

Ark Borders Housing Support Service

Ark Housing
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Telephone: 01450 370548

Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
1 May 2025

Service provided by:
Ark Housing Association Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2003002578

Service no:
CS2015340672

About the service

Ark Borders is registered to provide a service to people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health conditions living in their own homes. Support is provided by four staff teams.

The service operates from an office base in Hawick with additional support provided in Kelso, Galashiels and Peebles. At the time of the inspection Ark Borders was providing a service to 44 people.

About the inspection

This was a short notice, announced inspection. We visited the service on 24, 25 and 28 April 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 eight people using the service and their representatives.
- spoke with staff and management.
- observed practice and daily life.
- reviewed documentation.
- Reviewed feedback responses from our questionnaire, from 17 people using the service and their relatives, 52 staff and two visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Staff had a good understanding of people's abilities, needs and wishes.
- People enjoyed a range of activities and time with family and friends.
- People had good support to attend health appointments.
- Good communication and collaboration between managers and health professionals helped people stay safe and well.
- Medication was managed well and people were supported safely to take prescribed medication.
- Managers carried out regular one-to-one supervision and team meetings with a focus on good practice and professional development.
- Improvements had been made to personal plans which contained detailed information about the support people needed to enjoy a good quality of life.
- Photographs were effectively used to illustrate how people had achieved positive outcomes.

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
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 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.

Staff were skilled in their roles, demonstrating a good understanding of people's abilities, needs and wishes. Individuals had opportunities to make decisions about their health and lifestyle choices which impacted positively on their wellbeing. People told us of the range of pursuits and activities they chose to take part in, either individually or with friends. People could be confident of having the right support to help maintain their physical and mental wellbeing.

Managers had established good links with primary health professionals including people's GPs, pharmacists and opticians. When people were unwell, staff took prompt action to ensure they had access to the appropriate health professional.

Senior staff took an active role in facilitating effective partnership working with a range of specialist, external professionals. Regular reviews took place to ensure key information was shared between relevant parties, including people's relatives where appropriate. We concluded that good communication and collaborative working made a significant and positive contribution towards people staying safe and well.

Medication was managed well and good processes were in place to provide people with the right support to take prescribed medication. Regular checks and audits were implemented which meant any medication issues arising could be identified and resolved quickly.

People were supported to prepare meals, snacks and drinks which helped build their independence and life skills. Where people had complex eating and drinking needs or dietary requirements, staff were trained and clear strategies were in place to promote safety. People could be assured of support from staff who were attentive and considerate of their individual circumstances.

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.

Staff treated people with genuine respect, warmth and kindness. People told us they 'like the staff', 'staff are nice' and 'I'm happy with my support'.

Staffing levels were regularly assessed by managers and were based on individual need. Most support was provided by small teams of staff with the relevant skills and training to support each person's outcomes.

Whilst this worked well in most areas, we found one situation where the team was very large, making it difficult for people to anticipate who they would see next. We spoke with the manager who informed us this would be reviewed, to correspond with the consistent support being provided across the rest of the service.

Managers carried out regular one-to-one supervision and team meetings with a focus on good practice and professional development. Although there had been some challenges recruiting new staff, this was being resolved and most staff felt supported by their seniors. We observed examples of good teamwork and

effective communication where key information was shared. This meant issues within the service were identified quickly and staff could respond appropriately.

Recruitment processes were thorough and completed in line with current guidance. Prior to lone working all staff were required to carry out a period of induction and shadowing with more experienced colleagues. All staff were provided with a variety of training opportunities, both face to face and via an online learning platform. Consequently, people could be confident their staff were recruited safely and they were well trained.

How well is our care and support planned?

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.

Individualised personal plans were in place, which contained clear information and guidance for staff. Although there were a few, minor inconsistencies in the information, the personal plans described people skills and abilities very well, in addition to the support they needed to lead a good quality of life. The plans contained good details about what was important to people, which helped staff make meaningful connections with them.

Risks were assessed, giving staff essential information about how to keep people safe. Individuals' personal plans and risk assessments were regularly updated in line with changes, which helped staff provide consistent and personalised support.

To achieve the best possible outcomes, people experiencing care should be empowered to have meaningful input into reviewing their own care. People and their representatives were involved in regular review meetings. The use of photographs to illustrate people achieving positive outcomes was very effective. We were assured people had the opportunity to express their wishes and help shape their care and support.

For further information, please refer to the section: 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection'.

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 ensure best outcomes for people experiencing care, the provider should ensure they make improvements to personal plans. This should include personal plans containing all relevant details and presented in a consistent format.

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

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care 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).

This area for improvement was made on 7 June 2023.

Action taken since then

Since the last inspection the provider had fully implemented a new, electronic care planning system. People using the service and staff had online access to personal plans.

We found personal plans contained relevant details about people's care and support, including their health and wellbeing needs, communication abilities and food and fluid needs. There was also information about important people in their lives, their interests and preferred activities.

Personal plans were regularly reviewed with people and their representatives, and updates were made accordingly. Photographs were included in review notes, to demonstrate how people were achieving positive outcomes in their lives.

For further information, please refer to the section: 'How well is our care and support planned'.

This area for improvement is met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To support improving outcomes for people, the provider should ensure that improvements are made in relation to staff learning and development. This should include but is not limited to:

- a) establishing clear targets in relation to the timescales in which staff should complete training; and
- b) ensuring staff undertake the required training to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet people's care and support needs.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standard (HSCS): 3.14 which states:

"I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes".

This area for improvement was made on 7 June 2023.

Action taken since then

Managers had discussed training achievements and targets during staff members' one to one supervision meetings in addition to management meetings.

A significant majority of staff had achieved training to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet people's care and support needs. Training compliance for most topics was over 90%.

Fewer development opportunities for Adult Support and Protection were achieved. This was discussed in a recent managers' meeting and two senior staff were training to take a lead role in delivering the training to staff.

This area for improvement is met.

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
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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