

Alpha Community Care Limited

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Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service	Good ●
Is the service safe?	Good ●
Is the service effective?	Good ●
Is the service caring?	Good ●
Is the service responsive?	Good ●
Is the service well-led?	Good ●

Summary of findings

Overall summary

Alpha Community Care Ltd is a domiciliary care agency registered to provide personal care to people in their own homes.

Not everyone who used the service received personal care. CQC only inspects where people receive personal care. This is help with tasks related to personal hygiene and eating. Where they do, we also consider any wider social care provided. At the time of the inspection, 19 people were using the service, of which six people were receiving support with personal care.

People's experience of using this service and what we found

People told us they felt safe and staff were kind and caring. Staff understood how to protect people from harm or discrimination and had access to safeguarding adults' procedures. There were sufficient numbers of staff deployed to meet people's needs and ensure their safety. Although no new staff had been employed by the agency since 2019, the registered manager had appropriate recruitment procedures to ensure any prospective staff were suitable to work for the service.

The registered manager carried out risk assessments to enable people to retain their independence and receive care with minimum risk to themselves or others. People were protected from the risks associated with the spread of infection. People received their medicines safely and were supported to eat and drink in accordance with their care plan.

People were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible; the policies and systems in the service supported this practice. People's needs were assessed prior to them using the service. The provider had arrangements for the induction of new staff and provided regular training updates for existing staff. Staff were supported by the registered manager. People were helped to access healthcare services, as appropriate.

People and their relatives told us staff were caring and always showed kindness, sensitivity and respect. People and where appropriate their relatives had been consulted about their care needs and were closely involved in their ongoing care and support. Staff respected people's privacy and dignity. Staff were motivated and demonstrated a clear commitment to providing dignified and compassionate support. People were supported and encouraged to maintain and build their level of independence. People and their relatives had access to a complaints procedure, if they wished to raise a concern.

The registered manager and supervisor carried out a number of audits to check the quality and safety of the service. The registered manager provided clear leadership and took into account the views of people, their relatives and staff on the quality of care provided. The registered manager was committed to making ongoing improvements to the service. She agreed to carry out a satisfaction survey within two weeks of the inspection and record ongoing meetings with the nominated individual to provide evidence of the provider's oversight of the service. All people, staff and relatives praised the care provided and the

management of the service.

For more details, please see the full report which is on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) website at www.cqc.org.uk

Rating at last inspection

The last rating for the service at a previous address was good, published on 16 August 2019.

Why we inspected

This was the first inspection of the service following the provider's move to new premises.

Follow up

We will continue to monitor information we receive about the service, which will help inform when we next inspect.

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

Good ●

The service was safe.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Is the service effective?

Good ●

The service was effective.

Details are in our effective findings below.

Is the service caring?

Good ●

The service was caring.

Details are in our caring findings below.

Is the service responsive?

Good ●

The service was responsive.

Details are in our responsive findings below.

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service was well-led.

Details are in our well-led findings below.

Alpha Community Care Limited

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

The inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (the Act) as part of our regulatory functions. We checked whether the provider was meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Act. We looked at the overall quality of the service and provided a rating for the service under the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

Inspection team

The inspection was carried out by one inspector.

Service and service type

This service is a domiciliary care agency. It provides personal care to people living in their own houses and flats.

The service had a manager registered with CQC. This means that they and the provider are legally responsible for how the service is run and for the quality and safety of the care provided.

Notice of inspection

We gave the service two working days' notice of the inspection. This was because it is a small service and we needed to be sure the registered manager would be in the office to support the inspection.

Inspection activity started on 1 March 2022 and ended on 2 March 2022. We visited the location's office on both days.

What we did before the inspection

We reviewed information we had received about the service. We also sought feedback from the local authority.

We used the information the provider sent us in the provider information return (PIR). This is information providers are required to send us annually with key information about their service, what they do well, and improvements they plan to make. We used all this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

During the inspection, we visited the office and spoke with the registered manager. We also spoke with three people using the service, three relatives and three members of staff over the telephone.

We reviewed a range of records. This included two people's care records and associated documentation including medicines records. We also looked at the staff training records and a variety of records relating to the management of the service, including audits and policies and procedures.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

Safe – this means we looked for evidence that people were protected from abuse and avoidable harm.

This is the first inspection of this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- People were protected from the risk of abuse or avoidable harm. One person told us, "I feel very safe with all the staff. They support me in every way." Relatives had no concerns for the safety of their family members. One relative said, "I feel, [Family member] is completely safe. It's great to see them so happy and content."
- The registered manager and staff understood safeguarding matters and were aware of when to report incidents and safeguarding concerns to other agencies. All staff had received regular training in safeguarding vulnerable adults.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management; Learning lessons when things go wrong

- Risks to people's personal safety were assessed, monitored and managed effectively. People's care plan documentation included a series of risk assessments, which had considered risks associated with the person's environment, their care and treatment, medicines and any other factors.
- The provider had a business continuity plan which described how people would continue to receive a service in the event of adverse circumstances.
- There had been no accidents or incidents, however, systems were in place to record and investigate any such events.
- Various methods had been established to ensure any lessons learned from observations of people's care were quickly communicated to the staff team.

Staffing and recruitment

- A sufficient number of staff was deployed to meet people's needs in a person-centred way. People told us they usually received care from the same team of staff. This meant there was a good level of consistency and staff were familiar with people's needs and preferences. One person told us, "I love all the carers. They are all absolutely brilliant. They have a positive affect on my life in every way."
- The registered manager had not recruited any new staff since November 2019. We noted there were appropriate policies and procedures in the event additional staff needed to be employed.

Using medicines safely

- Medicines were managed safely. The provider's systems and processes were designed to ensure people had the level of support they needed to manage and take their medicines safely.
- Staff had access to best practice guidance and appropriate policies and procedures. Staff were trained to administer medicines and checks were carried out on their practice.
- Staff maintained electronic records following the administration of medicines. The care supervisor

checked the records at least once a month.

Preventing and controlling infection

- The provider had systems to help prevent and control the spread of infection and staff had received training on this topic. Staff had access to an infection prevention and control policy and procedure. Staff were provided with personal protective equipment, including disposable gloves and aprons as well as hand sanitiser. People confirmed staff used the equipment when providing personal care.
- All staff participated in a testing programme. We saw they sent the registered manager proof of a negative lateral flow device test before they started each shift.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

Effective – this means we looked for evidence that people's care, treatment and support achieved good outcomes and promoted a good quality of life, based on best available evidence.

This is the first inspection of this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. This meant people's outcomes were consistently good, and people's feedback confirmed this.

Ensuring consent to care and treatment in line with law and guidance

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) provides a legal framework for making particular decisions on behalf of people who may lack the mental capacity to do so for themselves. The MCA requires that, as far as possible, people make their own decisions and are helped to do so when needed. When they lack mental capacity to take particular decisions, any made on their behalf must be in their best interests and as least restrictive as possible.

People can only be deprived of their liberty to receive care and treatment when this is in their best interests and legally authorised under the MCA. When people receive care and treatment in their own homes an application must be made to the Court of Protection for them to authorise people to be deprived of their liberty. We checked whether the service was working within the principles of the MCA.

- The registered manager and staff had completed appropriate training and applied the principles of the MCA. Staff understood the need to ask people for consent before carrying out care and people using the service confirmed this approach.
- People had signed consent forms to indicate their agreement to the care provided. There were no restrictions placed on people's liberty.

Supporting people to live healthier lives, access healthcare services and support; Staff working with other agencies to provide consistent, effective, timely care

- The registered manager and staff made sure people received appropriate support to meet their healthcare needs. People's physical and mental healthcare conditions were documented within their care plan. This helped staff to recognise any signs of deteriorating health.
- People and relatives told us they were well supported. One relative told us, "Their attention to detail is second to none. They are very proactive, and we find that reassuring."
- The registered manager and staff worked closely with other social care and healthcare professionals as well as other organisations to ensure people received a coordinated service. Appropriate information was shared when people moved between services, to ensure people's needs were known, and care was provided consistently.

Supporting people to eat and drink enough to maintain a balanced diet

- People were supported to eat and drink in line with their needs and preferences.
- The registered manager carried out risk assessments as necessary and monitored people if they were at risk of poor nutrition and hydration.

Assessing people's needs and choices; delivering care in line with standards, guidance and the law

- The provider had established systems to ensure people's individual needs and choices were met. The registered manager completed an assessment prior to a person receiving a service. The assessment considered people's protected characteristics, such as sexuality, religion or belief and all aspects of their needs and choices.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- Staff were provided with appropriate support and training. People and their relatives told us the staff were competent and well trained. One relative said, "The team works well together, and everyone knows what they are doing. It is a five star service."
- New staff were supported through an induction programme, which included the provider's ongoing mandatory training. Staff training was monitored, to ensure staff completed their training in a timely way.
- Staff were provided with one to one supervision and an annual appraisal. This facilitated discussions around work performance, training needs and areas of good practice. The registered manager explained she intended to record the supervision conversations at least every three months.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

Caring – this means we looked for evidence that the service involved people and treated them with compassion, kindness, dignity and respect.

This is the first inspection of this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. At this inspection the rating has remained the same. This meant people were supported and treated with dignity and respect; and involved as partners in their care.

Ensuring people are well treated and supported; respecting equality and diversity

- People's rights were promoted, and person-centred care was delivered. People and their relatives expressed satisfaction with the care provided and made complimentary comments about the staff team. One person told us, "They all do a wonderful job. The care they provide is amazing" and a relative commented, "The staff work to a very high standard."
- The provider promoted and encouraged inclusion. Staff had received training on equality and diversity issues and had access to a set of policies and procedures.
- Staff understood their role in providing people with compassionate care and support. They were knowledgeable and respectful about people's individual needs, backgrounds and personalities.

Supporting people to express their views and be involved in making decisions about their care

- People were given the opportunity to express their views about their care on an ongoing basis. This ensured they were fully involved in decisions about their care and support.
- People told us the staff understood their individual needs and preferences and always accommodated these when delivering their care. One person said, "They always ask me what I want and leave the final decision to me. They want me to feel empowered."
- People were provided with appropriate information about the service. The information included details about what people could expect from the service.

Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- People's privacy, dignity and independence was respected. Staff offered people opportunities to increase their independence and to have freedom and control over their lives. One person told us, "The staff have helped me feel much more confident in going out into the community" and another person commented, "They always promote my independence and make sure I do whatever I want to including visiting friends and going shopping and swimming." All staff spoke warmly and kindly about the people they supported.
- Staff had access to policies and procedures and training about caring for people in a dignified way. This helped to make sure staff understood how they should respect people's privacy and dignity in a care setting.
- Staff understood their responsibilities for keeping people's personal information confidential. People's information was stored and held in line with the provider's policies and current legislation.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

Responsive – this means we looked for evidence that the service met people's needs.

This is the first inspection of this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. At this inspection the rating has remained the same. This meant people's needs were met through good organisation and delivery.

Planning personalised care to ensure people have choice and control and to meet their needs and preferences

- People received personalised care and support specific to their needs and preferences. People told us they were happy with their care and staff responded to any requests made for assistance. One person told us, "Nothing is too much trouble. They always help in every way they can."
- The registered manager had recently implemented a new electronic management system which included care planning. This meant staff had access to people's care plan documentation via a handheld device and could input notes directly on the system.
- Staff understood people's needs and it was clear people were supported to make choices and to take control of their daily lives. Staff documented the care people had received, in a detailed and respectful way.

Meeting people's communication needs

Since 2016 all organisations that provide publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The Accessible Information Standard tells organisations what they have to do to help ensure people with a disability or sensory loss, and in some circumstances, their carers, get information in a way they can understand it. It also says that people should get the support they need in relation to communication.

- The registered manager and staff understood the Accessible Information Standard. People's communication needs were identified and recorded in their care plans. Information was available in a variety of formats and in a way people could understand.

Supporting people to develop and maintain relationships to avoid social isolation; support to follow interests and to take part in activities that are socially and culturally relevant to them

- People were supported to continue hobbies and interests that enhanced their quality of life. The registered manager and staff placed a significant emphasis on the importance of social interaction and people's emotional wellbeing.
- The staff ensured people were supported to attend their chosen activities. This included support to access community facilities.

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- The provider had arrangements for recording, investigating and resolving complaints. The registered manager confirmed she had received no complaints or concerns about the service.

End of life care and support

- At the time of the inspection, there was no one in receipt of end of life care. However, in these circumstances the registered manager explained the service would work closely with health and social care professionals to ensure the comfort and dignity of the person.
- The registered manager explained she intended to add end of life care to the provider's list of staff training.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

Well-led – this means we looked for evidence that service leadership, management and governance assured high-quality, person-centred care; supported learning and innovation; and promoted an open, fair culture.

This is the first inspection of this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. At this inspection the rating has remained the same. This meant the service was consistently managed and well-led. Leaders and the culture they created promoted high-quality, person-centred care.

Managers and staff being clear about their roles, and understanding quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements; Continuous learning and improving care

- The registered manager and staff had a clear understanding of their roles and contributions to service delivery. We found staff morale was good and they felt valued and respected. The registered manager told us she was proud of the dedication and commitment of the staff team.
- The provider had established systems to monitor the quality of the service. The registered manager and the care supervisor carried out audits and monitored the standards and safety of the service.
- The registered manager and nominated individual maintained regular contact, however, discussions and any actions had not been documented. The registered manager assured us records would be re-established to demonstrate provider oversight of the service.
- The registered manager used various communication systems with staff, to ensure continuous learning and improvements took place. Staff told us they were comfortable in raising any issues or concerns and confirmed the registered manager was open to feedback.

How the provider understands and acts on the duty of candour, which is their legal responsibility to be open and honest with people when something goes wrong

- The registered manager understood and acted on the duty of candour responsibilities. She promoted and encouraged candour through openness. Good relationships had been developed between the registered manager, staff and people who used the service.

Promoting a positive culture that is person-centred, open, inclusive and empowering, which achieves good outcomes for people

- The registered manager and staff promoted the provision of person-centred care to achieve the best outcomes for people. Staff confirmed they felt everyone was well supported and they all told us how much they enjoyed their work. One member of staff told us, "I'm very happy working for the company. The communication is excellent, and we all want the best for people."
- Throughout the inspection, people and their relatives spoke positively about the registered manager and the staff team. One relative told us, "I can't fault the service at all. The registered manager and staff are an outstanding group of people." and a person using the service commented, "[Registered manager] is always at the forefront. She is one of the most amazing people I've ever met. They are all in a league of their own."
- Organisational policies and procedures set out what was expected of staff when supporting people. Staff had access to these, and they were familiar with the key policies.

Engaging and involving people using the service, the public and staff, fully considering their equality characteristics; Working in partnership with others

- Staff involved and engaged people in the service and considered their equality characteristics.
- People were actively consulted about the service. During the inspection, the registered manager assured us they would carry out a satisfaction survey to provide another route for people to provide feedback.
- The registered manager and staff worked in partnership with external agencies to learn and share knowledge and information which promoted the continued development of the service.