staff spoke warmly about their work, describing a supportive and positive team culture where colleagues 'pulled together' and communicated openly. Staffing levels were appropriate for the needs of the people staying at any given time, and rotas were thoughtfully planned based on compatibility, risk and individual requirements. As a result, people experienced consistent, safe and person-centred care.

Staff felt well supported by the management team. They received regular supervision, appraisals, and ongoing informal support. Communication systems were effective, with written and verbal handovers, team meetings and use of digital systems which helped ensure that important information was shared promptly. This meant staff had the information and consistent support they needed to deliver high quality person-centred care.

Training and competency processes were effective. Staff had access to a wide range of relevant training,

including face-to-face sessions for key topics such as moving and assisting, medication, epilepsy and autism. Competency assessments were also completed to a very good standard. These covered observation of staff performance in key areas such as interactions with people, moving and assisting, infection prevention and control, and medication management, demonstrating thoughtful evaluation of practice. This meant people could be reassured that they were being supported by a skilled, trained and competent staff team.

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 health and wellbeing and improve the quality of support the provider should ensure that people's personal plans are regularly reviewed and evaluated and that they utilise the systems and tools they have in place to do so.

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

'My personal 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

'I am fully involved in developing and reviewing my personal plan, which is always available to me' (HSCS 2.17).

This area for improvement was made on 9 May 2025.

Action taken since then

The service had not made sufficient progress in ensuring personal plans were regularly updated and reviewed.

People's personal plans were generally comprehensive, person-centred and included detailed and appropriate risk assessments. Despite this, some personal plans contained outdated or multiple versions of risk assessments, undated handwritten amendments, or incomplete signatures. This made it harder for staff to be confident they were using the most current and accurate information. As a result, there was an increased risk of inconsistent or less responsive care, particularly for staff who were less familiar with the person.

Three-monthly informal chats with parents were consistently taking place and offered good-quality, informal updates. However, formal six-monthly and annual reviews had not always occurred as required. Without regular review, there is a risk that people's changing needs may not be fully evaluated or planned for. While the service had identified this as an improvement area and begun taking initial actions, these were recent and did not yet demonstrate sufficient or consistent change.

As a result, this area for improvement had not yet been met. We will review progress with this at the next inspection.

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

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