

Highland Council School Care Accommodation School Care Accommodation Service

The Elgin Residence
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Portree
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Telephone: 01478 612 320

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
29 May 2025

Service provided by:
Highland Council

Service provider number:
SP2003001693

Service no:
CS2006133280

About the service

Highland Council School Care Accommodation is a service provided across five hostels in North West Scotland. These consist of Ardnamurchan, Mallaig, Plockton, Portree, and Ullapool. All hostels have oversight from the same manager.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 13, 14, 15, 19, 20 May 2025 between the hours of 08.30am and 19:30pm. 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 23 people using the service and 13 of their family
- spoke with 11 staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Since the last inspection there had been a lack of improvement in the hostels.
- Child protection concerns were not appropriately recorded or reported.
- The environment in some of the hostels was in disrepair.
- Most young people had a good relationship with staff.
- Young people experiencing bullying needed more formalised and response support.
- Quality assurance systems needed to be implemented to improve oversight of the practice and outcomes in the hostels.

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 children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	2 - Weak
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?

2 - Weak

We made an evaluation of weak for this key question. Whilst some strengths could be identified, these were compromised by significant weaknesses. As these weaknesses concerned the welfare and safety of children and young people, there continues to be six unmet requirements, one new requirement and one new area for improvement.

There was a lack of support for young people who experienced bullying. We found plans for how young people would be supported to be kept safe, were not sufficiently specific or recorded to ensure accountability and effective implementation. Young people told us, "I don't think it's fair we all get spoken to about bullying as a group, as we know who it is and feels like we are getting accused. This at times led to staff being unable to support young people's emotional wellbeing. This was a requirement which was made at the last inspection and will remain unmet.

There had been incidents that had not been recognised as child protection and had not been reported to relevant agencies, including the Care Inspectorate. Staff actions in such circumstances lacked accountability and transparency due to poor recording practice. The child protection policy had been updated, however, the procedure needed to be clearer in how to respond immediate concerns. This impacted on the services ability to protect young people from harm. This was a requirement which was made at the last inspection and will remain unmet.

Where young people needed more individualised support there was a lack of training, to enable these needs to be fully met. Staff told us, "We have been asking for training to support us for months now." This would help young people feel more understood and support their individual needs. **(See area for improvement 1.)**

Most young people had good relationships with the staff. Young people told us, "They try and make it fun we had a pizza night last week." We found staff to be nurturing and look for opportunities to arrange a variety of fun activities in the evenings and weekends. This helped young people build trusting relationships and have fun. Some hostels had still not undertaken training in trauma informed care which would further inform staff practice.

There was a number of risks identified for young people, however, no clear support in place to reduce the risk and keep young people safe. Risks also needed to be clearly recorded so staff knew how to consistently support young people and keep them safe. **(See requirement 1.)**

The environment in some of the hostels was in need of immediate repair. Young people told us, "Floods happen everywhere and it smells." We found a number of areas which were inaccessible to young people due to damage, and heard how a number of ceiling tiles had fallen down. Young people were pleased to tell us that the showers were going to be changed in the summer, as these were too hot. Young people told us, "I feel faint after I shower as it is so hot, and I have to lie down." At times this disrupted hostel living and impacted on the needs of the young people. This was an area which was highlighted at the last inspection.

Concerns regarding young people's wellbeing and health were not regularly reviewed. Individual plans had been implemented to support young people, these had not been updated in over a year. Communication between the hostel and school had also been a barrier in sharing information to ensure young people's mental health was a priority. This lack of collaborative working, impacted on the young people receiving a lack of support.

Some young people's specific care and support needs were not sufficiently recognised. Individual care plans lacked up to date information to support young people on a day to day basis. Risk assessments also needed to be updated, so staff had the right information to be able to keep young people safe and minimise risks. This was an area which was highlighted at the last inspection.

There had been a lack of management support to staff in the hostels. Decisions effecting staff had not been well communicated and had caused uncertainty. Staff told us, "No one has told me about these changes, and I don't know what's happening." We found this had impacted on staff moral and had potential to impact on the care young people received.

The lack of quality assurance processes in place meant there was limited oversight of training, medication and support plans to ensure young people's needs were met. This was an area which was identified at the last inspection and remains unmet.

At times there had been a lack of staffing in some of the hostels. This had put an added pressure on staff to cover extra shifts, and at times there had not been enough staff to support young people. There was a staffing needs assessment in place, however, some of the information recorded in this was not accurate. This led to times where there was a lack of support for young people, and staff were put under pressure.

There continued to be a lack of appropriate recording of events which should be reported to the Care Inspectorate. There had been physical altercations, medical emergencies and child protection concerns which had not been recorded in full detail or reported. We highlighted at the last inspection how this led to a lack of oversight and learning to prevent the event from reoccurring. To support better outcomes for young people.

Requirements

1. By 30 August 2025, the provider must ensure that the risks young people present within the service are assessed. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum ensure that:

- a) the risks young people present are recorded accurately and include proactive strategies, along with primary and secondary strategies to support the young people
- b) risk assessments are updated following incidents
- c) all potential risks are included in the risk assessment.

This is to comply with Regulation 4(1)(a) (Welfare of users) 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 the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'If I might harm myself or others, I know that people have a duty to protect me and others, which may involve contacting relevant agencies' (HSCS 3.24).

Areas for improvement

1. To support children's wellbeing, learning and development, the provider should ensure staff access training appropriate to their role, and apply their training in practice. This should include, but is not limited to, training in trauma informed practice and individualised needs of young people.

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

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled' (HSCS 3.14).

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

Requirements

Requirement 1

By 1 December 2024, the provider must ensure that any instances of bullying is recorded and a clear plan of support implemented. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum ensure that:

- a) any instances of bullying is recorded
- b) there is a clear plan in place around how the young person will be supported
- c) there is a regular review of the concerns raised.

This is to comply with Regulation 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 the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities' (HSCS 3.20).

This requirement was made on 12 November 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

We found several instances relating to bullying, and these had not been appropriately recorded. There was also no clear plan of support in place for the young people; how this would be addressed or a review with the young person to check if the circumstances had improved.

Not met

Requirement 2

By 1 December 2024, you must ensure that the child protection policy and procedure is reviewed. This is to ensure the safety of young people. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum, ensure that:

- a) the policy is updated and reflects the National child protection guidance Scotland 2021
- b) there is a clear procedure for staff to follow
- c) any child protection concerns are reported to the Care Inspectorate.

This is to comply with Regulation 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 the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which

state that:

'I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities' (HSCS 3.20).

This requirement was made on 12 November 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

The policy had been updated to reference the National child protection guidance Scotland 2021. However the procedure was not in line with the guidance and lacked clarity of the action to take when immediate concerns arose. There had also been a number of child protection concerns which had not been reported to The Care Inspectorate.

Not met

Requirement 3

By 30 January 2025, you must ensure that any immediate repairs needed to the building are undertaken. This is to ensure the safety of young people. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum, ensure that:

- a) the heat of the showers is appropriate for the young people
- b) repairs are carried out in a timely manner
- c) any repairs in young people's bedrooms are conducted to ensure a safe living environment.

This is to comply with Regulation 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 the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.19)

This requirement was made on 12 November 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

The temperature of the showers were still too hot for the young people. There was, however, a plan to upgrade the showers in the summer to address this issue. Areas of the hostel were inaccessible to the young people due to damages which had not been repaired.

Not met

Requirement 4

By 30 November 2024, the provider must ensure young people's medication is recorded accurately. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum ensure that:

- a) there is an accurate record of the amount of medication
- b) the medication is detailed correctly as per prescription label
- c) a regular audit is completed of medication
- d) any errors are correctly recorded.

This is to comply with Regulation 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 the 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).

This requirement was made on 12 November 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

There was still inconsistencies when recording the dates medication was administered. Errors were not appropriately recorded, and no justification of how the error had occurred and any action taken. Audits did not identify these inconsistencies in recordings.

Not met

Requirement 5

By 10 December 2024 you must ensure there is effective quality assurance processes in place. To do this, the provider must, at a minimum, ensure that:

- a) there is oversight of training
- b) medication is regularly audited
- c) care plans and risk assessments are regularly audited.

This is to comply with Regulation 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 the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'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 12 November 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

There continued to be a lack of oversight in regards to training staff had undertaken. Audits of care plans, risk assessments and medication were often not dated or signed and ineffective in identifying inconsistencies.

Not met

Requirement 6

By 30 November 2024 you must ensure there is an appropriate number of staff on shift, ensuring the right balance of qualified staff and experience. This is to support the health, safety and welfare of the young people. To do this, the provider must as a minimum, ensure that:

- a) there is sufficient staff to meet the needs of the people using the service at all times
- b) there is a balance of qualified and experienced staff able to support the young people
- c) there is a staffing needs assessment in place to reflect the experience of staff and ratio required.

This is in order to comply with section 7 of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019.

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

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15).

This requirement was made on 12 November 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

The service had implemented a staffing needs assessment. However, the information recorded in this needed to be accurate. There was times where there had not been enough staff and this needed to be reflected in the assessment also.

Not met

Requirement 7

By 10 November 2024 the provider must notify the Care Inspectorate as detailed in the document 'Records that all registered children and young people's care services must keep and guidance on notification reporting (2022)'.

This is to comply with Regulation 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 the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from different organisations working together and sharing information about me promptly where appropriate, and I understand how my privacy and confidentiality are respected' (HSCS 4.18); 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 12 November 2024.

Action taken on previous requirement

A number of incidents, child protection concerns and hospital visits had not been reported to the Care Inspectorate.

Not 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 children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	2 - Weak
7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life	2 - Weak
7.2 Leaders and staff have the capacity and resources to meet and champion children and young people's needs and rights	2 - Weak

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