

Penumbra - Western Isles Supported Living Service Housing Support Service

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Telephone: 01851 706 360

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

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Service provided by:
Penumbra

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About the service

Penumbra - Western Isles provides support to people living in the community who experience mental health and wellbeing concerns. It provides flexible support depending on the wishes and needs of each person supported. It aims to support people 'on their journey to better mental health, by working with each person to find their own way forward.'

The main office is in Stornoway and support is provided across many of the islands of the Western Isles. We inspected the service remotely.

About the inspection

This was a short notice inspection which took place between 17 and 21 February 2025. 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 15 people using the service and one family member
- Spoke with five staff and management
- Reviewed documents
- Spoke with professionals in contact with the service

Key messages

- People reported many benefits as a result of support from the service
- People found the service went at their pace
- People felt they could speak openly to their support worker
- People's mental health and mental wellbeing had improved
- The service's staff were commended for their abilities, understanding and compassionate approach
- The staff worked very well as a team
- Staff said the manager was very approachable, supportive and helpful

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

This service was providing a very good level of support. There were major strengths in the support for people's mental health and wellbeing. There were very few areas for improvement. Those that did exist will have minimal adverse impact on people's experiences and outcomes. While opportunities are taken to strive for excellence within a culture of continuous improvement, performance evaluated as very good does not require significant adjustment.

People found the staff to be very respectful. They felt they'd built up a strong and trusting relationship with their staff member. They could discuss matters in an open and beneficial way. People were confident that staff members would always listen carefully, make helpful suggestions and aid them to consider different ways to make progress with their mental wellbeing or other concerns they may have had.

The service used recognised mental health assessment and planning forms. These were seen as the person's tools for thinking about and exploring the challenges they could be experiencing in their life. They belonged to the person and the person took the lead in deciding what to put in the forms and what areas of life they would prioritise for the next step in their aim to make progress with their wellbeing. People saw the service as person centred.

The service embraced a recovery approach to mental health and wellbeing challenges. This recognised the person experiencing difficulties had the resources, abilities and was central in making decisions as to what could help them. The recovery approach is seen as person led.

Some very positive comments were made about the service in general.

- 'Initially, I couldn't speak, just cry,...but then (over time) I didn't feel on my own'.
- 'Helps with his independence...e.g. travelling.'
- 'Felt overwhelmed. Now, feel I'm advancing.'
- 'Nothing I don't like about the service.'

A big aspect of the service was its flexibility. It saw that people focussing on what most important to them at that time was key. People could be experiencing practical housing difficulties, or being feeling lonely or facing difficulties with grief. Conversations were had and careful consideration went into what would work for that person. People could review their progress in a formal and informal way on a regular basis. If alterations to the support or the focus was needed this happened. Staff and people worked as partners in the aim for more settled mental wellbeing.

The service made efforts to work well with other agencies. There were good examples of this in their contact with health and social care services, plus with the wider community agencies and opportunities. This helped people in receiving the right support at the right time. This benefitted people's health, wellbeing and safety.

There was a waiting list for the service and it was good to see that the manager was reflecting on how these people feel reassured whilst waiting during a difficult time in their life.

Reflection on other matters such as when people do not engage with the service or were ready to not need the service was also taking place. Some more involvement of people's views on such matters would be good to see.

The service knew that to keep providing the best support it could to people it had to be outward looking, have strong motivation to keep moving forward and be open to new ideas. This could include technology and we discussed a couple of examples. The service should continue its consideration of how it can promote itself more, be an option for younger people and generally keep adapting to meet people's wishes and needs.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

The staff team was very good. They were consistently reported as reliable, knowledgeable and skilled in supporting people.

Staff were recruited carefully at this service. All usual checks were undertaken and once employed suitable induction and training was in place to enable staff. People can have confidence in the service's recruitment and induction processes.

It was very noticeable how many positive comments were made about staff. This was both when we talked to people and in the questionnaires we received. Some examples of what people reported were:

- 'The service...saved me...and it's invaluable to me.'
- 'Penumbra have been a lifeline to me and have had a huge impact on my life.'
- 'So lucky to have penumbra and I can relate to my support worker...'
- 'Couldn't recommend a better team than Penumbra.'

It was clear that a most important strength was staff members' ability to listen. From building very positive and trusting relationships, people felt they could then talk and often that would lead to them taking steps to improve their wellbeing. Staff had empathy and were able to consider carefully what people were telling them and what ideas and thoughts they could suggest.

Staff were aided by the support available from other staff and the manager. Regular opportunities for discussion were in place. This included supervisions, team meetings and reflective conversations on what's going well in the support provided and what could be improved. Mutual support and a co-operative approach helped to develop staff insight and understanding of mental health and wellbeing. People can trust their staff have positive and compassionate attitudes which makes them more able to support them.

Many of the staff were experienced in mental health and wellbeing support. They understood, for example, many of the challenges people could experience, when it was good to encourage and motivate and when it was better to advise to not too try to do too much. Getting 'alongside' a person seemed to describe their approach and this reflected as well the principle of 'peer' supported that was also part of the service. Experienced staff and the manager were seen to be supportive of newer members of staff. People can assured the staff work well together, help each other and were flexible, so as a team they can provide as good a support to them as they can.

Suitable training was in place for staff. It would be reviewed and if new training would be needed or seen as beneficial this would be sought. Staff having the right knowledge and training assisted people to keep well, safe and make the progress they wanted to see. People can trust staff's responsible approach. If a person was experiencing a crisis in their mental health, for example, staff had knowledge and would know what would be best the thing to do. They knew when to share concerns, get advice from their manager or some other appropriate agencies.

Whilst we saw many positives in the service, we noted that some of the changes in staff and a new manager meant there was some settling in to the roles occurring in the staff team. Any unsettlement, though, was minimal in relation to people's support. Additionally, we discussed with the manager that a more in depth look at staff's training needs could prove helpful. Particularly, finding meaningful ways to get people's input into this. This would show how the service is incorporating person led approaches to the service. This approach could also be developed for when staff receive their own annual reviews of their practice strengths and development needs.

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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