

Highland Home Carers

Highland Home Carers (HHC) was founded in 1994 and became a Limited Company in April 2001. It is currently the largest independent provider of care at home in the Highland region and is at the forefront of the social care field in Scotland. The former owner wanted to secure the future of the company as an independent Highland company for its employees and service users, and opted for the model of Employee Ownership. In July 2004 a deal was concluded to transfer the ownership of the company into the hands of the employees (now referred to as Partners) by means of loan finance.



In 2007 HHC was introduced to Social Accounting as a model of quality assurance that fitted the organisation. Each year since that initial pilot, HHC has produced a set of social accounts, the majority of which have been successfully presented to an audit panel.



During the social accounting period 2014-15, HHC employed 417 partners. The commitment to full employee-ownership is demonstrated in a number of ways:

- All partners have a vote each year to elect a new employee Director and new Trustee – the elected person serves for 3 years.
- Partners who have worked for HHC for at least 3 months qualify to receive free shares in the Company. Through a Share Incentive Plan (SIP), shares are given to qualifying partners each year to signify their ownership of the company. The shares can be sold back to the company after a certain holding period dictated by the Inland Revenue (HMRC), and the market remains an entirely internal one.

Highland Home Carers continues to expand with 512 service users in the 2014-15 social accounting period. Service users are at the heart of Highland Home Carers and partners work closely with them and their families to provide care and support tailored to their individual needs. HHC provides a high quality flexible service, which allows people to remain independent in the comfort of their own home.

HHC are striving to achieve the following outcomes, and use their social accounting to check on whether they are delivering them:

- Service users retaining their independence; remaining in their own home and community
- Service users being enabled to have choice and control
- Employing local people
- Increasing partners' skill levels & confidence through ongoing training
- Partners being fully included in the company, having a voice within it
- Creating more opportunities for employee development
- Financial benefits for partners (e.g. free share allocation annually)

The longer term impact that HHC hopes to achieve is *'Service Users living healthier, happier and longer by remaining in their own homes. Partners having sustainable employment in their local areas and feeling involved and valued. Contributing to the local economy; keeping money in the local area by using local facilities and suppliers where possible.'*

Highland Home Carers was invited by Co-operative Development Scotland (CDS) in 2007 to enrol in a Social Accounting and Audit Pilot Initiative which was led by the Social Audit Network (SAN). 2014-15 is the eighth set of social accounts that HHC has produced, and on each occasion it has been a home-grown product. Following the success of the initial pilot study, the company realised that social accounting was a valuable method of measuring the quality of the service provided and gauging the company's impact on its main stakeholders. It also enabled HHC to receive vital feedback on performance and areas which require improvement. The information gathered within the social accounts assists HHC to improve practice thus benefiting Service Users and Partners.

The organisation believes that the social accounts report is a valuable tool during the Care Inspectorate's inspection and regulation. Chief Executive Stephen Pennington describes how *'the social accounting process helps us to concentrate on the areas that need attention. He also believes that 'the Social Accounts Report helps us to promote our Company. We have evolved in our use of Social Accounts from being primarily a descriptive process of what we are doing, to attempting to measure outcomes. This is an ongoing process, and I think we are learning all the time.*

The following quotations are taken from the 2014-15 social accounts:

'Extremely pleased with the level of care to me, not just my needs' (Service User).

'They really do care - it's not just a job to them and this is so very evident in their quality they give. They get to know and understand the person's way of life and fit in to that. They are adaptable. All this adds quality to my aunt's life and makes a big difference also to us as a family. Thank you' (Family member).

'HHC provides professional services to a wide variety of Service Users with personal touches tailored to the individual's needs which sets us aside from other firms, HHC see the people not just the job - we are there to do' (Partner).

'I think HHC is a fair and good employer, and is also one of the best examples of employee ownership I know. The company constantly reviews how the employee owners are involved in the business, and consistently reviews the model to ensure it is fit for purpose' (Non-Executive Trustee).

Further information can be found at Highland Home Carers' website www.highland-home-carers.co.uk