

Mrs. Catherine Mary Telford

Grace Homecare







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?	Requires improvement	

Overall summary

We carried out an announced inspection of Grace Homecare on 16 September 2015. We gave the provider 48 hours' notice of our visit to make sure the manager or their representative would be available.

Grace Homecare provides personal care services to people in their own homes, with 33 people using the service at the time of our inspection. This was the first time that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) had inspected the service.

The registered provider was also the manager of the service. Registered managers have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run. The registered manager was unavailable on the day of the inspection, however we spoke with them after our visit.

Recruitment practices were robust and the registered provider undertook spot checks and asked people for

Summary of findings

feedback so that they could monitor the safety and effectiveness of the service. People told us that they felt safe receiving care from Grace Homecare and that their privacy and dignity were well respected.

Staff were knowledgeable and received regular training after their induction. They told us that they understood people's care needs because they were well documented and the registered provider ensured that they were alerted to any changes in these needs.

People told us that they were well supported with food and drink and that staff knew their likes and dislikes. Staff demonstrated good knowledge of how to promote healthy choices.

The registered manager and senior staff demonstrated that they had knowledge of the performance of the service but had not developed sufficiently robust quality assurance systems which enabled them to evidence this in their records. The registered manager told us that they had started work to improve this immediately after our visit.

Summary of findings

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.

Staff had a good knowledge of safeguarding procedures and how to put these into practice.

There was a robust recruitment policy in place.

Risk to people was well assessed and staff had access to clear information which enabled them to support people appropriately.

Good



Is the service effective?

The service was effective.

Staff had the skills and knowledge to meet people's needs.

Staff received supervision from senior staff.

People were supported to access healthcare appointments.

Good



Is the service caring?

The service was caring.

All the people we spoke with said they had very good relationships with the staff.

People told us that the staff were mindful of their dignity and privacy when carrying out personal care.

People were involved in making decisions about their care.

Good



Is the service responsive?

The service was responsive.

The service responded to people's health care needs.

Care plans were in place at the service and people were involved in the review of these.

People were confident that complaints would be responded to.

Good



Is the service well-led?

The service was not consistently well led.

The auditing systems in place were informal and not recorded.

Staff told us that they were well supported by the registered provider.

The registered provider had mechanisms in place which allowed people to provide feedback on the services they received.

Requires improvement



Grace 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 was planned to check 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.

The inspection took place on 16 September 2015 and was announced. The provider was given 48 hours' notice because the location provides a domiciliary care service and we needed to be sure that someone would be in the office, as sometimes managers are out supporting staff or visiting people who use the service.

Prior to inspection we reviewed all the information held about the service. The provider had not been asked to provide a provider information return (PIR). This is a

document that provides relevant up to date information about the agency that is provided by the manager or owner of the agency to the Care Quality Commission. The service provided personal care to 32 people at the time of the inspection.

Our inspection team consisted of two adult social care inspectors and an expert by experience. An expert by experience is a person who has personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses this type of care service. Their area of expertise was in supporting people to use domiciliary care agencies. We visited the provider's office and spoke to senior staff involved in the management of the service. We looked at the care records of four people, reviewed the records of four staff and records relating to the management of the service. We spoke with the registered provider by phone after our visit. We also spoke with three staff, ten people who used the service and one person's relative.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

Everyone we spoke with said they felt safe receiving care from Grace Homecare. People told us that knowing who would be coming to see them was a significant factor in feeling safe. One person told us "I like the fact that they send a rota out each week so that we know who will be coming to us and when. This stops me from worrying about whether someone will actually turn up when they are supposed to. This happened at the last agency we used and was one of the main reasons for changing to this company nearly two years ago. I have to say we are both very happy about the care we now receive." Another said "My carers are so friendly and really want to help me, this in turn helps make me feel safe when they are here and doing the things for me that I need them to do."

A safeguarding policy was in place and staff we spoke with were very knowledgeable about signs of potential abuse and their responsibility to report this. They had completed training in safeguarding of vulnerable adults and could tell us what they would do if they suspected that a person was being abused.

We looked at the care files of three people using the service and saw a variety of risk assessments in place. These contained clear information about the type of risk and how to minimise this. Staff told us they looked at these before providing care and received an alert of any changes by text message from the office. Although the assessments included a review date we found the service had been inconsistent in recording that this had been done. For example in one care file we saw that the hazard identification and domestic risk assessments had review dates in May and June of 2015 but there was no record of this having been carried out. In another care file we saw

risk assessments had been reviewed and the person had signed the review. This meant that the service did not always have up to date information about risk and how to minimise this. The registered manager told us that they would take immediate action to rectify this.

There were sufficient staff available to provide care, and the care co-ordinator told us staff alerted the office immediately if they believed they could not attend a call. They told us "We log and track our calls, and staff sort any problems straight away. We speak to the people using the service. We have never missed a call completely." People who used the service told us that this was the case. One person said "I never have any problems with very late calls, nor have I ever had a missed call."

The service carried out appropriate background checks on staff. We looked at the recruitment records of six staff and found that references had been sought and identity checked using documents including passports and driving licenses. Checks had been made with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The DBS is a national agency that holds information about criminal records and persons who are barred from working with vulnerable people. This helps employers make safer recruitment decisions. Staff undertook a three month induction programme during which they shadowed visits and received monthly supervision from senior staff. In addition all staff received a copy of a comprehensive employee handbook which contained information about the organisation, policies and how to keep people safe.

People told us that they were happy with the support that they received with their medication. One person told us "They help me with my medication once a day and always make sure they sign for it in my paperwork before they go."

Is the service effective?

Our findings

People we spoke with told us that the care workers were well trained and had the necessary skills to provide care for them. One person said "I really find it helpful that the carers are so well trained because it can be so tiring having to explain over and over again how it is you want something to be done. I find that once I have explained something they very rarely forget what I have said and this makes such a world of difference to me." Another told us "We've never had any problems with the carers, they all seem to know what they are doing even down to how I like the ironing done for us." Staff told us that they had regular training which enabled them to provide care for people. One member of staff told us "I asked [the manager] for some dementia training and they put me on it a month later." Although staff told us they had regular training we found that records of this were not up to date. For example in one staff member's file we saw that training in dementia awareness, mental capacity and autism awareness were due to be refreshed in 2014 but there was no record of this being done.

Staff told us they had regular supervision with the management of the service. One told us "I have supervision three or four times a year, we talk about my performance, training needs and my future development." Another said "We talk about any issues every three months or so." We looked at records of these meetings and found that they were inconsistent. For example for one member of staff we saw evidence of three supervision meetings in November 2014, April 2015 and July 2015. In another we saw records of two meetings in November 2014 and May 2015. The supervision policy in place at the service stated 'Employees will be invited to a supervision session from their manager or supervisor at least four times each year.' We talked to the registered provider about this. They agreed that they had not recorded dates of supervision accurately in staff's records and would take immediate action to improve this.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) monitors the operation of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

which applies to providers of care and are part of the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005. They aim to make sure that people are looked after in a way that does not inappropriately restrict their freedom. The MCA is legislation in place to protect people who are unable to make decisions for themselves and ensure that any decisions are made in people's best interests. We saw evidence in staff files of mental capacity training and staff were aware of what to do if they had concerns about a person's capacity. At the time of the inspection people receiving support from Grace Home Care were able to make their own decisions, however staff we spoke with were knowledgeable about how people's capacity could vary and the ways in which they could be appropriately supported with decision making. They told us that they had received training in mental capacity and we saw evidence of this in training records..

People's care plans contained a detailed and person-centred assessment of their needs which had been carried out prior to receiving care. People's preferences were documented and there was contact information for other health professionals involved in the person's care such as GP, Occupational Therapist and Support Worker. The care plans contained information about people's health so that staff could provide appropriate support.

People told us that they were well supported with their own choice of food and drink, and said staff knew their preferences. One person said "I was asked what particular foods I like to eat when I first sat down with one of the supervisors to talk about my care needs. I'm getting rather old and rather fussy in my eating habits so it's really important to me that my carers know what I like and what I don't like. They know just how to make my porridge which is great." Staff told us how they supported people to have a balanced diet through suggestion and monitoring of people's intake. One staff member said "If I think someone is not eating well I try to offer different choices to try and tempt them." The staff member told us that they kept records of what people ate which were reviewed at regular intervals by senior staff.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

People spoke positively about relationships with their carer workers and told us that they were treated with kindness and consideration. One person said "We have no problems at all. I would certainly recommend them to family and friends." Another person told us "I never have to chase after the carers as they make sure that they tidy up when they are done and never leave us in a mess."

Staff spoke knowledgeably and with fondness about people they supported. One staff member told us "We do a client to staff matching, depending on their needs and who they are. We have a three month trial period to see if the person is happy with the staff that go to them." Another said "A supervisor goes with staff to meet people for the first time and shadows some of the visits to make sure that things are done the way that people like them."

People were given a comprehensive 'Client Guide' by the service which contained clear information covering topics such as the 'philosophy of care', 'what we can't do and why we can't do it' and information about the service. People we spoke with told us they found this very useful. One person said "The folder I have here at home is really helpful as it has all the useful contact details in it so I know that everything is kept in one place which is so much easier for me as I never remember where I put anything these days!"

Staff told us how they were mindful of people's privacy and dignity when providing care, and people we spoke with said they had no concerns about this. One person told us ""We never have any problems about privacy or dignity. Our carer usually attends to my husband first and helps get him up and sorted before she comes back to help me. They

make sure that we are both ready to face the day before they leave." Another said "My carer helps me wash every morning and she always ensures that the curtains are shut so that no one can see me in a state of undress. She will always tell me when my clothes are getting dirty so that I don't sit around in them for too long. I have to say all the carers I have will go that extra mile." Staff told us in detail about their practice. One said "I have a client who prefers that I don't wear my uniform when I go out with them, so I get changed before that call." Another told us "Before I help [name of person] have a shower I check things like the curtains and doors are closed. I talk to them all the time to put them at ease, and tell them at each stage what's happening."

Care plans were written in a person centred way, containing details about the person and their lives including the name they liked to be called, their social activities and interests and how and when staff should access their home. One person we spoke with told us "They were very good at offering me choice when I first started with the agency. They asked me what time I would like my visits and I have to say they have been very good and I get my visits when I would like them. The previous agency I used just told me what time to expect my visits even when they weren't convenient to me."

We asked people if they had been involved in the writing of their care plans. One person told us "We have a visit from a manager every six weeks or is it three months? I can't really remember because the time goes so quickly! We chat about all things to do with our care and discuss whether we need anything changing. My husband and I like the fact that we get to talk to a manager often."

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

People's care needs were well assessed and we saw this information reflected in their care plans. These contained clear guidance for staff on what type of care the person needed and how this should be delivered. Care plans we looked at presented a clear picture of the person and contained sections for health and mobility, communication needs, allergies, medication and additional information that the person wanted staff to know. People told us about the kind of information that they shared with the service. One person told us "We were asked whether we preferred a male or female carer when we first sat down with the manager. I said that it is important to me to have female carers and in two years I have never been let down."

We saw evidence of care plan reviews and that people had been involved in this process. For example we saw that one person had told the service that they wanted their evening calls to be later and this was arranged. Reviews of care were comprehensive and also checked the person's satisfaction with staff and the service overall. People told us about their experience of being involved in reviews of care. One person said "I had a meeting with a supervisor a few weeks ago and we decided that I really needed a bit more help in the morning to get up and about. The longer visit started last week and has really helped me. I feel so much more supported now." Another told us "At my recent review meeting with one of the supervisors, we discussed that I could do with a little more help at lunchtime. The supervisor has gone away in order to obtain some funding for this and I hope shortly that I will be able to have a little more help with getting my lunch ready."

No one we spoke with had made a complaint about the service but people were able to tell us with confidence

what they would do. One person said "I've never had to make a complaint but I know who to contact if I do because it is contained in my file" People were also confident that any complaint they did make would be addressed appropriately. One person told us "I've never had to make a complaint but I know how to do that although I think I would probably leave that to a member of my family to do. Knowing how the agency are always very good at responding to us I am sure they would take any complaint I had seriously." Staff were able to tell us about the complaints policy and how they would support people if they wanted to make a complaint. One told us "All the clients have a copy of the complaints policy in their file, and I would remind them about that." We saw that the pack given to people included comprehensive information about the role of advocates, meaning that people were encouraged to seek independent advice and support if they felt this was needed.

The service had records of one complaint, and although we found they had taken action and recorded conversations with the person there was no information as to their satisfaction with the outcome. We saw the record stated that action had been taken to reduce a similar situation from recurring.

We saw that people's assessments contained information as to the preferred times of their calls, and no one we spoke with told us that these were not adhered to. One person told us about their experience of care provision for their relative. "I needed to find care quickly for [my relative] when we were badly let down by our previous agency. The staff were able to help. We live away from all their other clients, so that they have a fair amount of travel to get to her, but in three months, their time keeping has been impressive."

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

We looked at how the service ensured that a good standard of care was being delivered. We found spot checks and unannounced observations of staff giving care took place. A senior member of staff told us "We spot check as and when – we listen to what staff and people are telling us. We do them quite often, but increase the frequency if we think that there are issues with a member of staff." These checks covered competency, knowledge of and communication with people, safe practice and promotion of people's independence. We looked at three staff files and found that regular spot checks were recorded. People told us that staff made records of their visits and some people told us that they were encouraged to read them. One person said "Every single carer fills in the file before they go and I do occasionally look to see what they have written with most of it being understandable to me." Another said "The filling in of paperwork is never missed and I actually agree with everything they write about me."

We concluded from speaking to people and the senior staff at the service that there was a commitment to delivering a high quality of care, however we found formal governance systems were not in place to record monitoring delivery, analyse developing trends and take prompt action when required. We discussed this with the registered provider and they agreed that they would take action to improve how they monitored the service.

People we spoke with told us that they had contact with the registered provider and senior staff both when their needs were assessed and reviewed and expressed a high level of satisfaction with the service. One person told us "When I phone the office they are always very quick to respond to any queries that I have. I have to say in my opinion this is the best care agency I have ever experienced and I just wish everyone could have the level of care that I get." Another said "I can't say that I've seen anything which would lead me to say it is not a well led organisation."

Staff spoke positively about the registered provider and their experience of working for the service. One told us "You are as good as your management, and the manager is brilliant." Another said "I love what I do. The manager and everyone in the office is approachable, everyone smiles. I feel we all work together." Staff told us they felt well supported by senior staff in the service.

The provider carried out satisfaction surveys with people using the service. We looked at the results returned from the most recently available surveys carried out in June 2014 and November 2014 and saw that all those who had responded were happy with the service. We saw comments such as 'Great care staff', 'I like the fact that the same staff come' and 'Happy with the service'. Another was ongoing at the time of the inspection however no responses had yet been returned. A senior member of staff told us "I check whether clients have any problems whenever we review their care." People we spoke with told us about regular conversations about their care but did not refer to surveys or questionnaires directly.

Staff told us they attended meetings and found them to be useful events. One told us "I last came to a meeting about six weeks ago, we discuss any issues together." A senior member of staff told us "I ring round the staff to ask to get their input before the meetings." We looked at the minutes of a meeting held in July 2015 which was attended by eleven people from the service. The meeting covered operational issues, staff requests for uniforms that would be cooler in the summer, pay and job vacancies. In addition to meetings the service produced a regular staff newsletter. We looked at the most recent newsletter and saw praise from the registered provider to staff for their performance including awarding of 'carer of the month', operational updates and clarification of the procedure for changing shifts.