The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

Inspection Report

Name of Service: SENSE

Provider: SENSE

Date of Inspection: 3 August 2026

Information on legislation and standards underpinning inspections can be found on our website https://www.rqia.org.uk/

1.0 Service information

Organisation/Registered Provider:	SENSE
Responsible Individual/Responsible Person:	Mr. Martin Walls
Registered Manager:	Ms. Rachel Arnott
Service Profile – SENSE is a day care setting, which provides care and daytime activities to service users living with a sensory impairment and complex needs. The day care setting is located in Carrickfergus, and is open 9.00am – 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.	

2.0 Inspection summary

An unannounced inspection took place on 3 August 2026, between 10.30 am and 4.20 pm. It was carried out by a care Inspector.

The last care inspection of the day care setting was undertaken on 9 February 2026 by a care Inspector. No areas for improvement were identified. This inspection was undertaken to evidence how the day care setting is performing in relation to the regulations and standards; and to determine if the day care setting is delivering safe, effective and compassionate care and if the service is well led.

The inspection established that care delivery was safe and that effective and compassionate care was delivered to service users. Improvements were required, however, to ensure the accessibility of the monthly monitoring reports within the day care setting. Full details, including a new area for improvement identified, can be found in the main body of this report and in the quality improvement plan (QIP) in Section 4.

Service users said that the care and support provided by the day care setting was a positive experience. Service users who were unable to voice their opinions were observed to be relaxed and comfortable in their surroundings and in their interactions with staff.

It was established that staff promoted the dignity and well-being of service users and that staff were knowledgeable and well trained to deliver safe and effective care.

Sense uses the term 'students' to describe the people to whom they provide care and support. For the purposes of the inspection report, the term 'service user' is used, in keeping with the relevant regulations.

3.0 The inspection

3.1 How we Inspect

RQIA's inspections form part of our ongoing assessment of the quality of services. Our reports reflect how the service was performing against the regulations and standards, at the time of our inspection, highlighting both good practice and any areas for improvement. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure compliance with legislation, standards and best practice, and to address any deficits identified during our inspections.

To prepare for this inspection we reviewed information held by RQIA about this day care setting. This included registration information, and any other written or verbal information received from service users, relatives, staff or the commissioning Trust.

Throughout the inspection process Inspectors seek the views of those working in, attending and visiting the day care setting; and review/examine a sample of records to evidence how the day care setting is performing in relation to the regulations and standards.

3.2 What people told us about the service and their quality of life

Through actively listening to a broad range of service users, RQIA aims to ensure that the lived experience is reflected in our inspection reports and quality improvement plans.

Service users told us that they liked attending the day care setting and 'coming to see their friends'.

Staff informed the inspector that they liked their jobs and had no issues with the care and support provided.

3.3 Inspection findings

3.3.1 Staffing Arrangements

Safe staffing begins at the point of recruitment and continues through to staff induction, regular staff training and ensuring that the number and skill of staff on duty each day meets the needs of service users. There was evidence of robust systems in place to manage staffing.

It was noted that there was sufficient staff in the day care setting to respond to the needs of the service users in a timely way; and to provide service users with a choice on how they wished to spend their day.

There was a process in place to ensure that recruitment was managed appropriately; this ensured that all pre-employment checks, including criminal record checks (AccessNI), are completed and verified before staff members commenced employment and have direct engagement with service users.

There was evidence that all staff had completed a structured orientation and induction, having regard to NISCC's Induction Standards for new workers in social care, to ensure they were competent to carry out the duties of their job in line with the day care setting's policies and procedures. There was a robust, structured induction programme in place.

Checks were made to ensure that staff were appropriately registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) or the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) or any other relevant regulatory body. There was a system in place for professional registrations to be monitored by the manager.

A robust system was in place to ensure that all staff were compliant with pre-determined mandatory training requirements. Competency assessments were undertaken on all staff to ensure that they were competent in their roles and responsibilities.

Procedures were in place for appraising the staffs' performance and supervisions were undertaken in keeping with the agency's policy and procedures.

There was a lack of administrative staff within the day care setting; this impacted on the work load of the manager and staff and ease of contact with the setting.

There were no volunteers deployed within the day care setting.

3.3.2 Care Delivery and Care Records

There was a daily handover at the beginning of each day, which included information about any changes to the service users' care that the staff needed to assist them in their roles

Regular staff meetings were held, with minutes recorded and circulated to ensure staff unable to attend remained informed. Minutes were detailed.

Staff interactions with service users were observed to be friendly and supportive, were skilled in communicating with service users; they were respectful, understanding and sensitive to service users' needs.

Activities for service users were provided incorporating both group and one to one activities. Birthdays and annual holidays were celebrated. Daily activity schedules were in place. Planned activities included relaxation, trips to local areas of interest, swimming, movies, cookery, sensory activities, music and arts and crafts.

Care reviews had been undertaken in keeping with the day care setting's policies and procedures. Reviews included consultation with service users on their preferred activities, ensuring their views informed and shaped the day-to day activities.

The transport arrangements for service users to and from the day care setting were discussed in detail. These arrangements were variable in nature and delivered by a range of providers.

Discussion took place with the manger about the need to evidence full oversight and review of these arrangements, to ensure maximum compliance with the Standards. This will be reviewed the next inspection.

There were arrangements in place to ensure that service users who required high levels of supervision or monitoring and restriction had their capacity considered and, where appropriate, assessed. Where a service user was experiencing a deprivation of liberty (DoL), the care records contained the relevant authorisation documents. A central register was in place to enable tracking of any DoL due for review.

The day care setting's procedure of the management and handling of service user medication was discussed. It was positive to note that these were subject to monthly audits by the manager.

3.3.3 Quality of Management Systems

There has been no change in the management of the day care setting since the last inspection.

Review of the staffing roster identified that the manager's presence was recorded when in the day care setting. In the absence of the manager there was a nominated person-in-charge (PIC) to provide guidance and leadership. The PIC was clearly identified on the roster.

The day care setting was visited each month by a representative of the registered provider to consult with service users, their relatives and staff and to examine all areas of the running of the day care setting. However, reports for the last number of months were only shared with the manager on the day of inspection. Reports should be completed and shared with staff in a timely manner to ensure that they are used to drive quality improvements. This has been identified as an area for improvement.

Day care settings are required to have a person known as the Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC), who has responsibility for implementing the regional protocol and the day care setting's adult safeguarding policy. A specific individual was identified as the day care setting's ASC. It was established that effective systems and processes were in place to manage the safeguarding and protection of adults at risk of harm. The annual safeguarding position report had been completed.

There was a system in place to ensure that complaints were managed in accordance with the day care setting's policy and procedure. Where complaints were received since the last inspection, these were appropriately managed and were reviewed as part of the day care setting's monthly quality monitoring process. It was positive to note that training for the manager in relation to the investigation of complaints had been arranged.

Review of incident records identified that they were managed appropriately. It was good to note that these were reviewed as part of the monthly quality monitoring process. Discussion took place with the manager about the benefits of an Incident Log to promote full oversight and trending of incidents. This will be reviewed at the next inspection. RQIA had been notified appropriately of any incidents in keeping with the regulations.

3.3.5 Quality and Management of the Environment

The day care setting was observed to be clean and tidy, suitably furnished, warm and comfortable and free of clutter. Externally the day care setting was well maintained.

Corridors and fire exits were clear of clutter and obstruction should the need to evacuate occur and fire extinguishers were easily accessible. Staff had attended fire training and had participated in a fire evacuation drill. Fire safety checks were regularly conducted. A fire risk assessment had been completed on 1 May 2026. There was evidence that the required actions identified had been followed up.

Hazardous substances were noted to be stored appropriately in accordance with Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) guidance.

4.0 Quality Improvement Plan/Areas for Improvement

An area for improvement have been identified where action is required to ensure compliance with Standards.

	Regulations	Standards
Total number of Areas for Improvement	0	1

Areas for improvement and details of the Quality Improvement Plan were discussed with the Manager, as part of the inspection process. The timescales for completion commence from the date of inspection.

Quality Improvement Plan	
Action required to ensure compliance with The Day Care Settings Minimum Standards August (revised) 2021]	
Area for improvement 1 **Ref:** Standard 17.10 **Stated:** First time	The Registered Person shall ensure that monthly quality monitoring reports are made available within the day care setting in a timely manner. Ref: 3.3.3
To be completed by: Immediate and ongoing form date of inspection	**Response by registered person detailing the actions taken:** These reports are now in place and will be avalable in service each month

Please ensure this document is completed in full and returned via the Web Portal

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

James House
2-4 Cromac Avenue
Gasworks
Belfast
BT7 2JA

Tel: 028 9536 1111

Email: info@rqia.org.uk

Web: www.rqia.org.uk

Twitter: @RQIANews