

Penumbra, Intensive Housing Support Service Housing Support Service

Penumbra
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Telephone: 01224642854

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 April 2025

Service provided by:
Penumbra

Service provider number:
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Service no:
CS2024000097

About the service

Penumbra, Intensive Housing Support is a service that is provided by the charity Penumbra. The service offers support to people and their families who may be impacted by substance misuse problems.

At the time of our inspection, support was being offered to 70 people in the Aberdeen area.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced which took place on 16,17, 18 and 22 April. 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 ten people using the service
- spoke with seven staff and management
- observed practice
- reviewed documents
- had contact with nine professionals.

Key messages

People were treated with dignity and respect, boosting their confidence and self-worth.

People were assisted in accessing health and social care services, enhancing their lives.

People were supported to maintain their tenancies, providing greater security and a sense of belonging.

Quality assurance systems and processes were enhancing outcomes for people.

People were supported by staff who knew them well, increasing the likelihood of positive changes in their lives.

Staff were highly knowledgeable and skilled, improving the quality of people's 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 leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	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

We identified significant strengths in the care provided, which supported positive outcomes for people. Therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Staff understood their role in helping people access health, social care, and other services, even where their role was limited. For instance, some people received support to register, access, and attend GP appointments, often for the first time in many years. Additionally, a person was assisted in registering with a dentist after a long period. Several also mentioned that their workers had helped them attend appointments with social workers and community psychiatric nurses (CPN), which many said they would not have gone to otherwise. One person shared, "I was feeling suicidal but couldn't speak to my CPN about it. My Penumbra worker attended the appointment with me, and the CPN was then able to support me as well." This life-enhancing support had a positive impact on people's overall health.

Although their role was limited, people were supported to take their medication as prescribed. For example, one person shared that they would forget to take their medication, but their worker suggested a plan to help them remember. As a result, this person was now taking their medication as they should. Furthermore, another person mentioned that their worker supported them to re-order medication when they had forgotten. This support ensured that people followed their medication routines, contributing to better health outcomes and overall well-being.

People were supported to make informed health and lifestyle choices. People spoke about staff helping them set goals. For example, one person shared, "My workers challenged me to get dressed to meet them in the café. I did it, and I felt so much better when I got dressed before going out. Now, I get dressed whenever I go anywhere, instead of staying in my pyjamas." Another mentioned self-harming less, with police no longer needing to check on their welfare, which had been frequent in the past. Additionally, with support, a young person established a structured routine, leading to regular college attendance. People also went for walks, joined gyms, arranged holidays, and wrote down daily goals such as getting their children to school and cleaning the house. As a result, people's lives became more structured and organised, leading to more positive outcomes and a better sense of well-being.

People were supported to make positive changes regarding their housing and living conditions. Some people received assistance in applying for new housing. One person shared, "I wouldn't have managed to apply or coped with the move without their support," while another expressed joy at Penumbra staff helping them liaise with housing, resulting in a move to a new property and area. Additionally, someone who had been living in an uninhabitable home due to hoarding was supported to clear out their flat and move back in, away from a domestic abuse situation. As a result, people felt safer and experienced a stronger sense of belonging, boosting their confidence and self-worth.

People received support from staff who treated them with kindness and warmth. Staff ensured that people's rights were upheld, and their voices heard. One person shared, "They talk to me like I'm a real person and don't talk down to me. It had been a long time since anyone made me feel like I matter. Then they helped me speak to another service that wouldn't listen to me before they got involved." Additionally, staff treated people respectfully, providing opportunities for them to open up and be heard. This empowered individuals and allowed them to look to the future with more hope.

People received support in various well-being and practical matters.

For example, staff provided advice and assistance on issues such as domestic violence, sexual health, sleep, mental health, benefits, and employment. We observed someone being helped to arrange payments for their council tax, something they said they would have ignored without their worker's support. This support enhanced aspects of people's daily lives and contributed to their overall well-being.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We identified significant strengths in the care provided, which supported positive outcomes for people. Therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Staff viewed management positively and felt supported by their leaders. One staff member mentioned, "The managers are fantastic; they support us, encourage us, and guide us rather than just giving orders." This increased staff satisfaction, improved morale, and resulted in a team that felt supported. This positive working environment enabled staff to work more effectively with people, showcasing the strength of leadership.

Management empowered staff to be involved in quality assurance and improvement. Staff felt their views and opinions were heard and that they had helped shape and develop the service. Team meetings included discussions around improvements, with staff actively asked for their input. Staff had also participated in developing some systems and processes, with some creating helpful spreadsheets to track various aspects of support. Furthermore, the service documented outcomes, which was a good way to benchmark and improve the service. This approach led to better support and outcomes for people using the service,

The service evaluated people's experiences. For example, they provided and received feedback forms completed by people using the service. Additionally, daily notes documented how people's support was progressing, often including their thoughts and feelings about their support. Furthermore, people reported that they were regularly asked about their support and how things were going, which made them feel valued and listened to. This demonstrated the service's commitment to person-centred care, resulting in people feeling more engaged and satisfied with the support they received.

People expressed confidence in the complaints process, with a policy in place. Although no complaints had been made, people felt assured they could raise concerns if needed. Furthermore, accidents and incidents were logged, with actions and outcomes documented. Management used these events to improve support quality. For example, a buddy system for staff was implemented after a recent incident. Additionally, follow-ups with supported people occurred after accidents and incidents, ensuring their well-being and encouraging continued support. This proactive approach ensured that staff and people using the service felt safe, supported, and confident.

Extensive community mapping had identified local resources and services, benefiting people by connecting them to various amenities. People spoke about accessing local cafes, community centres, gyms, and other community resources. This mapping ensured staff were aware of these resources, which was highly beneficial to people and demonstrated the service's commitment to community integration. This approach helped people feel more connected and was supportive of social inclusion.

Management utilised team input for collective learning. When a person disclosed self-harm, the manager supported the worker. Following this, management arranged for a self-harm specialist to speak to the staff team. This enhanced everyone's understanding and equipped them to respond to people more effectively. This demonstrated the service's commitment to continuous learning and development. This proactive approach ensured staff were better prepared to support people.

The service's improvement plan was comprehensive, with future initiatives in place to support improvements. Furthermore, auditing and monitoring systems covered various aspects, including personal plans, health and safety, and risk assessments. We concluded that the provider efficiently monitored and led the service, resulting in improved well-being for people.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We identified significant strengths in the care provided, which supported positive outcomes for people. Therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Staffing arrangements met people's needs. Despite a recent significant increase in people using the service, the quality of support remained high. Staff sickness levels were very low, and arrangements suited individual preferences. For example, people reported that workers asked when they wanted to meet, fitting meetings around their availability and what suited them. Additionally, the manager assessed staffing needs based on the number of people, their needs, and discussions with staff and referrers. When staff went on holiday, people were offered another worker or the option for text or call support, ensuring continuity. This inclusive approach ensured people had the support they needed, benefiting their lives.

Staff were well-trained and knowledgeable. Staff positively embraced their training and demonstrated expertise in areas such as adult support and protection, substance misuse, homelessness, working with offenders, and domestic violence. Staff actively discussed applying their training in practice, implementing trauma-informed care and using grief training to support individuals who had lost loved ones. Furthermore, the induction period for new staff received high praise, and regular staff supervisions proved helpful. This comprehensive training and support system significantly enhanced the quality of care provided, ensuring that people using the service received knowledgeable and empathetic support.

Staff communicated well with each other. Regular, in-depth team meetings took place monthly, where people's needs were discussed, and shared learning occurred. A team chat facilitated questions and support, and there were weekly catch-ups where any issues could be raised, and the manager checked on staff well-being. This strong communication ensured that staff remained well-informed and supported, ultimately enhancing the quality of care provided to people using the service.

Staff worked well with other professionals. For example, a staff nurse praised the comprehensive communication and teamwork, which significantly improved a shared client's outcomes. Strong relationships with other professionals resulted in trusting working relationships, leading to better support and positive outcomes for people using the service.

Staff had built positive relationships with people. Feedback from those using the service was very positive. One person shared, "They helped me with housing and also clearing out my brother's flat after he died. I'd have done nothing otherwise." Another person told us, "To start with, they helped me with my debts and paperwork. But now they're helping me to just get my life back on track with my mental health and with all the other things. I want to go back to work too." This highlighted the significant impact staff had on the lives of people using the service, providing an increased sense of stability, empowerment, and hope.

How well is our care and support planned?

5 - Very Good

We identified significant strengths in the care provided, which supported positive outcomes for people. Therefore, we evaluated this key question as very good.

Personal plans, visit recordings, and risk assessments were in place for each person using the service. Staff efficiently updated records on their system after every interaction. Furthermore, daily recordings were of very good quality, detailing practical support and how people were presenting and feeling emotionally. Risk assessments were regularly updated, and any new risks were discussed with management. This process helped keep both people and staff safe and supported the delivery of better-quality care and support.

People's support was reviewed, with documentation in place. Some formal reviews occurred more frequently than others, usually due to people's current circumstances. While engaging people in reviews can be challenging, it is also beneficial. The provider plans to increase the frequency of formal reviews where possible. We will follow up on this at future inspections.

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 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
3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	5 - Very Good
5.1 Assessment and personal planning reflects people's outcomes and wishes	5 - Very Good

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