

Mrs Margaret Elaine Brady

Clifton Homecare

Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Outstanding 

Is the service safe?

Good 

Is the service effective?

Good 

Is the service caring?

Outstanding 

Is the service responsive?

Outstanding 

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding 

Summary of findings

Overall summary

This inspection visit took place on 13 December 2016 and was announced.

This was the services first inspection since its re- registration with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 10 November 2016. This was because the service had moved premises.

Clifton Homecare is a domiciliary care agency, providing personal care to people in their own homes. The agency provides support in the home for older people and people who live with dementia. The agency operates from offices based on Orchard Road in St. Annes. At the time of our inspection visit Clifton Homecare provided services to 36 people.

The registered provider was an individual who also managed the service on a day to day basis. Registered providers are 'registered persons'. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run.

People supported by the service consistently told us staff who visited them were polite, reliable, caring and professional in their approach to their work. They spoke positively about the quality of service provided and how the registered provider and her staff went the extra mile to ensure their needs were met. Comments received included, "The staff who visit me are of the highest quality. I am receiving the best care I could have wished. They are all lovely people and I cannot wait for their visits, they make my day." And, "All my carers are polite and friendly always laughing and joking. They provide a fantastic service and nothing is too much trouble for them."

The service was extremely responsive to supporting people outside their contracted hours. We were repeatedly told of occasions where the service had gone above and beyond what was expected of them. This included attending to one person who was being cared for at end of life who had been stranded due to recent floods in a rural area. With the use of the services 4x4 vehicle they had been able to get to the persons home and provide much needed care and food provisions. The carer of the person couldn't praise and thank the registered provider and her staff enough for responding to their difficult circumstances.

People spoken with consistently referred to the registered provider and her staff as kind and caring people. They told us they valued their relationships with the staff who supported them and the support provided often exceeded what they had requested.

People supported by the service consistently told us they felt safe with the staff who supported them. They told us they received patient and safe care and they liked the staff who supported them. They said staff were respectful, friendly and conscientious.

People's care and support was planned proactively and in partnership with them. People felt consulted and listened to about how their care would be delivered.

Links with health and social care professionals were excellent. Health professionals we spoke with repeatedly praised the standard of care provided and described the service as exceptional.

People were supported by the service to attend healthcare appointments to ensure their health and wellbeing was maintained. One person said, "They come and pick me up in their company car and support me when I have health appointments. I don't know how I would get there without them."

People who used the service were supported to attend outings organised by the service or activities of their choice with the services own transport. On the day of our inspection visit a number of people were attending a local garden centre for afternoon tea and cakes. People spoken with told us they enjoyed these events as they provided them with the opportunity to socialise and make friends.

The service had regularly organised fund raising events including two recent Macmillan coffee mornings. These had been attended by people presently using the service and family members of previous clients. The events had provided people with a good opportunity to socialise with each other, reducing social isolation and loneliness. Some people had exchanged email addresses and regularly communicated with each other.

The service managed safeguarding concerns, accidents and incidents promptly and investigations undertaken had been thorough.

The registered provider understood the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA). This meant they were working within the law to support people who may lack capacity to make their own decisions.

Recruitment procedures were safe with appropriate checks undertaken. Careful consideration had been given to ensure staff offered employment shared the same values and beliefs of the registered provider to deliver high quality care alongside the existing staff team.

Staff and their mix of skills were used innovatively to give them the time to develop positive and meaningful relationships with people to keep them safe and meet their needs. There was a strong emphasis on promoting independence and empowering people wherever possible.

Staff retention was good and people told us they were supported by staff who knew and consistently met their needs.

The service used innovative and creative ways to train and develop their staff and ensured they put their learning into practice to provide an outstanding service.

There was an emphasis on developing staff potential within a positive learning environment to create a high functioning service. Staff were encouraged to become champions in their field of interest including dementia care and safeguarding vulnerable people.

Staff were aware of the need to promote and maintain people's safety whilst taking a person centred approach to risk. This enabled people to take calculated risks which enhanced their well-being.

Staff managed medicines consistently and safely. People told us they received their medicines at the times they needed them and they were happy with the support they received.

There was a strong emphasis on the importance to support people to eat and drink well. Staff were aware of people's individual preferences and had the skills, knowledge and ability to meet their dietary requirements.

People were actively encouraged to give their views and raise a concern or to make a complaint. Information from investigations and compliments had been used effectively to drive quality across the service.

Leadership within the organisation was strong and there was a strong emphasis on continually striving to improve. The service actively sought and listened to the views of people supported by the service and acted promptly where areas of improvement were identified.

The registered provider had a clear vision of what was required of a quality service and this was evident from the feedback we received from people supported by the service.

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

The service was safe.

Recruitment procedures the service had in place were safe.

The provider had robust procedures in place to protect people from abuse and unsafe care. People we spoke with said they felt safe.

Very thorough assessments were undertaken of risks to people who used the service and staff. Written plans were in place to manage these risks.

There were processes for recording accidents and incidents. We saw that appropriate action was taken in response to incidents to maintain the safety of people who used the service.

Staff and their mix of skills were used creatively to give them the time to develop positive and meaningful relationships with people to keep them safe and meet their needs.

Good 

Is the service effective?

The service was effective.

The service took a creative and holistic approach to meeting health needs and focussed on meeting peoples psychological, spiritual and social needs as well as physical need. This increased people's well-being and contributed to positive outcomes.

The service ensured people received effective care that met their needs and wishes. This enabled people to develop confidence and self-autonomy.

The service was committed to promoting an open culture of learning. Staff were encouraged to develop their strengths and interests as a means to promote effective care and to develop a high functioning organisation.

There was a strong emphasis on ensuring people's nutritional needs were met. The service worked very well with other

Good 

professionals to meet need and guidance was actively followed by staff. The service demonstrated innovative ways of meeting dietary needs.

Staff had an understanding of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA).

Is the service caring?

The service was exceptionally caring.

People and their relatives said staff were extremely caring and sensitive to their requirements. We found, without exception, staff went the extra mile to ensure people were safe and happy within their lives.

The registered provider ensured individuals were at the heart of their care. We found in depth care planning and staff approaches underpinned this.

The service understood the importance of encouraging people to maintain their independence. They worked flexibly and innovatively to ensure independence could be achieved and maintained.

When people required support with decision making the service sought advice and guidance from advocacy services.

Outstanding 

Is the service responsive?

The service was very responsive.

The service was very responsive to supporting people and provided care and support that was focused on individual needs, preferences and routines of people they supported.

The registered provider proactively addressed isolation and encouraged people to develop community networks and relationships through community participation. Activities for each person were delivered in a person centred way.

Care plans were in place outlining people's care and support needs. Staff were extremely knowledgeable about people's support needs, their interests and preferences in order to provide a personalised service.

People were supported to maintain and develop relationships with people who mattered to them.

Outstanding 

People knew their comments and complaints would be listened to and responded to.

Is the service well-led?

The service was extremely well-led.

The registered provider actively sought and acted upon the views of others. There was a strong emphasis on continually striving to improve and deliver the best possible service for people.

The registered provider consulted with stakeholders, people they supported and relatives for their input on how the service could continually improve.

A range of audits were in place to monitor the health, safety and welfare of people. Quality assurance was checked upon and action was taken to make improvements, where applicable.

Outstanding 

Clifton Homecare

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection checked whether the provider is meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008, to look at the overall quality of the service, and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014.

This inspection visit took place on 13 December 2016 and was announced. The provider was given 24 hours' notice because the location provides a domiciliary care service to people who lived in the community. We needed to be sure that we could access the office premises.

The inspection team consisted of two adult social care inspectors.

Before our inspection on 13 December 2016 we reviewed the information we held on the service. This included notifications we had received from the provider, about incidents that affect the health, safety and welfare of people the service supported. We also checked to see if any information concerning the care and welfare of people supported had been received.

During our inspection visit we spoke with six people supported by the service and six family members. We also went to the Clifton Homecare office and spoke with a range of people about the service. They included the registered provider, company director, the services administrator and four staff members providing care in the community. We also received comments from ten people after the inspection visit complimenting the service about the exceptionally high standards of support provided.

We looked at the care records of four people, recruitment records of two new staff, training records of four staff members and records relating to the management of the service. We also spoke with the commissioning department at the local authority, two healthcare professionals from the continuing healthcare team and a member of the rapid intervention treatment team. This helped us to gain a balanced overview of what people experienced when accessing the service.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

We spoke with six people supported by the service and six family members. They told us they had confidence in the staff who supported them and felt safe when they received their care. They told us they had the same group of staff who provided their care and they were known and understood their needs and preferences. Comments received included, "I am extremely happy and well supported by my carers. They are very professional, kind and patient with me and I feel very safe in their care." And, "Excellent staff who visit me. They cannot do enough for me and make sure I am safe and well before they leave."

A family member we spoke with said, "I know I don't have to worry about [relative] because they are in safe hands and I have complete peace of mind. It's such a relief because of the bad experiences we have suffered with other services. Clifton Homecare are brilliant."

Care plans seen had risk assessments completed to identify the potential risk of accidents and harm to staff and people in their care. Risk assessments we saw provided clear instructions for staff members when they delivered their support. We also saw the service had undertaken assessments of the environment and any equipment staff used when supporting people. Where potential risks had been identified action taken by the service had been recorded. Training records seen confirmed staff had received moving and handling and health and safety training to ensure they had the knowledge and skills to support people safely when they delivered care.

We saw the service had completed falls risk assessments to identify people who were at a high risk of falling. Following the assessments 15 people had been referred to the falls management team since March 2016. The referral was made to identify equipment and aids which would assist them to manage independently in their home and try to prevent the risks of falls. People we spoke with during our inspection couldn't thank the service enough for their help. One person said, "My life has changed completely thanks to Clifton Homecare. I am so unsteady on my feet but can get around safely now with my walking frame."

The service had purchased an ELK lifting cushion to assist clients up off the floor if they were uninjured or had suffered only minor injuries after a fall. The person can shuffle on to the cushion, or be rolled on from the recovery position and assisted to sit upright. The ELK can then be inflated at the touch of a button with someone supporting the individual from behind to bring them to a raised seated position ready to stand. Following a thorough assessment 13 people had been assisted safely since February 2016 preventing the need for paramedics to be requested.

We looked at recruitment procedures the service had in place. We found relevant checks had been made before two new staff members commenced their employment. These included Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS), and references. A valid DBS check is a statutory requirement for people providing personal care to vulnerable people. Gaps in employment had been explored at interview where a full employment history had not been provided. Two references had been received from previous employers. These provided satisfactory evidence about their conduct in previous employment. These checks were required to ensure new staff were suitable for the role for which they had been employed.

Discussion with the registered provider confirmed careful consideration had been given to ensure staff offered employment shared the same values and beliefs of the registered provider to deliver high quality care alongside the existing staff team.

We looked at how the service was staffed. We did this to make sure there was enough staff on duty at all times to support people in their care. We looked at the services duty rota, spoke with staff and people supported by Clifton Homecare. We found staffing levels were suitable with an appropriate skill mix to meet the needs of people who used the service. Staffing levels were determined by the number of people supported and their individual needs. Staff members spoken with said they were allocated sufficient time to be able to provide support people required. Comments received included, "My visits are really well managed, being a non-driver I am given plenty of travelling time." And, "As a non-driver I am often collected by another staff member using a company car on their way to their visit. It works really well and I have never been late."

We spoke with six people supported by the service. They told us staff who supported them were reliable and never late. Comments received included, "Very reliable service never had any issues with carers arriving late." And, "Very good service always on time."

The service had procedures in place to minimise the potential risk of abuse or unsafe care. Records seen confirmed staff had received safeguarding vulnerable adults training. The staff members we spoke with understood what types of abuse and examples of poor care people might experience. The service had a whistleblowing procedure. Staff spoken with told us they were aware of the procedure. They said they wouldn't hesitate to use this if they had any concerns about their colleagues care practice or conduct. When we undertook this inspection visit there had been no safeguarding concerns raised about staff working for the service.

We looked at procedures the service had in place for assisting people with their medicines. The service arranged for the Chemist to deliver medicines to their premises for people unable to accept delivery themselves. People supported by the service told us how grateful they were for the support provided. One person said, "I don't know how I would get my tablets if it wasn't for them. They have been a god send for me."

Staff were observant and knowledgeable about people's medicines. We were told by a health professional the support people received with their medicines was of the highest standard. They told us they were impressed not just with the safe procedures followed but also staff knowledge of the medicines being administered.

Staff employed by the service received medication training during their induction. Discussion with four staff members confirmed they had been trained and assessed as competent to support people to take their medicines. Six people supported by the service told us they were happy with medication arrangements and received their medicines when they needed them.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

People received effective care because they were supported by an established and trained staff team who had a good understanding of their needs. People consistently told us staff understood their needs and said they were happy with the care and support they received. Comments received included, "I have the same group of carers who know and understand my needs. I have never had a stranger sent to support me." And, "I know all my carers they are brilliant with me. The attention to detail when they visit me is exceptional. They know exactly what I need and how I need it delivering. They never leave unless I am completely satisfied"

There was an emphasis on retaining and promoting physical health for people supported by Clifton Homecare. We spoke to one person who had been a keen swimmer all their life but stopped attending the local swimming pool following an injury to their back. The person told us thanks to the support and encouragement of their carers they were again enjoying swimming. The person said, "Swimming is known to be good for damaged physical bones and muscles. I am enjoying my visits to the pool and can feel the benefits with my health. Many thanks to Clifton Homecare for their help and encouragement."

We saw people's care records included the contact details of their General Practitioner (GP) so staff could contact them if they had concerns about a person's health. We saw where staff had more immediate concerns about a person's health they accessed healthcare services to support the person. People we spoke with said their general health care needs were co-ordinated by themselves or their relatives. However, staff were available to support people to access healthcare appointments in the company's four vehicles if needed.

We spoke with one person who told us they were frail, wheelchair bound and unable get out without support. They told us the service would make an appointment at their doctors for them and then transport them in the services specially adapted car. The person told us the staff member supporting them would sit in on the appointment and help them explain to their doctor why the appointment had been made. The person said, "I don't know what I would do without them. I feel so lucky to have found them. My carer helps me explain my problem and then takes me to the chemist to get my medication. Wonderful service, second to none."

Health professionals spoken with repeatedly described the service as professional, caring, efficient and consistent. One healthcare professional said staff working for the service had an excellent knowledge of how to support people living with mental health. They told us about how they had been able to support one person who was isolated and wouldn't leave the house. With support and encouragement from the service the person had begun to attend a day centre. The healthcare professional said what the service achieved with the person was exceptional and completely turned their life around. The healthcare professional told us the service had not only made a difference to the person concerned but to the team they worked in. They told us they could not think of another agency that came close to their standards.

There was an emphasis on developing staff potential within a positive learning environment to create a high

functioning service. Staff were encouraged to become champions in their field of interest including dementia care and safeguarding vulnerable people. These skills were then shared within the staff team to create more positive outcomes for people who used the service. The registered provider said champions offered peer support to other staff if they had particular concerns. They told us it encouraged creative thinking and personalised solutions. This promoted more effective care and positive outcomes for people who used the service. For example one person supported by the service had recently gone into a rest home for respite care following a fall at home. The person who lived with dementia was visited by their regular carers to help maintain their relationship with them. We saw from the persons care notes when they returned home they had been able to settle quickly and get back in to their normal routine.

We spoke with four staff members, looked at individual training records and the services training matrix. All recently appointed staff had been enrolled on the Care Certificate which is a set of standards that social care and health workers follow in their daily working life. It is the minimum standards that should be covered as part of induction training of new care workers. Existing staff had achieved or were working towards national care qualifications. Records seen confirmed training provided by the service covered a range subjects including safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005, moving and handling and first aid. This ensured people were supported by staff who had the right competencies, knowledge, qualifications and skills.

The four staff we spoke with told us they each had an individual training and development programme to help ensure they had the skills and knowledge to provide safe and effective care for people who used the service. They told us the registered provider took training seriously and understood the importance of having a well trained workforce. One staff member said, "The training made available to us excellent, I have never known anything like it with the other agencies I have worked for. It's all about ensuring we have the knowledge and skills to give people the best support possible." Another staff member said, "I am really excited about working for Clifton Homecare. I have discussed my personal development with the provider and I am being supported to source training of interest to me."

People supported by the service and healthcare professionals consistently told us staff who worked for the service displayed a level of professionalism they had not previously witnessed from homecare services. Two healthcare professionals told us the service had a very good reputation and was the homecare service they always turned to when they required support for their clients. We were told this was because the staff displayed the right competencies, knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes and could be relied on to provide an excellent service.

The registered provider and senior staff regularly attended conferences and training workshops to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. Training recently attended included advanced techniques for administering feed and medications via a gastrostomy tube carried out by Abbot nurses. Cough assist and nebuliser training had also been provided by physiotherapists. This training was completed so the service could support people with these needs. When we undertook this inspection six staff had been trained in these techniques. The registered provider told us following the training the service had been able to commence supporting people with these specialised needs.

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 Act 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.

The registered manager demonstrated an understanding of the legislation as laid down by the Mental

Capacity Act (MCA) 2005. Discussion with the registered manager confirmed she was aware of the process to assess capacity and the fact that it is decision specific. Staff spoken with demonstrated a good awareness of the code of practice and confirmed they had received training in these areas. They told us they understood procedures needed to be followed if people's liberty was to be restricted for their safety.

Records seen and staff spoken with confirmed regular supervision and annual appraisals were in place. These are one to one meetings held on a formal basis with their line manager. Staff told us they could discuss their development, training needs and their thoughts on improving the service. We spoke with four staff members attending the office. They told us they felt well supported and enjoyed working for the service. One staff member said, "I have worked for a number of care agencies but have never had the support I receive here. We have regular supervision and get feedback about our performance and discuss our professional development. It's a good service to work for."

The service used a diet and nutrition assessment using the MUST (malnutrition universal screening tool) to calculate body mass index and risk of malnutrition. This helped to identify people supported by the service who were at risk at an early stage of weight loss due to poor nutrition. The care plan of one person had documented that following assessment a referral had been made to a dietitian because they were underweight. Care notes showed following the referral nutritional supplements and healthy eating had been encouraged. The notes confirmed the person had gradually put on weight and their health had improved.

Food preparation at mealtimes was completed by staff members with the assistance of people they support where appropriate. Staff told us people decided each day the meals they wanted. Staff spoken with during our inspection visit confirmed they had received training in food safety and were aware of safe food handling practices. People supported with meal preparation told us they were happy with the arrangements in place. One person said, "The staff who visit me are very competent and I am happy with the support I receive with my meals."

Is the service caring?

Our findings

People who used the service, their relatives and healthcare professionals were extremely complimentary and enthusiastic about the registered provider and her staff. Comments received included, "My [relatives] would not be able to continue living at home without them. The provider and her staff provide their services with professionalism and loving care." And, "I have had family who were supported by other services and it wasn't a positive experience. It was hard to have to accept support again. I cannot stress enough how they go above and beyond what they are paid for. The care and compassion provided is amazing."

People spoken with consistently referred to the registered provider and her staff as kind and caring people. One person we spoke with told us how they struggled coping when their family member became ill. They told us how Clifton Homecare had repeatedly provided a service beyond what had been requested and paid for. We were told how the registered provider had on several occasions provided support on their day off when the person had told them they were struggling to cope. The person told us if they needed anything it was there immediately and the boost they got from the support was exceptional. The person said being able to leave [relative] with the carers because they were so confident they were getting the best possible care was amazing. The person said, "The management of the care package is faultless, they have thought of everything. If I am struggling they will come out and support me. We needed the best care possible and we got it. It always feels like friends are here to provide the support not care workers."

Staff consistently told us the organisation had a caring ethos and positive caring relationships were nurtured and encouraged. Staff said they had the flexibility to respond if people were in need or if people were distressed. They told us they were supported to stay extra to ensure people were happy and content before leaving them. This caring nature was extended to supporting relatives too.

We spoke with six family members of people supported by Clifton Homecare. Without exception they all told us about the positive experience they had experienced with the service supporting them as well as their loved one. Comments received included, "They are absolutely amazing, truly caring and conscientious people every one of them. They couldn't provide better care if they were paid a million pounds. I cannot think of anything they could improve on." And, "I don't live locally so it's such a relief to know [relative] is in their care. They provide exceptional support. On [relatives] birthday they arrived with a cake and went to the post office to collect my present because [relative] hadn't answered the door in time." And, "When times are hard they put extra care in for us. Without them [relative] would be in a care home."

Staff told us they visited the same people which enabled relationships to be built and maintained. This promoted continuity of care and created satisfaction. Staff were allocated tasks to ensure the relationships had been nurtured and promoted. For instance, they were responsible for purchasing gifts on birthdays and at Christmas for each person they supported. The carers also assisted people's relatives with purchasing presents if they were not sure what to buy them or don't live locally. Staff also kept people they visited informed about events organised by the service including group outings and fund raising events.

Throughout our inspection people consistently told us about how Clifton Homecare provided a service

exceeding what had been commissioned and agreed. For example the service had identified ten people who they supported who lived alone and wouldn't be getting a home cooked meal on Christmas day. The registered provider had made arrangements for all ten people to receive a home cooked Christmas meal which she would be delivering on Christmas day.

We looked at the care records of four people and found a person centred culture which encouraged people to express their views. We saw evidence people had been involved in developing their care plans. This demonstrated people were encouraged to express their views about how their care and support was delivered. The plans contained information about people's current needs as well as their wishes and preferences. The registered provider told us it was important her staff understood people's past lives and she encouraged her staff to see people as individuals not just as a person who received a service. This was reflected in the positive feedback we received about staff from the people we spoke with.

People supported by the service told us they were very satisfied staff who visited them had up to date information about their needs. They told us staff listened to them and their care was delivered in the way they wanted. Comments received included, "They are doing a first class job for me, I couldn't be happier. They are very organised and know exactly what they are doing. Everything is completed to my complete satisfaction." And, "My carers are the best they will do anything for me. They have just been to the chemist and collected my medicines for me. Never leave without making sure I am happy and don't need anything."

The four staff we spoke with showed they had an excellent understanding and an appreciation of people's individual needs around privacy and dignity. People supported by the service told us staff spoke with them in a respectful way and they were treated with dignity during delivery of their personal care. They told us they were always treated with kindness and compassion and liked the staff who supported them. One person we spoke with said, "The staff who visit me are very polite, caring and helpful. They treat me ever so well and I feel blessed to be looked after by them. Their visits are the highlight of my day."

We spoke with one staff member about occasions where they thought the support provided had made a difference to the person supported and their family members. They told us about one person who lived with a family member who was their main carer. The family member had to go into hospital and the person did not want to go into care. Clifton Homecare amended the person's care package at the family's request to provide support over 24 hours. Carers assisted the person to visit their relative in hospital in their own time. The support provided had removed unnecessary stress and anxiety for family members who did not live locally and had busy working lives. The carer told us the registered provider had remained in constant contact with the family members keeping them updated about their family members.

We spoke with the registered provider about access to advocacy services should people require their guidance and support. The registered provider had information details that could be provided to people and their families if this was required. This ensured people's interests would be represented and they could access appropriate services outside of the service to act on their behalf if needed.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

We found the service provided outstanding care and support that was focused on individual needs, preferences and routines of people they supported. People we spoke with consistently praised the responsiveness of the management team and their ability to support them to express their views and wishes. This enabled people to make informed choices and decisions about their care and support. Comments received included, "The staff who support me are excellent. I am very comfortable in their care and get on with them all. They are very reliable and have never let me down or been late." And, "They are a very responsive service and will come out straight away if there is a problem."

The service worked in partnership with other professionals to meet the needs of people in their care. Health professionals we spoke with repeatedly praised the standard of care provided and described the service as exceptional, professional, reliable and responsive.

We spoke with one healthcare professional who told us about the support the service had provided for one person living with mental health problems. We were told the person lived in appalling conditions which were a health and safety hazard. With the persons permission the service liaised with social services and arranged for a two week short stay in a care home. During this time the persons flat was completely transformed and was clean and tidy on the persons return. The healthcare professional told us the skills and level of professionalism shown by the carers when working with the person had been outstanding and had made a big difference to their life. They told us the person accepted for the first time in their life personal care support from Clifton Homecare and attended the social outings organised by them. The healthcare professional told us the support provided had reduced the person's social isolation and transformed their life.

The service was very responsive to supporting people outside their contracted hours. We were repeatedly told of occasions where the service had exceeded what was expected of them. This included attending to one person who was being cared for at end of life who had been stranded due to recent floods in a rural area. Although outside their contracted hours they used the services 4x4 vehicle to get to the persons home and provide much needed care and food provisions. The carer of the person couldn't praise and thank the registered provider and her staff enough for responding to their difficult circumstances.

One person told us of the many occasions where the registered provider had visited their relative out of hours when they had become confused and distressed. The person told us they didn't live locally and couldn't be there for [relative] when they needed them. The person said they were always able to contact the service whatever time of the day and they knew they would respond and keep them informed about their family member's welfare. The person said, "On one occasion [relative] pressed their personal alarm three times during the night. The provider visited [relative] on all three occasions and then contacted me to let me know they were alright. The peace of mind this gave me cannot be described."

Three healthcare professionals spoken with all told us how extremely responsive and professional the service was when they needed to commission their services. One healthcare worker told us about a serious

safeguarding incident experienced by one person who was in receipt of end of life care. As the incident involved a family member this meant the person would be alone in their home. The healthcare professional told us Clifton Homecare responded immediately when contacted for assistance and provided a member of staff to look after the person until other family members arrived. We were told the speed of the response was exceptional and had ensured the safety of the person until their family members arrived. Healthcare professionals spoken with told us they never considered other services until they had spoken with Clifton Homecare.

People who used the service were supported to attend outings organised by them or activities of their choice with the services own transport. On the day of our inspection visit a number of people were attending a local garden centre for afternoon tea and cakes. People spoken with told us they enjoyed these events as they provided them with the opportunity to socialise and make friends. We spoke with two people who were going on the outing. One person said, "I am so excited I have been looking forward to the trip all day. Before I started using Clifton Homecare I never got out much because of my mobility. They have a specially adapted car which means I can join in. I have made lots of friends and I no longer feel lonely and isolated."

In addition to group outings the services vehicles were used to support people accessing individual activities of their choice. We saw people had been swimming and supported shopping. One person who had a love of horses had been taken to a local farm. Throughout the inspection people supported by Clifton Homecare couldn't praise high enough the service they received. One person said, "I cannot believe how lucky I am to have found this agency. As well as organising group outings which I love they will also take us out on our own. What a brilliant service."

The service had regularly organised fund raising events including two recent Macmillan coffee mornings. These had been attended by people who used the service and family members of previous clients. The events had provided people with a good opportunity to socialise with each other, reducing social isolation and loneliness. Some people had exchanged email addresses and regularly communicated with each other. One person we spoke with said, "I have made so many friends since I was introduced to Clifton Homecare, I had no idea I would have access to all these activities. I no longer feel lonely and have a very busy life."

In addition the service organised support groups which people could attend at the services premises. These were organised four times a year and the people supported by the service could choose who they wanted as a guest speaker. The most recent guest speaker had been a community fund raiser from The Royal British Legion in October 2016. The speaker spoke about the poppy appeal and how the British Legion spends the money donated. We were told people supported by the service were transported by car to the service premises and afternoon tea and cakes were provided. The community fund raiser told us during the meeting it had become apparent that some of the people present could actually be entitled to support from The Royal British Legion and this was being looked into.

People supported by the service told us they found the services office staff were very responsive if they contacted them. We were informed they were quick to respond if they needed an extra visit or additional support. For example people told us they could contact the office and ask for amendments to their care package. Comments received included, "They are incredibly responsive when you need them they will do anything for you. We get so much support which isn't in our care package." And, "The staff are all brilliant. They will come out and support you on their day off. I have never experienced that with the other agencies I have used."

During our inspection visit at the Clifton Homecare office we observed office staff dealing with calls from people supported by the service. We saw they were polite and professional in how they dealt with the calls

and responded to the caller efficiently. We noted the office staff knew the people making the calls and were familiar with the service they received. Requests made for additional support were dealt with immediately.

We looked at care records of four people. We found they were person centred, informative and enabled us to identify how staff supported people with their daily routines and personal care needs. Care plans were flexible and had been regularly reviewed for their effectiveness with the person supported. The service had responded to the changing needs of people by updating care records. For example, following a review of their care package one person had agreed to increase their visits from Clifton Homecare because they were struggling to cope with the support provided. We saw it had been documented on the care plan the person had discussed their care needs and had consented to their care package being amended. Discussion with staff confirmed they were informed promptly when changes to people's care had been required. This ensured they had up to date information about the care needs of people they support.

The service had a complaints procedure which was made available to people they supported and their family members. The procedure was clear in explaining how a complaint should be made and reassured people these would be responded to appropriately. Contact details for external organisations including social services and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) had been provided should people wish to refer their concerns to those organisations.

Although the service had a system in place for recording complaints none had been received when we undertook our inspection. People supported by Clifton Homecare, their family members and healthcare professionals only had positive comments to make about the service. People supported by the service confirmed they understood the services complaint procedure and knew how to make a complaint if needed.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

People supported by the service, their family members and healthcare professionals told us the registered provider and her management team were very supportive, caring and led the service extremely well. Comments received included, "Excellent service run by caring and professional people." And, "This is the best homecare service I have had dealings with. The level of professionalism provided leaves them head and shoulders above other services in my opinion."

Staff spoken with were positive in their comments about the registered provider and the way the service was run. They told us they liked and respected the registered provider and it was a pleasure to work for her. One staff member said Clifton Homecare had supported a family member and they had been very impressed with the standards provided. The staff member said, "I had never considered a career in care until I came in contact with Clifton Homecare. I was amazed with the service they provided and it made me want to work for them." Another staff member said, "I was looking for a company that looked after its staff as well as their clients. They are a family run business and you are made to feel part of the family. I knew when I arrived for my interview they were for me."

We spoke with the registered provider about the culture of the service. They told us the people they supported were at the centre of everything they were trying to achieve. The registered provider said, "We want people to know when they commission our services they will receive the best care and support available. That we will go that extra mile and be there for them whenever they need us."

We found the service had clear lines of responsibility and accountability with a structured management team in place. The management team were experienced, knowledgeable and familiar with the needs of the people they supported. Discussion with members of the management team confirmed they were clear about their role and between them provided a well run and consistent service. Comments received from six people supported by the service included, "Absolutely a top class service which cannot be improved on. They have made a massive difference to my life not just with the support provided but all the recreational activities they organise. I love attending them and have made so many friends." And, "The managers and carers are all brilliant. Really well run service, I have had nothing but praise for them from day one."

The service had systems and procedures in place to monitor and assess the quality of their service. These included seeking views of people they support through satisfaction surveys. People were asked a number of questions. These included asking if care workers arrived at a time that suits you, do staff arrive on time, do you always receive the same care worker, do care workers do the things you want done and asking how the service could be improved. The surveys had been summarised and although feedback was generally positive an action plan had been produced to address areas where people felt improvements could be made. This showed the service listened and responded to the views of the people they supported and their family members.

Comments received in surveys included, 'Staff are helpful, flexible and adaptable. I know if I am poorly you will be there for me', And, 'Very caring and professional service. You provide a flexible service and excellent

care. You have good staff and I feel confident that [relatives] care is in good hands.'

The service had also completed an employee satisfaction survey in November 2016 and again we noted positive feedback. Comments received included, 'The in-house and external training sessions are thorough, detailed and suitable for my day to day work activities.' And, 'I think Clifton Homecare are a well established company with a management team giving full support to their staff.'

Additional quality monitoring procedures in place included home visit assessments. People supported by the service confirmed they were regularly visited and asked for feedback about the service they received. One person we spoke with said, "Senior carers arrive to make sure my care worker has arrived and everything is alright. They needn't worry I have never had any concerns or worries about anything."

The registered provider had actively sought and acted upon the views of people they supported. There was a strong emphasis on continually striving to improve their service in order to deliver the best possible care for people supported by Clifton Homecare. This was supported by a variety of systems and methods to assess and monitor the quality of the service. We found regular audits had been completed by the service. These included medication, complaints, financial records, training, staff supervision arrangements and reviewing care plan records. Any issues found on audits were quickly acted upon and any lessons learnt to improve the service going forward. For example we saw of a review of an accident one person experienced in their home had resulted in the persons care package being increased to two carers and the installation of grab rails in their home.

The service had recently received recognition for the high standard of their business by being awarded the Be Inspired Business Award (BIBAS). The BIBAs is Lancashire's largest and longest running business awards programme. The award is run by the North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce who take a meticulous approach to their judging process. This had involved the registered provider and her management team completing intensive interview sessions and the judges visiting their business onsite to get a first-hand look and feel about how business operated. Every category had experts relevant to their individual sector judging business. Staff and relatives of people supported by the service were also interviewed. Questions asked included was the registered provider approachable and how did staff find the training provided for them. The relatives of people supported were asked if the registered provider was approachable and if they adapted care packages to meet their relatives changing needs. They were also asked by the judges why they had been prepared to be interviewed and give their views about Clifton Homecare.

The registered provider told us winning the award had given the people they support and their family members the confidence that they were dealing with a reputable company and the service that their loved ones received was well led. We spoke with the family members of six people who were all aware of the BIBAS award. They told us the award gave them peace of mind that their loved ones were looked after by a professional company and they were safe in their own homes. The relative of one person said, "They really are an outstanding service and the award they won was well deserved. Everything about the organisation of the service is faultless they are that good."

The registered provider worked closely with healthcare professionals in the continuing healthcare team and rapid intervention treatment team providing outstanding care. Feedback we received from both teams was consistent about the quality of service the registered provider and her carers provided. We were told Clifton Homecare showed a level of professionalism and commitment to the service they provided which ensured they helped to improve people's lives. We were told the service responded quickly and efficiently in emergency situations and made a difference to people struggling to cope in their own home.

The service worked in partnership with other organisations to make sure they were following current practice, providing a high quality service and the people in their care were safe. These included social services and the fire service. For example following contact from social services Clifton Homecare attended one person who had been assessed as a safeguarding concern regarding fire safety in their home. Following assessment of the persons home Clifton Homecare liaised with the fire service who attended the property and completed fire safety checks. Unsafe fire heaters were removed and replaced with oil filled radiators and fire detectors fitted within the property. This ensured the person lived in a safer environment and was no longer at risk of potential harm.

We found throughout the inspection the registered provider was extremely focused on providing the best possible person centred and holistic care. This involved the provision of personal care, practical support within the home, social and emotional support. We also found the service was extremely effective at responding to emergency situations to prevent unnecessary admissions to care homes and hospital.