

Skills Support Limited

Skills Support Limited - Doncaster

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?	Good 

Summary of findings

Overall summary

About the service

Skills Support Limited – Doncaster provide support to people living in their own home who have a learning disability, autism and mental health conditions. 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.

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

The service was exceptionally flexible and responsive to peoples changing needs. Staff were committed to providing outstanding person-centred care that enabled people to live a full, active and meaningful life.

People were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible and in their best interests; the policies and systems in the service supported this practice.

People were treated with dignity and respect and staff went over and above to support people flexibly to meet their needs. The provider was passionate about empowering people and people were treated with compassion and kindness. Staff provided excellent social and emotional support.

People received an extremely personalised and bespoke service, which was tailor made to meet their complex needs and preferences. People were central to the care and support they received and their decisions about their care were valued.

There was a complaints procedure in place. There were very robust and high-quality governance systems in place to assess and monitor the service provided. The service had continued to improve since our last inspection.

People's views were extremely valued and used to drive improvement. Risks in people's daily lives were assessed and mitigated. Staff were provided with safeguarding training and understood how to keep people safe.

Recruitment of staff was completed safely and there were sufficient staff numbers to provide the care and support required by people to meet their needs.

For more details, please see the full report which is on the CQC website at www.cqc.org.uk
The last rating for this service was good (published 27 June 2017).

Why we inspected

This was a planned inspection based on the previous rating.

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.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Good ●

Is the service effective?

The service was effective.

Details are in our effective findings below.

Good ●

Is the service caring?

The service was exceptionally caring.

Details are in our caring findings below.

Outstanding ☆

Is the service responsive?

The service was exceptionally responsive.

Details are in our responsive findings below.

Outstanding ☆

Is the service well-led?

The service was well-led.

Details are in our well-Led findings below.

Good ●

Skills Support Limited - Doncaster

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 Care Act 2014.

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 the Care Quality Commission. 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. At the time of our inspection there were four people using the service who received support with their personal care, although the agency also supported people who only required social support. We spoke on the telephone with two people who used the service and two relatives. We also met two people who used the service when we visited the agency's office.

Notice of inspection

We gave the service 24 hours' notice of the inspection. This was because we wanted to make sure the registered manager was available to support the inspection.

What we did before inspection

We reviewed information we had received about the service since the last inspection. We sought feedback

from the local authority and professionals who work with the service. The provider was not asked to complete a provider information return prior to this inspection. This is information we require providers to send us to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make. We took this into account when we inspected the service and made the judgements in this report.

During the inspection

We spoke with two people who used the service and two relatives about their experience of the care provided. We spoke with five members of staff including the provider, registered manager, assistant manager, and three personal assistants.

We reviewed a range of records. This included two people's care records and risk assessments. We looked at a variety of records relating to the management of the service, including policies and procedures were reviewed.

After the inspection

We continued to seek clarification from the provider to validate evidence found. We looked at training data and quality assurance records. We spoke with three professionals who regularly visit the service.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

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

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has remained the same. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse; Learning lessons when things go wrong

- People and their relatives told us that people were kept safe.
- Staff had regular training in safeguarding and knew how to recognise and report a concern.
- Staff were aware of the whistleblowing policy. Whistleblowing is one way in which a staff member can report suspected wrong doing at work, by telling someone they trust about their concerns.
- Policies and procedures were available regarding keeping people safe from abuse and reporting any incidents appropriately.
- The registered manager was aware of the local authority's safeguarding adult's procedures. The registered manager kept an up to date record as an overview of any concerns raised and the outcome and actions taken.
- The provider had systems in place to record, monitor and review incident's so that lessons could be learnt.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- Risks to people's safety had been assessed, monitored and managed so they were supported to stay safe while their freedom was respected.
- Risks to staff and the environment were assessed and monitored and there was a regular review and update when a change occurred.

Staffing and recruitment

- The provider continued to safely recruit staff.
- The provider's recruitment process included a face to face interview, written references and a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The Disclosure and Barring Service carry out a criminal record and barring check on individuals who intend to work with children and vulnerable adults, to help employers make safer recruitment decisions.

Using medicines safely

- The provider was not currently providing support to anyone with the administration of medicines.
- There was a policy in place to guide staff in how to support people using medicines, should this be required, including recording, storing medicines, and administering them.

Preventing and controlling infection

- All staff received mandatory training in infection prevention and control.
- Staff were supplied with personal protective equipment (PPE).

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.

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has remained the same. This meant people's outcomes were consistently good, and people's feedback confirmed this.

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

- The registered manager completed an assessment before each person received support. This had been done to establish what level of support was needed and took into consideration people's choices. The assessment had considered risks to the person's health and safety, so action could be taken to reduce them.
- The assessment also considered the person's protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 were considered. An example was respecting a person's cultural or ethnic heritage by enabling them to choose the gender of the care staff who provided their close personal care.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- Staff were trained and competent to effectively support people. Staff had a wealth of skills and clearly knew people well.
- Staff were supported by the management team. The registered manager had a record of when staff had received a written supervision and when a practice observation had been carried out.
- The registered manager had not kept a record of when staff had received an appraisal of their work, however this had no impact on the staff who told us they felt very supported and were very knowledgeable in their roles.

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

- Staff supported people to maintain a balanced diet when they needed assistance.
- We saw staff respecting people's food choices and preferences and people told us staff listened to them and respected their choices.
- Staff promptly reported changes in people's dietary needs and appetite. People were offered support to reduce their weight. This approach led to people eating a varied, balanced diet and improvements in wellbeing and confidence.

Staff working with other agencies to provide consistent, effective, timely care

- Relatives praised how staff supported people to access health care services and how they were always informed of changes in people's healthcare. One relative said, "They [staff] are on the ball, keeping up with appointments and making sure they are regularly reviewed by the GP and the other services."
- The provider was working in partnership with health care professionals to support people to have their health needs reviewed and monitored, where this was needed.

Supporting people to live healthier lives, access healthcare services and support

- Staff supported people to access healthcare support and services when this was needed as part of their care package.

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 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.

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 and whether any conditions on authorisations to deprive a person of their liberty had the appropriate legal authority and were being met and they were.

- The registered manager ensured records were made to assess people's capacity to consent to specific decisions. Where people were not able to make their own choices, the registered manager was aware that decisions should be made in people's best interests. People had been supported to access advocacy services where needed.

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.

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has now improved to outstanding. This meant people were truly respected and valued as individuals; and empowered as partners in their care in an exceptional service.

Ensuring people are well treated and supported; respecting equality and diversity; Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- The staff were passionate and focused on empowering people to express their views and being in control of their lives. Staff showed exceptional commitment to developing positive relationships with people and excelled at supporting them emotionally with kindness and compassion.
- Staff knew the people they were supporting incredibly well and had developed positive and meaningful relationships with people. One person told us "I really look forward to seeing [name]." It was clear that the person had a special bond with staff and they had been positively matched with staff and shared a joint passion for hobbies and interest which had helped them to bond.
- Staff told us they had an excellent understanding of people's social and emotional needs. It was clear they delivered support with empathy and kindness whilst ensure people were empowered to make their own choices.
- Staff continued to go above and beyond people's expectations to provide a service which treated people with true kindness and promoted well-being and happiness.
- For example, staff had gone over and above their roles and responsibilities on numerous occasions to support people during emergency situations by changing their plans at the last minute to give the person support outside of planned support hours.
- We saw evidence of staff going the extra mile to support people to achieve their goals, which gave people a sense of achievement and had positive outcomes to their wellbeing. One person who was socially isolated was supported to live independently. The person had no family and found help difficult to accept. Staff became a positive role model to the person by maintaining regular contact and helped to raise the person's self-worth. With Christmas approaching the provider has organised for a variety of gifts to as a Christmas present for this person.

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

- People told us they would not use any other service because they were so well supported and extremely happy with the provider and staff. The provider ensured they worked collaboratively with people and staff to ensure that care was always delivered by staff that matched people's personal characteristics, hobbies and interests.
- People's care records demonstrated how their care needs were assessed, planned for and met in a highly personalised way. People's diverse needs were always promoted and supported, this included gender and sexuality. Staff knew the people they cared for extremely well, including their diverse needs and how they were met. They were committed to provide a very high level of care and support at all times. One staff said, "I am passionate about making a positive impact with people. One person I support has come a long way. I

know [the person] would be in a different position without support. They are now living independently and helped with managing their own money. Because I've been able to encourage and guide [the person] I've been able to change their mind set, just by talking and reassuring. I had to encourage positivity and help them to think of different ways to think about things, that might usually have been an issue. The person would have never have gone to the dentist, now can't wait to go. I questioned if they would be able to live independently but have done this now for two years.

- One person who suffered from anxiety was given extra ad hoc support, this enabled them to be able to move to a new house. This would not have been possible without the encouraging and uplifting support given by the provider and staff. Staff regularly made many additional calls to the person to reassure and empower them. The office staff took additional calls, sometimes up to four times a day, so they could reassure and give advice and clarification to the person, this helped to build their confidence and self-esteem.
- Without hesitation, staff were selfless in offering support to a person in an emergency. The person was distressed when a fire broke out during the night in their flat. The person called staff who immediately came to offer support and reassurance and stayed with the person until they were safe and emotionally stable.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

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

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has now improved to outstanding. This meant services were tailored to meet the needs of individuals and delivered to ensure flexibility, choice and continuity of care.

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

- Information had been gathered from people and their families to build a detailed picture about each person's support needs, preferences and history. The management team regularly provided support for people and used that opportunity to collect feedback about people's preferences. Staff told us they were able to provide personalised support tailored to the needs and wishes of each person.
- Records contained detailed information for staff on how best to support people with all aspects of their life. Promoting people's independence was risk assessed to provide appropriate support. They also included detailed information about health needs and the care people required to manage their long-term health conditions.
- Staff were incredibly passionate and dedicated to ensuring they, not only met the needs of the people they supported, but also relative's needs. For example, one person became ill whilst being supported in the community. Staff called an ambulance and calmed and reassured the person that help was on its way. Once the person was on their way to the hospital staff contacted the person's relative who didn't have any transport and offered to give them a lift. After reuniting the person with their relative at the hospital, they gave their number to the relative and went back later that night to ensure they both got home safely.
- People and their families told us support was very flexible and adaptable. One relative said, "They [the provider] are flexible with the hours we have so the same member of staff can always be provided. This is very important to [my relative] and they facilitate this." Another relative said, "I think [staff] are ace. Staff are really good for my relative, they have a laugh and they are friends."
- We received extremely positive feedback from professionals who had contact with the provider. One said, "We are in close contact with managers and support workers and have a good working relationship. They deliver a person-centred approach to the individuals and ensure that they have the care they need. They encourage independence but offer support which enables them to have a fulfilled life." Another professional said, "I'm really happy things are working well. [Name] is so much improved in their presentation, the flat and wellbeing. I think the [staff] are already working wonders."

Meeting people's communication needs

Since 2016 onwards all organisations that provide publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). The standard was introduced to make sure people are given information in a way they can understand. The standard applies to all people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss and in some circumstances to their carers.

- Staff told us how they had persisted in adapting methods of communication with people to understand

their wishes. When people were less able to communicate verbally, staff found different ways to ensure they understood their needs.

- For example, one staff proactively looked for ways to communicate with a person who chose not to use words to communicate. Through perseverance and determination, they discovered using text message, was successful in enabling the person to make choices. Staff proudly said, "Out of the blue one day the person began talking to me using words. I was overwhelmed and quite emotional, but so proud of the person's ability to adapt. I have great job satisfaction."
- The registered manager was aware of the accessible communication standards and ensured people had access to information. For example, they had information in different formats, such as 'how to make a complaint' in easy read.

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

- Skills Support-Doncaster are a designated SID (Safety in Doncaster) place of refuge for any vulnerable adult in Doncaster who may find themselves needing help. They can come to the office building and will be provided with support to them to get the help they need or to put them in touch with family or friends. The provider has previously helped someone who was in need of support and assisted them with help from social services.
- People had access to the community and a choice of events and interests as part of their agreed package of care. One person told us they were supported to do what they chose, and staff were well matched to their likes and preferences.
- Relatives said staff supported their family member to have a presence in the community and said they were well known in the local area because of the continuity of support received from Skills Support - Doncaster.
- We saw records which demonstrated people were supported to go on holiday for example, and participate in activities of their choice, which built independence. Records of complimentary comments made by people's family demonstrated the positive impact of the support provided. One comment said, 'Thank you for helping [name] lead a happy and varied life.'
- During the winter months the provider offered people free access to a room in the office where free activities and drinks are provided. The explained that some of the people who received support had limited finances and they felt it was important to offer a warm and safe environment where people could safely socialise.

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- The provider had systems and processes in place to respond to complaints and concerns.
- The registered manager told us they took complaints seriously and we saw that they conducted a thorough and detailed investigation into concerns and looked on any lessons that could be learnt from them.

End of life care and support

- End of life care was not provided; however, staff were aware of the principles of providing good end of life support and would seek advice and guidance from relevant health professionals should the need arise.

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.

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question 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.

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

- People and staff were very complementary about the service. One staff member said, "Skills have been one of the best companies I've worked for. Very supportive of staff and clients. Very understanding and I'm proud to be a part of the company." Another staff member commented, "I have been employed by Skills for one year and within this time I have been appreciated for my work and I feel I am a trusted member of the team."
- The service promoted a positive culture which was inclusive, and their vision was for people to live their life, their way. There were clear vision and values which were person-centred and ensured people were supported to regain control and autonomy over their lives
- Since our last inspection, the service continued to improve and sought and introduced new systems to develop the service provided. There was a clear commitment by all staff working in the service to provide extremely high standards of care and support and empower people to develop and regain skills.

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 provider and registered manager understood their responsibilities relating to the duty of candour.
- Records demonstrated that where things had gone wrong, a thorough and detailed investigation had taken place and lessons learnt to reduce future occurrences.

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

- The registered manager was supported by the provider who was very involved in the way the service was run. The provider and registered manager were both clearly passionate about providing the best service possible to people and their families. They were both very committed to be an excellent employer to their staff team, who told us they had an excellent relationship with the management team.
- The registered manager kept up to date with best practice and regulatory requirements and regularly refreshed their knowledge and understanding and cascaded this down to the management team and staff.
- The provider had robust system to assess and monitor the service, learn lessons and implement improvements. Regular audits took place and the service was monitored and action taken to address shortfalls.

- The service continued to inform us of any incidents we needed to be made aware of. They provided clear information of actions taken to learn from incidents and improve people's lives.

Engaging and involving people using the service, the public and staff, fully considering their equality characteristics

- People were last asked for their views about the service in satisfaction questionnaires in 2017. The registered manager was aware of the importance of seeking feedback from people and their relatives and was working on sending out the latest satisfaction survey in coming months. Despite their being no recent satisfaction survey, the provider showed they had regularly asked for feedback during reviews, and they also had an open-door policy.

Working in partnership with others

- The service told us how they worked well with other professionals involved in people's care. This was evident from the records of many compliments we reviewed from people's financial representatives and health and social care professionals. These identified the extremely positive work provided to assist people to achieve excellent outcomes.
- The registered manager was keen to share the pride felt for the service offered and told us. "We feel that we are often blessed with the staff we have and the extra mile that virtually all will go to help our clients when we need them too. When the situation necessitates all staff including business proprietor, care managers will rush out to attend should any of our client's situation necessitate and we have an excellent reputation within the Doncaster professionals. We do not advertise our services, relying on word of mouth and reputation and believe that we are exceptionally good at what we do, and this is seemingly reflected by the social work team who will turn to us often at short notice to assist in often complex and challenging situations."