

Comficare Limited

Comficare Ltd

Inspection report

The Business Support Centre
Caddsdow Industrial Estate
Bideford
Devon
EX39 3DX

Tel: 01271377430

Website: www.comficare.co.uk

Date of inspection visit:

22 November 2018

23 November 2018

Date of publication:

14 January 2019

Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Good ●

Is the service safe?

Good ●

Is the service effective?

Good ●

Is the service caring?

Good ●

Is the service responsive?

Good ●

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

Summary of findings

Overall summary

Comficare Limited is registered to provide personal care to people in their own homes who may have a physical disability or who may be living with dementia. The agency provides services to people in Bideford, Barnstaple, Torrington and the surrounding areas. At the time of the inspection 29 people were being supported by the service. The service employed 15 care staff.

This inspection was undertaken on 22 and 23 November 2018.

At our last inspection of the service in March 2016 we rated the service 'Good'. At this inspection we found the evidence continued to support the rating of 'Good'. There was no evidence or information from our inspection and on-going monitoring that demonstrated serious risks or concerns. This inspection report is written in a shorter format because our overall rating of the service has not changed since our last inspection.

Why the service is rated Good.

There was a registered manager in post. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they 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.

Risks associated with people's care were identified and measures were in place to reduce avoidable risks. Staff received training to ensure people were supported with managing their medicines. Processes were in place to protect people from abuse and neglect and staff were aware of how to raise any concerns.

There were enough staff to deliver the care planned and staff had been recruited safely to ensure they were suitable to work with people.

People's liberty and choice was promoted. People were involved in decisions about their care and subsequent reviews. The registered manager and staff demonstrated an understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005. This meant people were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way.

The service worked in partnership with other health and social care professionals to ensure people received the care and support they required. Professionals said the service was pro-active, alert to any changes and worked well with them for the benefit of their clients.

People were supported by staff who were trained and supervised to do their job. People expressed total confidence in the staff who visited them. Comments included, "I can't find any fault..."; "They are a very professional company" and "This company is wonderful. The care is superb..." Staff had received training

relevant to their roles and were positive about the support provided.

Staff consistently demonstrated a kind and caring approach towards people. People told us, "This service had transformed our lives..." and "The standard of care is first-class..."

People's needs were effectively assessed prior to the service commencing. Care had been planned with each person and their relative where appropriate.

There was an open and supportive culture at the service. The service sought feedback from people, relatives and staff to ensure the service continued to improve and develop. A range of checks were undertaken to help maintain the quality of the service and identify where improvements could be made.

Further information is in the detailed findings below

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 remains Good	Good ●
Is the service effective? The service remains Good	Good ●
Is the service caring? The service remains Good	Good ●
Is the service responsive? The service remains Good	Good ●
Is the service well-led? The service remains Good	Good ●

Comficare Ltd

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.

This inspection took place on 22 and 23 November 2018 and was announced. The inspection was announced forty eight hours in advance as it is a small service and we needed to ensure the registered manager was available to assist with the inspection. The inspection was completed by one CQC inspector over two days.

Prior to our inspection, we looked at all the information available to us. These included notifications sent by the service, any safeguarding alerts and information sent to us from other sources such as healthcare professionals. A notification is information about important events which the service is required to tell us about by law.

We also reviewed the service's Provider Information Return (PIR). This is a form that is completed at least annually. It asks the provider to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make.

We received completed questionnaires from nine people sharing their experience of the service. We also received completed questionnaires from three professionals, including a commissioner of the service and one relative.

We spoke with the registered manager and two staff when we visited the office on the first day of the inspection. We also looked at four care plans and other care records; training records, three staff recruitment and support files and records which related to the management of the service. On the second day we visited three people in their own home and met with three relatives. Following the inspection we spoke with three staff.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

The service continues to be safe.

People and their relatives said the service was safe and reliable. They praised the registered manager and staff describing them as professional, caring and kind. Comments included, "This is a very professional company. The service is reliable and flexible"; "This company is wonderful. We have been left in the lurch with other companies but never by Comficare" and "I have full confidence in the care staff."

People were protected from the risk of abuse or neglect as staff had received training to recognise any safeguarding issues. Staff knew how to report concerns within the company and were aware of the external agencies they could contact if they had any concerns. No safeguarding alerts had been raised about or by the service in the past 12 months. The registered manager had worked in the past with the local authority to ensure people were protected from harm.

Risks associated with people's care and support needs were identified in care records along with guidance for staff about how to support people to keep them safe. One person who required assistance with moving said staff were very competent. They added, "I feel safe when the girls move me. They tell me what to do." A professional told us, "They (staff) have worked with me to ensure a successful and safe environment for my client." Staff had access to protective equipment to reduce and prevent the risk of infection.

Systems were in place to support people with the management of their medicines. Staff did not administer medication; rather they prompted and reminded people to take their medicines as prescribed. Staff also assisted some people to remove medicines from packages. The medicines policy re-enforced this approach and staff confirmed that prompting and reminding was the extent of the support provided. There was clear guidance for staff to follow on the medicines charts and staff signed to say they had completed the necessary support. The registered manager could look at electronic records in 'real time', meaning any errors or omissions could be identified quickly. No medicines errors had occurred since the last inspection.

There had been no accidents or incidents involving people using the service in the past 12 months. There were systems in place to report accidents and staff were aware of the process. There was good communication between the small staff team and the registered manager.

There were sufficient numbers of staff to meet people's needs. Rotas were issued to staff with timely notice of their scheduled visits. Staff tended to work in geographical areas to reduce the need to travel. They said they had time to travel between each visit. People reported the service was very reliable; visits had not been missed and staff arrived on time and stayed the agreed time. People said visits were never rushed. One person said, "It is a fact that the service is excellent." Another commented, "It's a very good company and we are very happy." The registered manager explained three visits had been missed since the last inspection. This had been down to human error. People had received apologies from the registered manager and she had implemented a policy where schedules could not be changed or swapped without her consent or that of a supervisor.

The provider had undertaken pre-employment checks of staff to ensure they were safe and suitable to support people.

Staff had received training on infection control and prevention and had access to a range of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and aprons. All those responding to our questionnaires confirmed staff did all they could to prevent and control infection. For example, by using hand gels, gloves and aprons.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

The service continues to be Effective

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 with appropriate legal authority. People who normally live in their own homes can only be deprived of their liberty through a Court of Protection order.

People's liberty and choice was promoted. The registered manager and staff demonstrated an understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005. This meant people were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way. People confirmed they were always asked for their consent before care and support was provided. During home visits we observed staff involving people in decisions about the care they received.

Everyone we contacted said staff had the experience and skills to support them. Comments included, "All staff without exception are fantastic. (Person) loves them all..." and "The staff have been excellent. Not one concern about them. We are fortunate to have them..."

All staff had received training relevant to their roles and staff were positive about the training and support provided. Various training methods were used, including face to face, electronic learning and in-house training. Any specialist training was undertaken by appropriate professionals, for example complex moving and handling. 53 per cent of staff had achieved a nationally recognised qualification in health and social care and others were undertaking this qualification with the support of the provider. That was an increase of 13 per cent since the last inspection.

New staff underwent a programme of induction before supporting people unsupervised. Staff new to care were required to complete training in line with the Care Certificate. The Care Certificate is a nationally recognised learning tool to support staff new to care.

Staff were supported to continuously improve and they had regular supervision (one to one) meetings with their line manager. This enabled staff to discuss their working practices, any issues or concerns they had about their work and any further training they needed to help them provide effective support to people. Staff said they were well supported by the registered manager. Comments included, "The training and support has been very good. I feel there are no stupid questions..." and "I enjoy my work. The manager is very good. She listens to us, not just about work but any personal issues we may have..."

People were supported to eat and drink enough to meet their needs, where staff were responsible for this. People's care plans gave staff guidance on how to support people with their eating and drinking needs

where this was necessary. This included reflecting any preferences people had.

People received support with their day to day health needs. The registered manager assessed people's needs before the service began by meeting with them and their relatives and reviewing any professional reports. People's specific healthcare needs were detailed in the care records for staff to refer to. The registered manager worked closely with healthcare professionals involved in people's care, such as district nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists, and followed their advice. One professional explained, "I have found the agency very approachable and pro-active in working with my client...The client's needs are now frequently changing and the agency are alert to notifying me, when I am needed to visit."

Is the service caring?

Our findings

The service continues to be Caring

People and their relatives said the staff continued to be caring, friendly and kind. People said they received a very personal service. Comments included, "They (staff) are very caring and respectful. We can have a joke and a laugh...I feel relaxed with them"; and "The care is superb...it was the answer to a prayer..." A relative expressed their thanks for the kind support and compassion shown to them by staff. They added, "They (staff) have time for me too...what is so important and impressive is the empathy..."

The registered manager knew all of the people using the service and had regular contact with them. People said she was kind and considerate and a good role model for staff. The Provider Information Return information (PIR) stated, "Being a small company means that I have met every single one of my service users. It means that I'm not just a voice at the end of the phone. It means that if they need to talk to someone; they know that I am there." Feedback from people and their relatives confirmed this was the case. One person said, "We are very lucky...we know (the registered manager) well. Nothing seems to be too much trouble for her..."

Staff were aware of what was important to people. For example, during an evening visit a person was distressed that their cat was missing. Staff knocked on all the neighbour's door to help find the cat and reduce the person's anxiety and distress. One person was very reluctant to be admitted to hospital, so to support the person to stay at home as they wished, staff arranged additional visits for the person. This avoided an admission to hospital.

Positive relationships had developed between people and the staff supporting them. People confirmed staff always promoted their privacy and dignity. One person said, "They (staff) are very thoughtful and caring. I never feel embarrassed with them. I feel at ease..." We observed the registered manager and people and their relatives sharing stories about current events, their health and family. People said staff had time for them and showed an interest in them. One person said, "We have such a good relationship with the girls and (the registered manager). All staff without exception are fantastic..." All of those responding to our questionnaire said they would recommend the service.

The registered manager always made arrangement for new staff to be introduced to people, which meant people did not have strangers delivering their care. One person said, "We always know who is coming and this is reassuring." This was echoed by others we spoke with.

People and their relatives could make decisions and express their views about the care and support they received. A relative explained they were fully involved in their loved one's care, which was important to them. They added, "It's a team effort. We are fully involved and listened to..." Everyone who responded to our questionnaire said the information they received from the service was clear and easy to understand.

People told us they valued their independence and that the service helped them to remain independent and

living at home. One person explained, "This service has transformed our life...it was difficult to cope. It has been fantastic." A relative explained how their loved one had "so much confidence in staff" and that their mood brightened when staff were visiting. They added, "They (staff) are so good for her morale. They do a wonderful job for her..."

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

The service continues to be Responsive.

People were supported in line with their assessed care needs and preferences and reviews were held when these changed. People's needs had been assessed prior to a service being offered. The registered manager had visited them to discuss their needs and preferences and what to expect from the service. People said the initial assessment had been comprehensive. One relative explained, "The thing that impressed me was the very comprehensive care and support plan. (The registered manager) spent a long time with us, to get to know (the person). The registered manager is on the ball and very hands on..."

A new computerised care planning system had been introduced since the last inspection. This enabled the registered manager to up-date care plans in real time. For example, during the inspection staff contacted the office to alert the registered manager that a person was developing a sore sacrum. This was immediately up-dated on the care plan with clear actions for staff to take to prevent further deterioration of the person's skin. Staff accessed care plans and up-dates via a secure application on their phones. Hard copies of care plans were also kept in people's homes for staff and people to refer to. Staff said the new system had improved communication and records.

People received care and support that was responsive to their needs and preferences. Care plans covered areas such as preferred routines, personal care, nutrition and hydration, communication, moving and handling and skin care. The registered manager and staff demonstrated a good understanding of people's individual care needs. They knew about people's communication preferences and emotional needs as well as their physical support needs, and preferred daily routines. The registered manager explained it was important to find out as much as possible about people because it meant they could provide a personalised service. Comments from people confirmed they were receiving the support they required. Comments included, "We couldn't live a normal life without them. We are so grateful" and "I can't praise Comficare enough. They have been excellent."

The service met the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). The AIS is a framework put in place from August 2016 which requires the service to identify; record and meet communication and support needs of people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss. People's communication needs were assessed and detailed in their care plans. For example, people's preferred method of communication and any impairments that could affect communication was recorded and guided staff on the best ways to communicate with them. This meant staff knew the communication methods that were most helpful for each person. One person used a speech-generating device which staff were familiar with to enable the person to communicate their needs and wishes. The service also provided information in different formats. For example, large print and braille.

People felt the service listened to them and made changes to support their requests. People knew how to complain and were confident any issues would be investigated and resolved. A copy of the complaints procedure was kept on each person's file in their home. The service had received

Three complaints in the past 12 months. These were investigated and resolved in line with the provider's policy.

At the time of the inspection the service was not supporting any people who had end of life care needs.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

The service continues to be Well-Led

The service had an experienced registered manager, who was also a director of the company. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they 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 using the service, their relatives and staff spoke highly of the registered manager. Everyone spoken with and those responding to our questionnaire said the service's registered manager and staff were accessible, approachable and dealt effectively with any concerns. The registered manager had created an inclusive and open culture, where people were able to express their needs, preferences or concerns. They felt included and encouraged to contribute their views and ideas. One person said, "The service is very well managed by (the registered manager). They are all professional. It's a very good company." A relative said, "The carers are taught very well, which is a reflection on (the registered manager's) leadership and enthusiasm..."

Professionals, including commissioners expressed their confidence in the service. A commissioner explained the service was part of their provider framework for personal care contracts and that in two years no complaints or concerns had been received by the local authority. They added, "Devon Cares (the commissioner) have found Comficare engages with the team and picks up packages of care when they can."

Staff had a good understanding of the provider's values and aims. They understood what that meant in terms of the way they supported people. Staff and the registered manager described a caring and inclusive culture at the heart of the service. This was confirmed by people using the service. Comments included, "This is a first-class service..."; "We couldn't wish for better support..." and "We are grateful to have found Comifcare...that's the word...care."

Communication within the service was good. Regular team meetings were held where staff could speak freely about their work or their learning and development. The registered manager included staff in discussion about any new packages of care to ensure the team had capacity to fulfil the expectation. Staff said they were well supported by the registered manager and felt any comments or ideas were listened to. One said, "We know (the registered manager) appreciates us. She is very approachable...she is fantastic to work with...there is always someone on the end of the phone for support." Another said, "She (the registered manager) listens to concerns or worries, not just about work but about our personal life too. She is kind and compassionate..."

Staff felt valued and their achievements recognised. The registered manager had developed a staff reward and recognition scheme. A 'carer of the month' scheme had been introduced, with the registered manager and supervisors nominating staff who had been particularly flexible or positive when facing challenges. Each

member of staff had received spa vouchers in the Summer as a thank you for 'pulling together' during a very busy period. One member of staff said, "This was so thoughtful..."

People had regular opportunities to feedback their experience of the service. For example, through care reviews, regular quarterly phone calls from the registered manager or supervisor and by using satisfaction surveys. The last annual surveys were completed in July 2018 and showed a high level of satisfaction. Comments included, "You are very responsive when I contact you..."; "We are very pleased with the service..." and "You do a fantastic job." The registered manager had compiled a summary of the surveys and shared the summary with each person using the service. Where improvements had been identified, they had been addressed. For example, one person requested staff always wear their ID badge. The registered manager found a member of staff had mislaid their badge so replaced it.

'Spot checks' were also carried out to monitor the quality and safety of the service. During spot checks the registered manager or supervisor observed staff practice and approach when undertaking their duties, to ensure they worked safely and displayed a respectful attitude. The registered manager explained that if any practice issues were observed during these visits with staff, they were discussed at supervision meetings.

The commissioners of the service carried out staff surveys to better understand what motivated them. Comments showed staff were motivated by "making a difference"; "helping people to stay at home" and "by making people smile..."

The quality assurance systems in place helped to drive improvements at the service. These included a range of internal checks and audits which helped to highlight areas where the service was performing well and the areas which may require further development. For example, there were regular checks to ensure people were supported safely and that staff were up to date with their learning and development.

The registered manager worked in partnership with other organisations to ensure they were following current practice and providing a safe service for people. These included GP's, district nurses, occupational therapists and other healthcare professionals.

The registered manager demonstrated a good understanding of their role and responsibilities including when they needed to notify CQC, the local authority safeguarding team or the police of certain events or incidents such as the alleged abuse or theft from a person.

It is a legal requirement that each service registered with the CQC displays their current rating. The rating awarded at the last inspection and a summary of the report was on display.