

# Care service inspection report

Full inspection

## **Thistle Foundation – Craigmillar, Edinburgh & The Lothians Housing Support Service**

Thistle Centre of Wellbeing, 13 Queens Walk  
Edinburgh

Service provided by: Thistle Foundation

Service provider number: SP2004005062

Care service number: CS2004080907

Inspection Visit Type: Announced (Short Notice)

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and set out improvements that must be made. We also investigate complaints about care services and take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

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## Summary

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection following other regulatory activity. For example, if we have to take enforcement action to make the service improve, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

### We gave the service these grades

Quality of care and support	5	Very Good
Quality of staffing		N/A
Quality of management and leadership	5	Very Good

### What the service does well

Thistle provided individual and outcome focussed support. Most people had their own team of personal assistants (PAs). PAs were matched to people and they and their families could be involved in choosing their staff.

Thistle's values and ethos were threaded throughout induction, training and supervision.

Staff were caring, knowledgeable and committed to their work.

Service leaders were working well together and sharing expertise.

Parents and families were seen as valued partners. Information was shared and families were invited to influence improvements.

Staff were active in liaising with partner agencies. Information was therefore shared appropriately to promote health and protect people.

The service was making a difference to the quality of people's lives.

**What the service could do better**

We made a number of suggestions to further improve this very good service.

**What the service has done since the last inspection**

Thistle had begun a 'Big Conversation' with people being supported, families and staff. This was seen as a genuine and open dialogue, where people could influence change and future improvements.

Two new managements posts had been created and the service leader team had grown to thirteen.

There was increasing collaboration across Thistle's supported living and health and wellbeing staff.

New audit systems had been introduced and were effectively raising standards of record keeping, finance and medication management.

Thistle was working hard to address staff recruitment and retention.

Staff competencies had been developed and were about to be rolled out for all grades of staff.

The service had acted on the suggestions from the previous inspection.

Thistle had moved into its new headquarters.

**Conclusion**

We were satisfied that the service was providing high quality care and support and was committed to continuous improvement.

# 1 About the service we inspected

**Thistle Foundation** is a national voluntary organisation. Guided by a voluntary board of directors, the organisation is managed on a day-to-day basis from a Head Office in Edinburgh.

This service provides housing support and care at home for adults living in their own homes who have physical or learning disabilities, mental health issues or sensory impairment.

The service has small teams of personal assistants (PAs) who provide the direct support and care. The service was led by an assistant director (the registered manager), two health and wellbeing managers and thirteen service leaders. The service was supported by a quality assurance manager and training and development staff from within Thistle.

The Thistle vision, mission statement and manifesto states:

"We believe life is for living. We always go the extra mile to help people with disabilities or longstanding health conditions to lead great, authentic lives, where they are in control. Thistle Foundation is a boundary-pushing, pioneering organisation helping bring about a society where everyone has the right to feel involved and empowered to live the life they choose, regardless of their disabilities or health condition. We go the extra mile to find the right solution for people, without presuming we know the answers."

At the time of the inspection there were eighty-one people receiving the service. Support ranged from a few hours per day to twenty-four hour care.

## Recommendations

A recommendation is a statement that sets out actions that a care service provider should take to improve or develop the quality of the service, but where failure to do so would not directly result in enforcement.

Recommendations are based on the National Care Standards, SSSC codes of practice and recognised good practice. These must also be outcomes-based and if the provider meets the recommendation this would improve outcomes for people receiving the service.

## Requirements

A requirement is a statement which sets out what a care service must do to improve outcomes for people who use services and must be linked to a breach in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (the "Act"), its regulations, or orders made under the Act, or a condition of registration. Requirements are enforceable in law.

We make requirements where (a) there is evidence of poor outcomes for people using the service or (b) there is the potential for poor outcomes which would affect people's health, safety or welfare.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

**Quality of care and support - Grade 5 - Very Good**

**Quality of staffing - N/A**

**Quality of management and leadership - Grade 5 - Very Good**

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change following other regulatory activity. You can find the most up-to-date grades for this service by visiting our website [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com) or by calling us on 0345 600 9527 or visiting one of our offices.

## 2 How we inspected this service

### The level of inspection we carried out

In this service we carried out a low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care.

### What we did during the inspection

This report was written after a short notice visit to the service on 12 May 2016. Follow-on visits took place on 13, 20, 23, 25, 27 and 31 May. Feedback was given to the managers on 7 June 2016

From the 1 April 2016 the way in which we carry out an inspection has changed. In order to be more proportionate and targeted in our work, in highly performing services, inspections will look at two Quality Themes. This service was eligible for this type of inspection.

At all inspections we will consider:

Quality Statement 1.3 "We ensure that service user's health and well-being needs are met."

Based on what we know about this service, we chose to look at:

Quality statement 1.4 "We use a range of communication methods to ensure we meet the needs of service users."

Quality Statement 4.3 "To encourage good quality care, we promote leadership values throughout the workforce."

Quality Statement 4.4 "We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide."

During the inspection, we met eight people using the service and we spoke with one by telephone. We met a small group of family members at a Family Forum meeting.

Prior to the inspection we asked the service to distribute Care Standards Questionnaires to people receiving housing support. We received seven responses (of thirty).

We also sent out thirty questionnaires for a sample of staff members. We received seven completed questionnaires.

We joined two team meetings, a practice development group for PAs led by service leaders and a training session. We observed one to one supervision meetings and an interview for a PA position. We spoke with a number of PAs whilst they were carrying out support. We spoke with most members of the management team.

Evidence was also gathered from a number of sources including:

- Ten personal "My Life My Support" plans, risk assessments and related records
- A summary of staff feedback
- Staff records including: job descriptions, induction programme, keyworker roles, supervision records, meeting minutes
- Accidents, incidents and complaints records
- Observations of interactions between staff and people using the service
- Records from the 'Big Conversation'
- Quality report, Board report, audits, new policies and procedures,
- Training/practice development notes
- Feedback from the five professionals.

### **Grading the service against quality themes and statements**

We inspect and grade elements of care that we call 'quality themes'. For example, one of the quality themes we might look at is 'Quality of care and support'. Under each quality theme are 'quality statements' which describe what a service should be doing well for that theme. We grade how the service performs against the quality themes and statements.

Details of what we found are in Section 3: The inspection

## **Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)**

In any year we may decide on specific aspects of care to focus on during our inspections. These are extra checks we make on top of all the normal ones we make during inspection. We do this to gather information about the quality of these aspects of care on a national basis. Where we have examined an inspection focus area we will clearly identify it under the relevant quality statement.

## **Fire safety issues**

We do not regulate fire safety. Local fire and rescue services are responsible for checking services. However, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant fire and rescue services so they may consider what action to take. You can find out more about care services' responsibilities for fire safety at [www.firescotland.gov.uk](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk)

## The annual return

Every year all care services must complete an 'annual return' form to make sure the information we hold is up to date. We also use annual returns to decide how we will inspect the service.

**Annual Return Received:** Yes - Electronic

## Comments on Self Assessment

Every year all care services must complete a 'self assessment' form telling us how their service is performing. We check to make sure this assessment is accurate.

We received a well-considered self assessment from the service. We were satisfied with the way in which the service had completed this. The service identified what they thought they did well, some areas for development and any changes they planned. We found this to be fair evaluation and agreed with the grades proposed by the service.

We suggested that future self assessments would be strengthened by involving a range of staff in the process of the assessment.

## Taking the views of people using the care service into account

We met eight people using the service and spoke with one by telephone. We received seven completed Care Standards Questionnaires.

Overall people were happy with the quality of their service. One person had not been happy at the time of completing the questionnaire, however when we met them they were more satisfied.

Comments have been included throughout the report.

## Taking carers' views into account

We joined a Family Forum meeting and attended a team meeting with a relative present. One Care Standards Questionnaire was completed by a relative.

The comments we received were generally positive.

What family members said was important included:

- Thistle should retain its unique identity, its values and approach.
- The stability and reliability of staff is essential.
- Service leaders should really know my relative and listen to them.
- To cover absence, another service leader who knows my relative will step in.

Comments have been included throughout the report.

## 3 The inspection

We looked at how the service performs against the following quality themes and statements. Here are the details of what we found.

### Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

#### Statement 3

"We ensure that service users' health and wellbeing needs are met."

#### Service Strengths

Promoting health and wellbeing were Thistle's top priorities. We found that the performance of the service was very good for this statement.

Each person had an up-to-date 'My Life My Support' plan. This guided PAs as to how they should support each individual. Plans provided excellent information about each person's background, preference and needs and it was evident that they had been involved in developing these.

Staff were aware of the outcomes that were important to the person they supported and these were documented. The Talking Points framework was used to identify and review outcomes.

The service was making a difference to people's lives, for example:

- Two people told us they had been motivated to join the gym
- We heard about people who felt able to leave their house for the first time in a long while, going out to the hairdressers again, asking for support to learn new skills
- People were included in their communities - going to lots of shows, joining a slimming club, taking trips, holidays and a cruise, going "everywhere" in their own car (such as Nottingham, to follow an interest in Robin Hood); applying to university
- One person had gained confidence in selecting staff and had volunteered to join an interview panel to represent other service users

- One person was staying up later with their new 'evening' staff
- Some people had chosen to take part in the 'Big Conversation'.

Health care needs were assessed and risk assessments undertaken as part of the support planning process. Staff supported people to seek and attend health care appointments and routine screening.

In addition to mandatory training, PAs received specific training for individual's needs, such as epilepsy, preventing pressure ulcers. Additional team training was added as required, for example, behavioural support.

One person had received extensive support whilst in hospital during a holiday abroad.

Someone with a progressive condition was able to remain in their own home and stay as well as possible with the right care and equipment. Staff were working closely with appropriate professionals, such as the district nurse. Staff supported someone to keep up their physiotherapist prescribed exercises.

The service had up-dated its medication policy and training. Team workshops to introduce the new policy had led to in-depth discussions about how to improve people's health. We attended part of the medication training and found this to be person centred, with emphasis on staying well and respecting choice and promoting rights. There were new medication audits systems which helped staff to be clear about what was needed and made them feel that practices were safe.

We also saw that:

- Staff paid attention to oral hygiene and dental care and acted on directions and advice.
- There was a good awareness of people's safety, comfort and confidence in regard to seating, wheelchairs and walking aids. All staff received training on moving and assisting and specific training was provided where equipment such as hoists were used.
- Staff said they adjusted plans and activities to suit the person and take

account of fatigue. For example: "matinÃ©e shows are better than evening shows now. We also judge how she is each day. We can bring her bed into living room so she can be part of what is going on."

- Staff shared ideas and any concerns at team meetings. We saw that matters were followed up. 'Supervising for outcomes' meant staff kept focussed on making a difference.
- Managers had a thorough understanding of adult support and protection and concerns were passed to relevant agencies. The service was aware of any specific issues or vulnerability and used a multi-agency approach to reduce risks.

(We shared a link to the Keep Safe website, at: <http://www.iammescotland.co.uk/keep-safe-areas/> ).

- New personal finance procedures were in place. There was more clarity about the role and remit of PAs and better oversight and auditing to protect people and staff.
- Telecare was considered if it offered advantages for an individual.

We welcomed the plan to make risk assessments more person centred to address specific risks, for example: falls; self harm; risk posed by neighbours; pressure ulcers. The service continued to develop the Carista database and it was intended that MLMS plans would move to this when ready.

From the incident records we saw that falls were an issue for a few people. Managers agreed that new guidance on preventing falls and injury for people with learning disabilities would be useful for discussion/training within teams. This is available at: <http://hub.careinspectorate.com/search/?s=preventing+fall+for+people+with+learning&type=0&view=0&ord=0>

**Service user comments included:**

"My support arrangements are really good, partly down to me as I am very insistent. Thistle have the right values. My new service leader has enthusiasm and wants to get it right."

"Staff work to the best of their ability."

"Staff are doing a brilliant job, I trust the team implicitly. I've never had any worries about team. They employ good people, I wouldn't let them in my house if I didn't trust them. Staff show me receipts and change. They go above and beyond. I couldn't ask for better staff. There have been changes of staff but I have had the main staff for about two years. They put up with my sense of humour, they know how to take me. I get help with housework, shopping, showering, collecting prescription and help with meals."

"I have joined the gym and I'm doing the health and wellbeing programme. My team leader pops in once or twice a month and does an audit and we have a catch up. He asks if there is anything more he can do for me. I have felt much better over the past two years."

"My support plan tells people about me and what I like. My support worker, her manager, my mum and I discuss what I want and need. This is reviewed about once a year. The service helps me to get out and about and do all the things I want to do. My support worker keeps me safe and looks after my welfare. My support worker is like a big sister and friend. She is very kind and considerate. She always helps me plan our day together in advance. I don't like change. I am happy with my support worker. I don't want her to leave - ever! She is always on time. I never feel she is in a rush to leave. She often asks if I am happy with the service and if I ever want to change anything, then I just have to let her know. This service has enabled me to go out and about safely and allowed me to become more confident and capable as I have been able to learn to do more for myself from my experiences."

"My support plan was updated recently and I like the way it represents me. I meet my staff a few times before they start working with me. I got a mobile phone which I can use so I can spend time by myself and call people when I

need to. Sometimes I want a change of staff - if it is not up to me it is more challenging. I recently interviewed and chose staff so this went well."

"I feel my support plan is well constructed. I have monthly team meetings with my support workers and also six monthly reviews of my support plan. My team are very respectful to me. I'm well assisted and things that need done, get done. My team and I run a diary of coming events, my team organise me getting to and from events. When I'm at home my team knows not to be invasive. I have a call system which can be used at any moment. In the beginning there were a lot of staff changes but now my support is stable."

"I feel safe with my service at Thistle, and I am sure that they contribute towards the extension of my life span."

"Staff get lots of training and they try to do things I want from my review. They encourage me to try more things. I don't feel safe in my house but the staff make me feel safe. My team change a lot because I sometimes want them to."

"I'm happy. I feel very safe. Staff treat me well, they treat me as a friend would. I'm part of the interview team, so I help pick my own team members. I can approach any team member if I have a problem and I can have my say at my team meeting. Staff do their job well. They help me to get out the house and do my shopping and generally get out and about."

"The staff are very supportive and helpful."

**Professional comments included:**

"We visit weekly and find the carers very good. They appear to give good care to her skin and quickly bring our attention to any concerns they have."

"I have always been impressed by the person centred approach used by Thistle, the efforts made to allow our client to do what she wants to do in her life. Staff supporting our client ensure that her views, thoughts and feelings are always taken into account when deciding change, improvement or even just simple things like deciding on meals, clothes and outings. Our client was able

to go on holiday with staff, was able to attend a local support group with staff, to get out shopping, to go to the cinema and more importantly remain at home where she wanted to live. We had some real challenges to keep this lady in her own home but felt staff were quick to alert us if something changed. This enabled us to treat a problem early and prevent admission to hospital. If admission occurred staff supported her and remained with her until she came home. She has been able to hold on to the small elements of her daily life that she can do herself, she is encouraged to be active socially, to participate in the community, to eat healthily and be hydrated, to keep in touch with her family, to participate and attend conferences and events related to her condition, to express how she feels and receive emotional support, to be safe, warm and comfortable in her own home, to receive medical attention quickly if needed and to have respite from home when she needs it which also allows staff to have a break."

"One service user who has a large package of care has been supported to move from a Direct Payment to an Individual Service Fund - this means the same level of choice, control and flexibility without the financial responsibility - Thistle initiated this. Thistle have worked alongside the service user to identify when he would like his support and have creatively provided his hours to maximize his personal budget. The care team are very responsive to the service users needs - he has a copy of all their mobile numbers and can call them in an emergency out with his care hours."

"The service user I work with uses a Direct Payment to fund her support, the nature of this means she is the person who decides when to have her support and what type of support she requires. Outcomes achieved includes: engaging in leisure activities; opportunities to meet new people; managing self-care and health needs."

"I have only once met with a representative from this organisation regarding a client. I found them to be very accommodating, helpful and willing to work jointly to meet my client's nutritional needs. They provided us with a suitable venue to meet and included the client's mum (his welfare guardian ). We agreed on dietary information to support the carers be consistent in their approach, with regard to minimal weight levels, agreed minimum intakes and when to seek medical help. I have since discharged the client and have

not been required to contact this organisation again."

**Staff comments included:**

"One service user has made some real change, they have been on their first ever holiday and they are planning their next. Their health has improved. It was to do with getting the right people and keeping the right size of team, we worked it differently - with success."

"Someone I support hadn't been out of the house for some time but just came over and bought a gym membership. It shows a huge improvement in self-esteem."

"One person is requesting support to make more summer plans, the want to go on trips. It is complex - but it will be great."

**Areas for improvement**

We suggested that a brief summary of the personal finance conversation be recorded on service user's files. This should record what support has been agreed and who was involved in the decision-making.

We shared guidance from the Mental Welfare Commission on the Working with the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act (2000) available at: [www.mwscot.org.uk](http://www.mwscot.org.uk)

We advised the service to:

- Ask that medical practitioners assess the capacity of service users to consent to treatment, and where they are unable to consent, ask the medical practitioner to complete the appropriate documentation (Section 47 certificates) including a treatment plan, under Part V of the Act.
- Obtain copies of Guardianship or Power of Attorney documentation, so that there is clarity about the extent of decision-making powers (financial, welfare or combination).

We also shared guidance from the Mental Welfare Commission on decisions about technology.

The service agreed to access the City of Edinburgh Council's adult support and protection training (level 2/3) for the new managers.

**Service user comments included:**

"An age-old issue is sickness cover. There is a need for a more coherent backup system. You might have to have someone who has not done a shadow shift with you."

"Improve staff coverage during staff illness and holidays."

"Generally speaking I'm happy with my support but during holidays cover or sick leave, I don't always get properly trained staff that know me and my needs well enough. Staff should encourage me to socialise more."

**Comments from professionals included:**

"Thistle try their hardest to accommodate the clients requests however availability of support staff can mean some times the clients requested care times cannot be accommodated."

**Grade**

5 - Very Good

**Number of requirements - 0**

**Number of recommendations - 0**

## Statement 4

"We use a range of communication methods to ensure we meet the needs of service users."

### Service Strengths

We found that the performance of the service was very good for this statement. People could be confident that the service worked hard to ensure that their communication needs were known and understood by all of the staff working with them. A wide range of communication methods were in use.

Information recorded in support plans provided an excellent picture of people's communication needs and preferences.

Most PAs worked with just one individual, although some might work across a small number of teams. This meant people knew their PAs and staff knew how to support and communicate with them. We saw that staff were attentive and responsive to people's verbal and non verbal communication. We saw staff working with people at their pace, taking the time for them to participate and contribute. Some staff told us about the importance of music to the people they supported. They understood what people enjoyed and what could lift the mood or calm and sooth.

We attended a 'communication' themed practice development which included an introduction to Signalong, and Boardmaker. A service user who had been just been through an assessment for a Lightwriter came along to demonstrate this to staff. Other service users made use of picture boards, pictorial diaries and plans, symbols. We saw that staff made sure these were up-dated.

Thistle provided many documents in easy read format and planned to draw up an easy read policy.

### Comments from professionals included:

"Our client has significant cognitive change and communication problems so was challenging at times but we were supported by psychologist to allow her to express to a person outside the service. Our client is strong in her opinions.

Staff attend meetings that perhaps client can't to represent her views. Staff were taught how to communicate with her and techniques to make it less stressful. For example questioning techniques and using recognition rather than recall as she has poor recall and short-term memory. I feel that staff were able to take their time to make sure she was heard and listened to. Staff also used a communication book for a team approach which helped professionals when problem solving. We also took advice from speech and language therapist to maximise the communication."

"There are various communication and appointment diaries which the staff support the service user with, to ensure the whole care team are aware of the service users needs/appointments/wishes/changes to care routine etc."

"Support staff have assisted this client in developing a "visual" aid to help manage her care routine, this is basically a care rota that has symbols and pictures on it that indicate the care tasks or activities that happen at certain times and days. This works better for my client than a standard "diary" type rota."

### Areas for improvement

Thistle was not always able to ensure cover was available from within the known team of PAs. One relative said that sometimes a new member of staff was sent who had not met the person before the shift. This had an impact on their relative who became very anxious and made phone calls to them.

One service user said that help to prepare for review meetings would be good.

### Grade

5 - Very Good

**Number of requirements - 0**

**Number of recommendations - 0**

## Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Quality theme not assessed

## Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

### Statement 3

“To encourage good quality care, we promote leadership values throughout the workforce.”

#### Service Strengths

The performance of the service was very good for this statement. Thistle promoted leadership across all grades of staff.

PAs worked in 'self managing' teams which were led and supported by service leaders. PAs had a degree of autonomy and accountability. They were expected to take ownership of planning and coordinating the day-to-day service and for tasks such as rota planning and some quality checks. PAs were introduced to these expectations during induction.

The service offered PAs the opportunity to apply for Keyworker roles in a specific area of practice, such as: mentoring new staff; moving and handling; behavioural support; IT. They were tasked with helping other teams to develop their skills and were remunerated for these responsibilities. We supported this interesting development. We heard about the wealth of other skills, interests and aptitudes which PAs could draw on and share with the people they supported, for instance: playing in a band, theatre skills, speaking multiple languages, painting murals (including a commission in a hospice) playing sports.

Two part-time support co-ordinator's were employed in larger teams where people required high or complex support. This role offered PAs an opportunity to develop leadership skills.

We were impressed with the knowledge and enthusiasm of the PAs we met and of their commitment to the person they supported. When we were invited into people's homes we saw that staff had very good relationships with people.

A number of PAs were taking part in Thistle's 'Big Conversation'.

We noted that Thistle's values were threaded throughout training, practice development, supervision and team meetings. We saw that the medication training was skilfully delivered. Training was seen as an important element in maintaining high standards and reinforcing the organisations values. Training on the personal finance procedure had been adapted to be more effective and meaningful for staff. This was now carried out through team workshops. Managers said they might use this model of training more widely.

The new management appointments meant service leaders were better supported. We found that managers and service leaders were capable, open and improvement focussed. New team goals and expectations were being rolled out. Staff told us that they felt supported. Service leaders spoke of loving their work and getting job satisfaction from effecting change in service users' lives.

Service leaders had completed (or were undertaking) a five-day 'Leading Others' course. This was developed by Thistle and was delivered by an external trainer. We heard that this had been well received. Staff told us they found it challenging, productive and inspirational. Other development included: 'Making it Personal' and 'Personal Outcomes and assets based approaches'.

We saw improvements to team meetings ensuring effective use of time and better follow-up of agreed actions. Meetings were used as an opportunity to share information and expertise across the team. Discussions were very good, staff demonstrated their knowledge of what worked best for people, they questioned ideas and volunteered solutions. Staff spoke about people and their relatives with respect and understanding..

We also saw improvements to the quality and recording of supervision and heard that this was on-going. We noted that staff received praise and encouragement and were given direction about future actions and work priorities. It was clear that staff were comfortable discussing areas for personal development. We also noted that supervisors asked staff "do you need anything from me?"

Service leaders were registered (or in the process of registering) with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) as supervisors. PAs will require to register as support workers in from 2017. The service was offering staff opportunities to achieve SVQ 3 in preparation for this.

Thistle planned to introduce a competency framework for all grades of staff. In addition, self managing/participative teamwork was being looked at and further training was to be given. We welcomed these developments.

### **Comments from professionals included:**

"Our client has a large team of carers that is led by (service leader). Some carers have worked with our client longer than others, understandably this group tend to lead and be more confident in dealing with the support. The service leader is quick off the mark to ask for support, attends professional meetings with her team, organises training as required and has had to find additional staff urgently to allow this lady to remain at home. New staff are gently brought in to support our client with experienced members leading the way. The staff have shown that they are committed and go the extra mile to assist her in maintaining a good quality of life and remaining at home where she wishes to be. As a professional working with the team I feel involved, included and respected by the staff."

"The client's main carer helps manage time tables and rotas for other carers. Care manager has supported in recruitment of carers attempting to resolve issues with lack of cover when Carers have left or where Clients care routine has changed."

**Comments from staff:**

- "I like it at Thistle, it's the most person centred organisations I've worked for."
- "I feel we have top class training."
- "Service leaders are working really well."
- "It's a good place to work, it is exciting where we are going. Thistle puts ideas into action."
- "Experienced service leaders are good at supporting the newer ones. We share ideas and get to a collective view on things, such as how to manager a performance issue - usually through coaching. New systems are time consuming but brilliant, the workshops with teams were good and they had a big impact. I could see right away the benefits. Just now I feel my teams are working well. I can't praise one team enough, they are absolutely brilliant."
- "Leading Others was great but tough. You have to step out of your comfort zone, I welcome change now. I feel well supported and we also get a lot of peer support."
- "I asked to attend Leading Others again as a refresher. The new keyworkers are really great."
- "When planning practice development groups we know this has to be time well spent and valued by PAs."
- "It's going in the right direction. I love the job, it throws up different challenges on a daily basis. We can speak out about how we feel and we are listened to."
- "It's a good team, the service leaders are very supportive, they can tell if someone needs a cup of tea. We swap expertise."
- "We are working on the quality of supervision notes so that there is a clearer link to service users outcomes."

- "Thistle is far better than my previous employer in all aspects of the work and support for workers."

### Areas for improvement

Staff working at Westfield would benefit from more reliable internet access and workstations. Thistle reported that there was a complete review of ICT underway.

Managers agreed to clarify the service leader 'buddying' system so that people and families were reassured of the back up arrangements.

Service leaders might wish to keep notes of 'between supervision' or ad hoc support to individual staff. Other services we inspect have developed a way to record this on their database.

### Service user comments included:

- "Some staff leave before the job gets done and I have to summon them. In cases like this the next person on rota has to finish the job."
- "I would like all the jobs done, but I don't have a team with me all the time. Staff need to be on shift with me on time, I would like them to be on phones less. Staff are not checked enough. My service leader had too many teams and I don't see her enough."

### Relative's comments included:

- "Service leaders have a lot of training, I'm not sure they need more. My priority would be that managers get to know my relative and the team."

## **Staff comments included:**

- "There are fewer vacancies now so we can get back to doing what we should be doing."
- "It was a lot to cope with when a few service leaders left last year."
- "There is some pressure - need to help people improve and not feel anxious."

## **Grade**

5 - Very Good

**Number of requirements - 0**

**Number of recommendations - 0**

## Statement 4

"We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide"

### Service Strengths

We found that the performance of the service was very good for this statement. People could be reassured that quality assurance was a high priority and that new systems were strengthening this ongoing process.

Thistle states: "We will involve the people who use our services in the creation and running of those services that best suit their needs." We saw that people and their families were involved from the beginning, from the assessment to planning the support they wanted and needed.

There was an open and responsive culture. During the inspection, we saw service users dropping into the office, having a look around the new HQ. People were comfortable approaching staff and received a warm welcome.

People told us they knew how to make a complaint and that they could speak to their service leader if they had a concern.

Family Forum meetings were held four times a year, with independent facilitation. We saw that these meetings were informative, inclusive and addressed the concerns family members raised. Meeting minutes were sent to those who could not attend and contained useful links for further information.

In 2015 Thistle's began a 'Big Conversation'. This was a genuine and open dialogue between people being supported, families and staff where people could be listened to and could influence change and improvement.

Thistle's web site ([www.thistle.org.uk](http://www.thistle.org.uk)) provided a range of information, helping people be involved and keep in touch. We saw that it provided examples of what impact the service had made to people's lives.

New systems to ensure the quality of the service included:

- Spot checks,
- Senior management on-call system,
- Senior management meetings,
- Adaptable approach to staff training to ensure the implementation of new practices,
- Service leader monthly medication, finance and communication audits, shared with relatives if requested, areas for improvement addressed,
- Management quarterly audits and reporting to the Board on the findings,
- Improved incidents reporting, investigation and follow-up,
- Improved complaints reporting.

Thistle was taking part in a project with In-control Scotland, looking at personalisation in human resources. For example, developing person specifications to recruit PA perfectly matched to people and their needs and interests. Learning from this would be shared with other care providers.

Managers reported that staff turnover rates were reducing and they hoped that the new sleepover payment and the introduction of the living wage would help continue this trend.

The service had acted on the areas for improvement at the previous inspection. We discussed a small number of follow-up actions which Thistle agreed to conclude or complete.

Thistle planned to grow its services incrementally and said it would work to balance this with maintaining quality.

**Comments from service users included:**

- "I am involved in the Big Conversation. I was already involved with induction at Thistle and I was asked if would like to be part of it. Thistle have never done something like this before. It took a while to get off ground. We have a working agreement which the Directorate have been asked to sign up. Thistle wanted to get all corners of the organisation involved. If I am honest, Thistle didn't tend to do well if they got negative or neutral feedback, then tended to try to bring people around to their point of view. For example, with self-managed

teams. I was vocal about this, as I thought it was the wrong idea. I can agree to disagree. Over the past year or two they have become more willing to listen. The Big Conversation is really good as people are now saying that things could be better. The director is very approachable, open to feedback, asks how can we improve. It is easier to influence things now. It's about Thistle moving forward, working more in a collaborative relationship and it also involves the wider community. Thistle are trying and I appreciate that."

- "My service leader often asks if I am satisfied."

### Comments from professionals included:

- "I continue to have positive interactions with Thistle and their hard work and inclusive attitude is clearly reflected in the satisfaction the service users report."

- "In the current climate of health and social care changes this service is essential to allowing young adults with long-term conditions to remain free of institutionalised care."

### Comments from staff included:

- "We are pleased about the new quality systems. They highlight areas of good practice and areas for development, such as the frequency and quality of supervision. We have constructive conversations where developments are required."

"The quarterly audits picked up out-of-date practices and they highlight trends which are addressed in supervision or through further training."

### Areas for improvement

Some people had not had a support plan review once every six months, as set out in the Regulations. Managers were confident that the new audits and checks would rectify this. Where a service user declines to participate in a review, the service should record that a review was offered, review the plan and notify the service user of the outcome and any revisions to the plan.

## **Service user comments included:**

- "Sometimes the policies are a bit "blanket" but you make it work within your own capacity. I think the pay for on call is low. I think there should be more people who are supported by Thistle involved in the 'Big Conversation'. The majority are PAs and a few families. The meetings are during working hours. The reasons people don't want to get involved are for example, people being worried their support would be taken away or poor past experience giving their views. I hope with encouragement this can be resolved."

## **Staff comments included:**

- "Overall safety measures and back up support for staff could be improved."

## **Grade**

5 - Very Good

**Number of requirements - 0**

**Number of recommendations - 0**

## 4 What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at our last inspection

### Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

## 5 What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at our last inspection

### Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

## 6 Complaints

We investigated a complaint we received about this service. The complaint was not upheld.

## 7 Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service since the last inspection.

## 8 Additional Information

During 2015 Thistle informed us it had created a new group structure with the establishment of Thistle Services CIC. The provider had shared information about this with families.

Thistle Foundation retains overall control of service delivery to ensure compliance with the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and Regulations made under that Act.

## 9 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
30 Jun 2015	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	4 - Good
10 Jun 2014	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good
6 Jun 2013	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good
26 Jun 2012	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	4 - Good
17 Feb 2011	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	Not Assessed
		Management and Leadership	Not Assessed
19 Mar 2010	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and Leadership	Not Assessed
22 Dec 2008	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good

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