

Learning Disabilities Service - Supported Living Network Housing Support Service

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
Orkney Islands Council

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SP2003001951

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About the service

The Learning Disabilities Service - Supported Living Network is registered to provide a care at home service for adults with learning disabilities living in their own home. The support is based upon individually assessed need, both within people's own tenancies and shared living arrangements in the community.

The service operates from its office base in St Colm's, Kirkwall. The provider is Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership.

At the time of inspection, the service was supporting 14 people.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 16 to 19 March 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 six people using the service and three of their family, we also reviewed five survey responses
- spoke with 13 staff and management, we also reviewed three survey responses
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

Key messages

- People were cared for with warmth and respect by staff who understood their needs and encouraged them to achieve their goals in life.
- Staff worked in a person-centred way in how they communicated with people and responded to their needs and wishes.
- Managers were using quality assurance processes to evaluate people's experiences and identify how the service could continue to improve.
- Staff worked well together as a team and benefited from comprehensive training and access to support and supervision.
- Consistency of staffing was a concern but the service was reviewing how this could be addressed within the current recruitment challenges.
- People and families engaged in regularly reviewing their care and support.

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?	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?

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.

We observed warm, compassionate care for individuals based on staff having a clear understanding of what contributed to people's happiness. We saw how staff anticipated people's needs and promoted their choices. One example was clear guidance on specific words or gestures people used to communicate their wishes. Another example was how the knowledge and skill of staff promoted positive behaviour and reduced anxiety for people by creating a safe and calm environment. This meant staff used creative approaches in promoting how people could positively direct their own care and support.

People were enabled to make health and lifestyle choices that promoted their physical and mental health. We heard about people's enjoyment of community social events and celebrating their individual achievements in learning new skills. We heard of examples where people were actively supported to maintain friendships and family connections. One family member told us, "Staff there are absolutely brilliant and do a lot with my relative" and another confirmed, "I think our relative has excellent carers."

Staff recognised changing health needs and people benefited from access to community healthcare. Medication and finances were managed well and enabled people to have as much control as possible in supporting their independence. One professional told us, "They know people very well and notice when there are changes and link in with the appropriate health professionals" and another confirmed, "They have responded well to a person's diagnosis and have supported them around medical appointments and how best to manage their condition." This meant people benefited from the right healthcare at the right time from the right people.

Families and individuals engaged in reviewing their care and were updated about significant changes to their emotional and physical wellbeing. We heard of examples where people benefited from a person-centred and solution-focused approach. One professional told us, "They have been good at thinking outside the box around care delivery, being adaptive and responsive" and another confirmed, "Consideration is given to how much people themselves will cope with a review with their thoughts being obtained in the most suitable and comfortable way for each individual." This meant people's rights were upheld and their contribution valued.

We heard about how complaints could be managed better and discussed with the provider how these will be followed up and any learning documented for the future. This means that the service would be taking an improvement-focused approach. The service could further improve by ensuring there are clear protocols in place for 'as needed' medication, particularly when used as part of supporting positive behaviour for people. This would ensure best practice in reviewing the effectiveness of any medication and that the person is benefiting from its use.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

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

Staffing arrangements were regularly reviewed to ensure people's needs were met. Many staff had been working within the service for several years and knew people well. We saw how assessments of staffing reflected how people's emotional wellbeing may change and flexibility was needed to ensure their needs were met. We saw how there was enough time for staff to engage in meaningful conversations and develop positive relationships with people. Staff worked well together and spoke with us about responding flexibly to changing situations. One professional told us, "They take time to get to know the person and support people to develop their life skills" and this was corroborated by a staff member who told us, "People have a lot of choice and time for meaningful support." This meant that the right number of staff with the right skills were mostly working at the right times to support people's outcomes.

Team meetings were arranged in advance to provide opportunities for staff to discuss their work. Staff spoke positively about regular training and supervision and the approachability of the seniors within the service. One staff member told us, "I think everyone is wonderful, staff care very deeply about people and want the best for them" and another confirmed, "The teams are really good at pulling together in times of absence to cover the shifts and great at making sure people have the best possible opportunities and experiences." This meant people benefited from a warm atmosphere because staff developed good working relationships.

However, we heard from families, staff, and professionals that more contracted staff were needed to ensure consistent support for people. One professional told us, "The shortages in staff make staffing inconsistent" and families we spoke with shared these concerns and the potential impact upon their relative. We discussed the recruitment challenges with the provider, who was already working hard to identify longer-term solutions and improve the level of stable support available for people. This will be reviewed 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?	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?	4 - Good
3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together	4 - Good

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