

# Penumbra - Borders Supported Living Service Housing Support Service

Penumbra  
Unit C  
Melrose Station, Palma Place  
MELROSE  
TD6 9PR

Telephone: 01896 822404

**Type of inspection:**  
Announced (short notice)

**Completed on:**  
15 April 2026

**Service provided by:**  
Penumbra

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003002595

**Service no:**  
CS2004057242

## About the service

Penumbra Borders Support Living is a registered Housing Support service operating across the Scottish Borders, with its central office based in Melrose.

The service provides flexible support to people experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, or difficulties sustaining their tenancy. It also delivers the Be Well service in partnership with Berwickshire Housing Association, helping individuals maintain their homes and wellbeing.

A new pilot project has recently been introduced to support young people transitioning from children's services, as well as unaccompanied children and asylum seekers.

The number of people receiving support varies throughout the year, and at the time of inspection the service was supporting 173 individuals. Support is tailored to need and ranges from brief phone contact and drop ins to regular weekly support of up to 14 hours.

## About the inspection

This was an announced (short notice) inspection which took place on 09 April 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 11 people using the service and one relative of a person who no longer requires support
- spoke with 10 staff and management
- reviewed documents
- spoke with five visiting professionals.

## Key messages

- The service demonstrated sector leading practice, delivered consistently in a person centred manner.
- A dedicated and compassionate team of staff consistently demonstrated they valued and respected the people they supported.
- Support was delivered at each person's pace, helping to reduce anxiety, support engagement and build trust.
- A high performing, compassionate, and collaborative team led by a manager who was trusted, respected, and deeply committed to improving outcomes for vulnerable individuals.

## 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?	6 - Excellent
How good is our leadership?	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?

## 6 - Excellent

We evaluated this key question as excellent. The service demonstrated sector leading practice, delivered consistently in a person centred manner. There was clear evidence of strong recovery focused work, underpinned by an embedded trauma informed approach.

People's health and wellbeing clearly benefited from the care and support they received. A dedicated and compassionate team of staff consistently demonstrated they valued and respected the people they supported. During the inspection, evidence from conversations with people using the service, staff members, and external professionals confirmed individuals were treated with kindness, compassion, dignity, and respect. One person told us, "The service is amazing - they feel more like family," while another commented, "I had a broken heart when I came here, but Penumbra are healing it."

Staff demonstrated a comprehensive and holistic understanding of people's needs, supported by the effective use of personalised support plans and the I.ROC (Individual Recovery Outcomes Counter) tool. Support plans clearly reflected each person's health and wellbeing priorities, while the I.ROC encouraged staff to view individuals, recognising their strengths rather than focusing on perceived deficits. A professional who works closely with the team commented, "They know their service users extremely well."

People described support as person led, with workers focusing on what mattered to them and allowed individuals to choose how their support time was used. People consistently reported feeling listened to and understood, enabling them to be actively involved in setting their own goals and priorities.

Support was delivered at each person's pace, helping to reduce anxiety, support engagement and build trust.

People were able to evaluate their own progress, decide when their support had achieved what they needed, and moved on when they felt confident and ready.

Where risks and restrictions were present, individuals were supported through structured, person-centred approaches instead of restrictive practices, consistent with the principle of the least restrictive option under the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.

People receiving support and professionals told us the team responded flexibly to individual needs. This approach meant people could access additional support when necessary, and during times of crisis, they were supported to remain at home instead of being admitted to hospital, in line with their expressed wishes.

Part of the service included the Be Well Project in conjunction with a local housing association. This team supported people to improve mental wellbeing by promoting recovery, confidence, and self management of their mental health. It also helped individuals maintain secure, sustained housing by reducing tenancy breakdowns and related risks, while fostering hope for the future through increased optimism, connection, and ability to move forward.

The project was sector leading when it commenced in 2020 and had been nominated for awards since its inception. The service is committed to 'sticking with' people who have previously struggled to engage,

resulting in improved outcomes and the extension of the pilot. People receiving support told us the service has made "a big, big difference to my life".

## How good is our leadership?

### 5 - Very Good

We made an evaluation of very good for this key question. The management team demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for people.

Penumbra Borders had well established and effective quality assurance systems which supported continuous improvement and strong oversight of practice. Management demonstrated a clear understanding of the needs, vulnerabilities, and circumstances of the people they supported, and this was reflected in the structured approach taken to monitoring, reviewing, and developing the service.

A comprehensive programme of audits was carried out which demonstrated a culture of accountability, reflective practice and a commitment to maintain high standards.

The service's development plan had evolved over time to reflect the growth of the service and the increasingly diverse needs of the people supported.

We heard consistent feedback, emphasised across multiple professional perspectives, of a high performing, compassionate, and collaborative team led by a manager who was trusted, respected, and deeply committed to improving outcomes for vulnerable individuals. Their strengths in communication, partnership working, and person centred practice had led to a new pilot project to support younger people transitioning from children to adult services as well as unaccompanied children and asylum seekers.

Management oversight of incidents was strong. Staff responded appropriately when incidents occurred and involved relevant agencies which ensured people's safety and wellbeing. There was clear evidence of effective multi agency working, particularly in situations involving police or adult protection concerns. This responsive practice reflected a positive and proactive organisational culture.

We identified some gaps in quality assurance processes in relation to documentation within some personal plans. Management had already taken steps to address this, directing staff to update plans and ensure information accurately reflected current practice. This demonstrates the commitment to use quality assurance findings to drive improvement and maintain high standards.

Overall, the service benefited from strong, visible leadership who modelled reflective practice, responded constructively to areas for improvement, and maintained a clear focus on achieving positive outcomes for people.

Other professionals repeatedly spoke of management 'as going above and beyond expectations' and 'the leadership fostered open, respectful discussion of differing professional views without conflict.'

Penumbra Borders was recognised across the sector for their 'deep understanding of local housing and homelessness challenges' and 'an invaluable lifeline to both our service and the people we support'.

## How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We made an evaluation of very good for this key question. The staff team demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for people.

Safer recruitment procedures were being followed consistently. The staff files sampled demonstrated all required checks were completed prior to employment, providing assurance recruitment practice were safe and well managed.

Staff had access to a wide range of core and role specific training to support safe and effective practice. Engagement with eLearning was strong; however, some discrepancies in individual training records suggested documentation may not always be fully updated. Strengthening the accuracy and consistency of training records would support clearer oversight of staff competence and development needs. Management acknowledged this and we were confident this would be reviewed.

Supervisions and team meetings took place regularly. These offered opportunities for shared learning, discussion and reflective practice.

Staff also benefited from daily access to management support if needed, which was important given the lone working model and complexity of supported people's needs.

Staff told us they felt very well supported which contributed positively to their wellbeing, a strong team culture and helped maintain a consistent approach to care.

Supported people described the significant impact staff had on their lives: One person told us: 'I wouldn't be here without (name) being there for me, they just kept calling, for months, until I let them in'.

A relative told us they could not praise staff enough for their commitment: 'they visited at home and the hospital religiously. It's been a few years now, but it's like night and day, unbelievable how our relative has a life back'.

External professionals also highlighted the quality of staff practice, describing: 'the teams ability to remain engaged with individuals who present significant complexity and to do so with professionalism, empathy and persistence stands out as a defining feature of their practice.'

## 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 service should ensure that the whistleblowing policy states that staff can contact the Care Inspectorate at any time and provides the contact details.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: "I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed". (HSCS 4.23

**This area for improvement was made on 13 July 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

The providers Resolution Policy makes reference to raising issues externally which include the Care Inspectorate.

This area has been met.

## 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?	6 - Excellent
1.3 People's health and wellbeing benefits from their care and support	6 - Excellent
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement is led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
3.2 Staff have the right knowledge, competence and development to care for and support people	5 - Very Good

## To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

## Contact us

Care Inspectorate  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

[enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

## Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iarrrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.