

Aberness Recruitment Support Service

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
10 July 2025

Service provided by:
Aberness Recruitment Agency Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2015012453

Service no:
CS2022000151

About the service

Aberness Recruitment is registered to provide a care at home service to adults with support needs living in their own homes and in the community. The service provides flexible packages of care and support ranging from a few hours each week to over 250 hours each week. The service supports people living in and around the Inverness area.

The service was registered on 14 June 2022. There was a period of inactivity prior to becoming active again on 1 November 2024. The service was first inspected on 14 March 2025 with recommendations made and this was a subsequent inspection to follow up on progress.

The provider is Aberness Recruitment Agency Limited.

The head office is based in Inverness and at the time of inspection the service was supporting 14 people.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 7 to 8 July 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 two people using the service and two of their family
- spoke with five staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Staff developed meaningful relationships with people based on warmth, respect and compassion.
- Care plans detailed every aspect of people's support and focused on their wishes, needs and interests.
- Support was reviewed and included feedback from family and external professionals.
- Managers implemented thorough quality assurance systems to ensure people benefited from their support.
- Staffing levels were good, and people's care and support benefited from consistent staff teams.
- Staff were competent, skilled and knowledgeable within their role, due to regular training and supervision.
- People and their families were fully involved in planning 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 leadership?	4 - 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 evaluated this key question as very good, where significant strengths supported positive outcomes for people.

People experienced warmth, kindness and compassion in how they were supported and cared for. There were examples of how managers responded flexibly in supporting people's activities. This enabled people to make choices that were important for them and to get the most out of their lives. One example was how managers rearranged support hours to ensure a person could attend a new course without having a negative impact on the rest of their week.

People were supported by staff who showed an understanding of people's communication needs based on developing trusted relationships with the person. One family member told us "Staff have taken the time to get to know my relative and how to communicate in different ways." We confirmed how staff enabled people to make informed choices and responded to changing needs through observed staff discussions. One example was how staff understood their role in supporting positive outcomes for a person by working together as a team and with a consistent approach. Staff focused on balancing the person's choices with managing risks in promoting more activities with them in the community. This presented a number of challenges to overcome but staff focused on being creative in achieving positive outcomes for the individual. One external professional confirmed this positive approach and told us "I see first-hand the support my client has received, they have gone above and beyond." This meant people benefited from a person-centred approach in enabling them to be fully involved in their support.

People and families felt confident in their care and support because they knew who was coming and when to expect them. Staff recognised changing health needs and shared the information with external professionals. This ensured people were receiving the right care at the right time from the right people. External professionals expressed feeling confident in the support provided and that any needs identified were actioned promptly. One family member told us "I don't know what I would do without them now. I am very impressed by them" and this view was confirmed by an external professional who told us "I am very happy with the support my client receives, and their team work very hard to meet their outcomes."

The service had improved in providing clearer protocols for 'as needed' medication. We discussed with the provider about using specific recording charts for when topical medication is administered.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

Managers demonstrated a clear understanding of what was working well and what improvements were needed. Staff spoke positively about changes within the service and a continued commitment to ensuring the best outcomes for people. Managers evidenced clear oversight of the service based on thorough quality assurance systems which gathered reliable information. Examples of activities included monthly audits of care plans, medication and finance records, and staff supervision and training. One staff member told us "The manager is amazing and so supportive and making some positive changes" and another told us "There is excellent, prompt and meaningful communication between services and layers of management." This meant leaders had the skills and capacity to oversee improvements.

Staff were encouraged to develop within their professional role and supported with comprehensive training. This meant staff were skilled, able to respond to people's needs and recognised when concerns needed to be shared. People were confident giving feedback because they felt leaders would act quickly and there was a clear understanding of the standards people should expect from their care and support.

Discussions with managers indicated how families and staff could raise suggestions and provide feedback. There were clearer boundaries on the purpose of staff meetings or review meetings for people receiving the service. This meant focused discussions were possible on staff issues or person-specific issues and actions documented clearly.

Managers had developed the basis of an improvement plan, and we discussed how this needs to demonstrate how self-evaluation and feedback from people are used to drive improvements within the service. We identified where this should improve (see area for improvement 1).

Areas for improvement

1. To support continued quality assurance, the provider should ensure that an improvement plan is developed which is reviewed regularly and informed by self-evaluation. This should include, but is not limited to, submitting appropriate notifications to the Care Inspectorate and evidencing how feedback from people is used to drive service improvements.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that 'I am supported to give regular feedback on how I experience my care and support and the organisation uses learning from this to improve' (HSCS 4.8) and 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where significant strengths supported positive outcomes for people.

Staff were recruited carefully and well to ensure the right people with the right values were supporting people. Staffing arrangements supported positive outcomes for individuals and took account of the importance of matching staff with them. One family member told us "They did try and match who is best to support my relative and be consistent. We discussed this with a manager and thought about who would be best to support" and another confirmed "The managers are amazing and tried to fit carers into my relative's life as opposed to the other way round and match carers with them." This meant staff were able to support people's preferences and good continuity of care.

Staff were competent, knowledgeable and skilled due to regular supervision, training and opportunities to reflect on their practice. Staff spoke positively about effective communication between staff and working well together as a team. Staff told us they had time to provide care and support which included meaningful conversations and interactions with people. Staff told us "Training is really good, and we have regular team meetings for service users where we can contribute and make suggestions" and this was confirmed by another who told us "The support network is fantastic, we get regular supervisions and I feel really well supported".

Managers and staff were motivated and worked hard to ensure people's support worked for them. Managers and staff expressed person-centred values and were clear about their responsibilities towards people. People using the service and staff benefited from effective communication with their support team and a warm atmosphere. One staff member told us "I feel that I can lift the phone and speak about anything" and another confirmed "What managers do well is listen, whenever I need support, they are always giving me the right support and guidance within my role."

We discussed with the provider how one team supporting a person was experiencing changes to staffing, whilst the person was also living with changes to their wellbeing and routines. We suggested additional support from specific professionals and meeting with the team more regularly to support these changes.

How well is our care and support planned?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, where significant strengths supported positive outcomes for people.

Care plans were detailed and used person-centred language that clearly demonstrated the individual's unique likes and dislikes. A system was in place for updating risk assessments and significant events which enabled care and support to be delivered effectively. People and their families were involved in directing their own care and support and could access the online system directly. This meant people could see who was due to support them on that day and families could see what support had been provided. One family member told us "I like the detail and the documentation, it's easy to track my relative's wellbeing" and another confirmed "They plan with my relative and ask them where they would like to go and what they like to do."

Staff were confident in how to deliver support with people due to clear guidance. Discussions at meetings evidenced how staff continually reviewed people's experiences and respected their views. External professionals were confident that advice and guidance was followed, and staff were proactive in being responsive to people's needs. Families told us that they were encouraged to be involved in the assessment and planning of support. One staff member told us "There is effective and clear communication with families and supporting additional services" and this was confirmed by an external professional who told us "Managers are very proactive and regularly attend core group meetings."

Managers and staff worked in true partnership with families and external agencies around the best interests of a person if they were unable to fully express their wishes and preferences. The service evidenced that supporting legal documentation was in place to ensure this was being done in a way that protected and upheld people's rights.

We heard feedback from a family where two providers are involved in a person's care and support. The service could improve communication between the two agencies in ensuring all relevant information is shared for handover meetings.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 1 July 2025, the provider must ensure that there is effective governance at service level to monitor and manage the quality of care and effectively identify and drive improvements in the service. To do this the provider must at a minimum:

- a) ensure there is sufficient time and capacity to enable team leaders and managers to focus on quality assurance and monitoring checks
- b) implement quality assurance systems to evaluate the effectiveness of supervision, training and development opportunities and ongoing competency of staff
- c) implement quality assurance systems to evaluate people's care experiences and how this informs service improvement
- d) develop a service improvement plan which is reviewed regularly and informed by self-evaluation.

This is to comply with Regulations 3 and 4(1)(a) of The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/210).

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11); and 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This requirement was made on 14 March 2025.

Action taken on previous requirement

Managers implemented thorough quality assurance systems, including audits of care plans, medication, finances, staff supervision and training. People's care experiences were being evaluated at review meetings and through questionnaires. The service developed the basis of an improvement plan but needed to evidence how this was informed through self-evaluation and feedback from people using the service, families and external professionals.

This requirement was met and there will be a revised area for improvement to reflect progress.

Met - within timescales

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 staff are competent, skilled and knowledgeable, the provider should make sure, at a minimum, staff receive regular supervision and at regular intervals. This includes observations of practice with clear outcomes that enable staff to provide high quality care and support.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14); and 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS4.11).

This area for improvement was made on 14 March 2025.

Action taken since then

Managers implemented regular supervision and practice observations which evidenced reflective learning and supported staff development.

This area for improvement was 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 leadership?	4 - Good
2.2 Quality assurance and improvement is led well	4 - 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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