

Care Forum (MK) Limited

# Care Forum (MK)

## 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

### About the service

Care Forum (MK) is a domiciliary care agency providing personal care to children, young people and adults.

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

Young people and their families received exceptionally high-quality, person-centred care from an extremely caring and exceedingly well-led service. Young people with a wide range of needs were supported by staff to lead full, interesting and meaningful lives. Support for the young person also resulted in families having much-needed opportunities for a break. We saw that young people had excellent, warm, caring relationships with the staff and enjoyed their company.

Staff had high regard for the safety of the young people they were supporting. They undertook training in safeguarding and protecting young people from abuse and avoidable harm and were confident to report any concerns. Young people were pro-actively supported to take risks safely. There were enough staff to keep young people safe and recruitment ensured that staff were suitable to work at this service. Medicines were given safely. Communication and sharing of information was very good and lessons learnt when things went wrong.

Staff were exceptionally kind, compassionate and caring. They provided fully personalised support that focussed on what the young person and their family wanted. Staff fully understood how to support young people's privacy and dignity and they encouraged young people to be as independent as possible. Staff supported people to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible; the policies and systems in the service supported this practice.

A team of highly motivated and dedicated staff provided a service that was fully responsive to the needs of each young person and their family. Staff had 'gone the extra mile' on numerous occasions, often in their own time, to make sure that young people were able to fulfil their wishes and dreams.

The service was exceptionally well-led by a registered manager who inspired the staff team to put the people they were supporting at the heart of everything they did. The provider's values were put into practice by the staff and governance systems ensured the service provided was of the highest possible quality. Young people, their relatives and staff were always involved in improving all aspects of running the service and their voices were heard.

For more details, please see the full report which is on the CQC website at [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

### Rating at last inspection

The last rating for this service was outstanding (report published 20 October 2016).

### Why we inspected

This was a planned inspection based on the previous rating.

You can read the report from our last comprehensive inspection, by selecting the 'all reports' link for Care Forum (MK) on our website at [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk).

### Follow up

We will continue to monitor information we receive about the service until we return to visit as per our re-inspection programme. If we receive any concerning information we may inspect sooner.

## 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 exceptionally well-led.  
Details are in our well-led findings below.

Outstanding ☆

# Care Forum (MK)

## 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 visit to the service's office was carried out by two inspectors.

#### Service and service type

This service is a domiciliary care agency. It provides personal care to children, young people and some adults living in their own houses and flats. It also supports one adult who lives in a care home. Throughout this report we have referred to all people receiving a service as 'young people'.

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.

#### Notice of inspection

We gave a short period of notice of the inspection because it is a small service and we needed to be sure that the provider or registered manager would be in the office to support the inspection.

Inspection activity started on 30 May 2019 and ended on 28 June 2019. We visited the office location on 30 May 2019.

#### What we did before the inspection

We looked at information we had received about the service since the last inspection. We sought feedback from the local authority and external professionals who work with the service. We used the information the provider sent us in the provider information return (PIR). This is information providers are required to send us with key information about their service, what they do well, and improvements they plan to make. This information helps support our inspections. We used all of this information to plan our inspection.

#### During the inspection

We met three people who used the service. Two people did not use words to communicate and the third person only wanted to speak a few words to us. We saw how people and staff interacted with each other. We spoke with one relative and five staff: the registered manager, deputy manager, two team leaders and one member of staff. Before the inspection the registered manager had sent people, their relatives, staff and external professionals a survey to complete. We looked at those surveys that had been returned.

We visited the office location and looked at care records, medication records, compliments/complaints and other records relating to the management of the service such as staff supervision records and audits.

#### After the inspection

The manager sent us further information and we received comments from three professionals who had regular contact with the service. We received comments from staff and relatives, both written and from telephone conversations. Some of these comments have been included in the report.

# 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

- The registered manager had high regard for the safety of all the young people supported by the agency. They kept the staff team fully up to date with research and new ideas relating to best practice. Staff were skilled at recognising risk of harm and signs of abuse. They had received training in both child protection and safeguarding adults. They were confident about what they would report and to whom. Staff had also undertaken training in a wide range of topics so that they could recognise if young people were at risk. These included neglect, child sexual exploitation, county lines (drug dealing), female genital mutilation (FGM) and children who lack a voice.
- Staff worked pro-actively with other professionals to make sure the young people they supported were kept safe from harm. One member of staff told us how they had provided evidence to the local authority to assist the decision-making in ensuring a child was protected. An external professional told us, "Care Forum will always insist on two-to-one support if the case warrants it, to ensure the safety of all parties."
- The registered manager told us about one young person whose behaviour in public became so challenging that both the young person and others were at risk. Following a year of supporting the young person at home, extensive planning and risk-assessing, new care staff were introduced and the young person taken back into the community. This had been a complete success; the young person and their family were delighted that the young person was learning to safely socialise again.
- In the PIR the provider told us that all concerns were shared with other professionals "even when they initially appear minor as there may be a cumulative set of events that result in significant harm."

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- The staff team took a pro-active approach to assessing and managing risks. They ensured that they provided the safest possible service to every young person they supported. They discussed ideas and updated care records with the revised assessments and guidelines for staff.
- The staff team gave us several examples of innovative thinking which enabled young people to take positive risks and do what they wanted to, while keeping them safe. For example, one young person enjoyed going swimming with their support staff. They also enjoyed jumping out of the pool and running away from the staff. Staff knew that the young person was safe in the pool with one member of staff so the other member of staff remained dressed at the side of the pool. This meant the young person would be kept safe if they decided to leave the pool.
- Young people's relatives were involved in decisions about positive risk-taking. Staff encouraged young people to learn new skills safely. For example, one staff member taught one young person to use the bus independently by following in their car. Another member of staff taught a young person to do their own ironing, by showing them safely and teaching them in stages.
- When a young person wanted a particular, new experience staff spent time researching the

activity/area/venue. They liaised with the young person's family if the family had checked it out, to make sure it was suitable and safe. They told us if there were any doubts they would discuss with their manager and do whatever they could to make it a safe experience. They said, "We do our best to do what families want. We all feel really bad if we can't."

#### Staffing and recruitment

- Staff assured us there were always enough staff to provide the service each person needed, including during times of staff leave.
- The provider's robust recruitment policy ensured as far as possible that new staff were suitable to work with the young person and their family. One member of staff had left the agency and returned a year later. The registered manager had still made all the required checks, such as references and a criminal record check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The staff member said, "I had to wait for references and a new DBS before I could start work."
- The registered manager ensured that young people and their relatives were actively involved in deciding which staff they wanted to support them. When the agency started supporting a new family, the management team matched a small team of staff to the family. The family received a 'mini-CV' (information about each member of staff) which included a photograph. This reassured families that the staff member had suitable qualifications and experience to safely support their family member. The registered manager asked for feedback from the family about staff performance and whether good relationships were developing. If there were any issues, they made the requested changes.
- One young person had requested support to do a degree at university. The young person had written their own questions and, with support from a member of staff they already worked with, had interviewed the applicants. They chose who they wanted to support them and the relationship had flourished. The member of staff said, "I consider [name] to be one of my closest friends."
- The registered manager dealt promptly with any complaints about staff and any issues of poor performance. Whenever possible, they supported staff to improve, perhaps with additional training or guidance. If necessary, they did not hesitate to terminate an unsuitable member of staff's employment.

#### Using medicines safely

- Responsibility for medicines rested with the families of the young people supported by the agency.
- On occasion, such as during a holiday or a day out, staff gave young people their medicines. The provider had policies, procedures and records in place to ensure this was correctly documented and safely managed.
- Staff administering gastric feeds, epilepsy rescue medicines or oxygen had undergone training with nurses who specialised in those areas of care. In most instances the nurses based the training on the particular individual who needed the support. This meant that the training was fully personalised.

#### Preventing and controlling infection

- Staff had undertaken training and were aware of their responsibilities to protect people from the spread of infection. Staff used personal protective equipment such as gloves and aprons to protect the young person from the spread of infection.
- Staff supported young people with their personal care. One young person was working towards greater independence but struggled to remember their personal hygiene routines. The young person's care worker recorded guidance on the young person's phone so that they could play it back when the care worker was not there. This resulted in them maintaining their personal hygiene and achieving their goal to be independent in this area.

#### Learning lessons when things go wrong

- The management team acted in an open and transparent way to all incidents, near misses and concerns



raised. Staff completed incident forms and discussed the incident with their manager to work out ways of ensuring this did not happen again. The registered manager updated care plans, risks assessments and policies when the investigation of the incident highlighted this as being needed.

- The registered manager took every possible opportunity to share any learning with the staff team and with others involved in the young person's care.

## 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 management team had a holistic approach to assessing the individual needs of each young person. This approach also took into account the needs of their family, recognising that the support was also for their benefit. The staff team constantly re-assessed each young person's needs, wishes and choices to ensure the support continued to be what they and their family wanted. One relative told us that their family member's needs, which had been changing, had been regularly re-assessed. They said, "It's brilliant – [name of support worker] has done risk assessments and care plans are in place, all different ones, even for different types of seizures."
- The registered manager told us that at initial assessment and care planning visits they asked young people and their families to define what outcomes they wished to attain from their support. These were built into the care plans and informed staff. The management team checked with families and during staff supervision that these outcomes were being achieved. This meant that staff were providing fully effective support.
- Staff worked closely with other organisations involved in the young person's care to ensure that the support delivered by the staff was in line with their expectations. The registered manager told us, "We work closely with health and social care professionals to provide the highest quality care in a unified approach." A member of the management team said, "It is a privilege to be able to be part of the planning and then arranging the support that this family needs."
- The registered manager had a wide range of ways to keep fully up to date with current research and best practice. They cascaded this to the staff to ensure that staff provided care and support that was in line with the most up to date research and evidence-based best practice.
- The service shared their learning, practice and achievements with others. The registered manager told us that, among other events, they had attended a conference for care providers to share with them how Care Forum (MK) had achieved a rating of outstanding.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- The staff team were well-trained, highly skilled and very experienced, with some members of staff having worked for the agency for a number of years. An external professional told us, "We often refer young people with high health needs to Care Forum as we know their carers are trained to a high level."
- New staff received a thorough induction, which included training and shadowing more experienced staff. The management team arranged a wide range of further training, seeking out courses on topics that aided staff's development. They chose training that was delivered in different ways, such as face-to-face or on-line, in groups or one-to-one, based on the way each staff member learnt best.
- Some staff training was developed around each young person's individual needs. For example, external

specialist professionals provided training and shadowing opportunities for staff so that they could fully meet one young person's highly complex health needs. Relatives were often happy to demonstrate how they supported their family member, which meant the young person received seamless and consistent care and support. A team leader stepped in to provide person-specific moving and handling training for staff to be able to support a young person following a spinal operation. This ensured that staff training effectively met young people's individual needs.

- Staff were all pleased and appreciative of the level of support they received from each other and from the management team. One member of staff said, "Care Forum is a very supportive employer...there's always someone on the end of the phone – I can ring them with anything."

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

- The responsibility for a young person's diet remained mostly with their family. However, the management team had a strong focus on ensuring that staff supported young people to eat a healthy diet and have sufficient fluids. A team leader had recognised that staff were taking young people to a particular fast-food restaurant, often following parents' suggestions. Staff worked with the parents and the young people to encourage a healthier diet.

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

- Staff worked well with other agencies, so that everyone involved in providing care and support to each young person did this in a collaborative way. This included local authorities, GPs and community nurses as well as clubs and education facilities that young people attended.
- The registered manager told us that the staff team had joint-worked effectively with a range of professionals to provide detailed reports of parents' abilities to care for their child. On occasion this evidence had been used in court and had facilitated the outcome that social workers were seeking.
- The registered manager involved the whole staff team in liaising with other professionals. One member of staff said, "I have attended multi-disciplinary meetings which have helped me to carry out my role more effectively and efficiently."

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

- Young people's relatives were responsible for ensuring that their family members accessed healthcare services. However, staff supported young people to maintain their health, when required. For example, they gave medicine to young people if they needed it during a seizure. On occasion, they would support young people to attend an appointment with a healthcare professional if relatives were unable to attend.

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.

- The staff team followed all the principles and guidance related to application of the MCA, human rights and common assessment framework for children and young people. They were aware that the MCA applies to young people from the age of 16 but had never had to be involved in assessing anyone's mental capacity.

When required, this had been done by a social worker.

- Staff ensured that wherever possible the young people were fully involved in decisions about their care and knew what they needed to do to ensure best interests decisions were made. The registered manager said, "Young people are encouraged to make their own choices and helped to try new things."

## 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 outstanding. At this inspection this key question has remained the same. 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

- There was a truly tangible person-centred culture throughout the whole staff team and staff told us they were extremely proud of their efforts to provide the best possible care and support to each young person and their family.
- We received very positive comments about the service from a number of relatives who expressed enormous gratitude to the staff team of Care Forum (MK) for the care and support they provided. They recognised that staff went 'the extra mile' to ensure that the needs of both the young person and their family were more than met. For example, two staff had rearranged their personal lives so that they could take one young person to see the film they were so desperate to see. One relative said, "I am so grateful for the assistance I have from Care Forum. Knowing that my [family member] is having a great time with the carers and doing the things I struggle with is wonderful."
- Relatives who contacted us all praised individual staff for their exceptional kindness, caring and compassion. One relative wrote, "We think [support worker] is great! [They are] extremely caring and understanding towards [our family member]. It has made a huge difference in our week (and on my sanity) to have [their] support." Another relative said what they liked about Care Forum was, "Good quality carers who are suitably skilled to deal with my [family member's] needs and are keen to learn on the job. They are extremely reliable." A third relative told us, "[Name] is always very prompt and professional and communicates well. [Their] dedication and compassion always comes across."
- Staff demonstrated true understanding and a real empathy for the young people and families they were supporting. One support worker told us, "I've always gotten on very well with [name], however this year it hasn't felt like a job and I haven't felt like a carer...I've never seen [name] happier and I must say I'm delighted for [them]." Staff had very high regard for each person's cultural and social needs and acted in a thoughtful, sensitive way to ensure those needs were fully met.
- Young people and their families had exceptionally good relationships with the staff supporting them. The agency wanted everyone 'to have fun' and we saw this in action. We saw laughter and smiling faces, with staff showing how much they enjoyed the company of the young people they were with. A relative said, "[Support worker] is just what [name] needs. [Name] is into slapstick humour and [support worker] fits into that – [they are] silly and can have fun."
- Staff communicated well with each young person they were with, making that young person know that they were the centre of the staff's attention. A relative said, "[My family member] gets excited by [support worker] coming round - [name] has [their] special time and isn't left out."

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

- Staff knew the young people they worked with extremely well. Some staff had worked with a young person for a number of years. One relative told us, "[Support worker] understands [name] – it's like a friend coming round...extended family."
- The support provided to each young person and their family was entirely directed by what they wanted. Young people were offered choices in ways they could understand. Staff provided advice and guidance if requested but, ultimately, decisions were made by the young person and/or their family.
- The registered manager proactively advocated on behalf of the young people the agency was supporting and their families. For example, they had challenged venues that did not offer adequate changing facilities for the young people. They had got involved (in their own time) with planning new changing rooms at a local leisure facility. They were assisting a family to apply for benefits. Staff addressed issues with one young person's care home on their behalf.

#### Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- Respecting young people's privacy and dignity was thoroughly embedded in staff's practice. Staff dealt with personal care very discreetly at all times, especially when they were out in the community. For example, staff ensured one young person retained their dignity in the swimming pool: they assisted them to wear a top over their bathing costume, which zipped up at the back so they could not take it off.
- Staff told us how vitally important it was for the young people to have their privacy and dignity respected. One staff member told us, "That's something we advocate all the time." They gave an example of asking people to step out of the room when several professionals arrived for a physiotherapy session, adding, "You don't want a crowd of people staring at [the young person]."
- Staff were exceptional at supporting young people to be as independent as possible. The service was provided partly so that young people and their families had a break from each other. For some of the young people this was the only opportunity they had to do things without their family. One staff member told us that a young person had felt they lacked independence living at home. They regained this, living in their own room at university with staff support. The staff member said the young person "regards this as the most fulfilling and arguably the best year of their life."

## 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 outstanding. At this inspection this key question has remained the same. 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

- The service provided to young people by Care Forum (MK) was completely personalised and fully responsive to each young person's individual needs. Each young person had a totally person-centred support plan. This detailed the young person's preferences about how they wanted staff to give them care and support and what they and their families wanted to do during their support sessions. A member of staff told us, "Care plans are very, very detailed – there is nothing else I believe we could add. If I am on leave I know that anyone can pick it up and be able to manage their care."
- One young person who had extremely complex health needs had a support plan that included numerous photographs showing the ways in which staff should hold them and exercise their limbs. These were accompanied by very clearly written guidance for staff so they would not cause the young person any discomfort.
- Whenever possible staff involved the young person in developing and reviewing their care plan. One member of staff said, "I will always ask for them to be present and ask them questions, simple things like 'what would you like to do?'. I will give them choices and adapt. I will include their views in the care plan." Staff even asked young people how they thought staff should manage their behaviour if it was unsafe. One young person suggested staff walked behind them when they were agitated so they did not feel crowded. Another young person explained they liked the back of the car to themselves and a third young person said they liked to walk briskly until they calmed down.
- The registered manager and staff gave us numerous examples of ways in which the staff team had been exceptionally responsive to young people's individual needs and had found ways to enhance young people's well-being. Most of these examples had involved staff working additional hours or in their own time. Staff had looked after a young person so that their parents could go away for the weekend to celebrate their wedding anniversary. One member of staff was taking a young person to Devon for a few days so that they could go to their grandfather's special birthday celebrations. Several young people had been able to go on holiday independent of their parents. One young person had been able to move away from home, obtain a masters degree at university, move into their own flat and find employment.
- Staff had made themselves available to look after a family on frequent occasions, at very short notice and for prolonged periods of time when the mother had been admitted to hospital. This had prevented the children being taken into care. For another family, a young person had been able to return home following spinal surgery and stay at home because of the support and care the staff had provided.

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 were highly skilled at communicating with each person in the way the person chose and understood best. A member of staff told us about the young person they looked after. They said, "[Name] is able to communicate on a daily basis using facial expressions, so I need to gear my communication so that [they are] able to indicate and have the time to let me know what [they] want. [They] are very able to make a choice. I would definitely honour [their] communication, this is vital."
- The registered manager told us that one member of staff had spent their own time devising a communication system based on one young person's understanding and which worked for that young person. This had meant the young person found it easier to express themselves and to make choices, resulting in a much better quality of life. Their relatives were extremely pleased that their family member's communication had greatly improved.

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

- On their website, Care Forum (MK) stated one of their aims was to teach young people independence and social skills in accordance with their and their relatives' wishes whilst ensuring that they had fun and were kept safe. They stated, 'We take [young people] to community activities and help them integrate into society.' This aim was achieved exceptionally well.
- Each young person's care plan included their interests and the outcomes that the young person wanted to achieve. Staff supported the young person to follow, and in many cases expand, their interests and work towards their outcomes. For example, one young person wanted to learn how to understand and manage their money. Their activities included going to the shop to buy ingredients which they cooked when they got home. This meant they were working towards the outcome they wanted and they were also learning how to cook. One young person was afraid of dogs, which limited the things they could do and the places they could go in the community. Staff had helped this young person overcome the fear, to the extent they now wanted their own puppy. Staff worked with a young person who wanted to go bowling but would only watch other people playing. Over time, and with a lot of patient encouragement, the young person started to join in, loved it and often got a strike.

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- The provider had a complaints process in place. A copy of a 'How to make a compliment, comment or complaint' information sheet was given to families as part of an information pack. The registered manager kept a clear and detailed record of any complaints that were made. This included the complaint, background and investigation, how it was resolved and any follow-up action required. They said, "When we receive a complaint we speak in detail with the complainant and apologise. We investigate and look at ways to improve."
- Relatives said they had never had to complain. One said, "Anything I ask is usually dealt with promptly." Another relative's complaint had been fully resolved: they were happy with the way the complaint was handled and they had requested additional support from Care Forum.

End of life care and support

- The registered manager told us that over the years they had worked with a few young people at the end of the life. They worked very closely with the local hospice and most of their work had been within the hospice setting. Staff would stay with the young person so that their relatives were able to take a break, knowing their family member still had someone they knew with them.
- At the time of the inspection one young person had been diagnosed as being at the end of their life. The



member of staff who worked with the young person, supported by one of the management team, was working closely with the young person's relatives, social worker and staff from the hospice. This was to ensure that the relative's wishes, that the young person should die at home, could be met whilst also ensuring that the young person had the best possible care.

- End of life care plans included the role and responsibilities of each of the agencies involved so that everyone was clear and care was truly seamless.
- The registered manager told us the management team ensured that staff were also supported, including being offered bereavement support from the hospice, when a young person they had cared for had died.

## 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 outstanding. At this inspection this key question has remained the same. Service leadership was exceptional and distinctive. Leaders and the service culture they created drove and improved high-quality, person-centred care.

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

- The registered manager had developed and promoted an exceptionally positive culture which always had the young people and their families at the heart of everything. Their vision was simple yet truly person-centred and was quoted on the agency's website: "Our mission is to provide high quality support services to families with disabilities. We will provide this with warmth, humour and affection. Our aim is to bring happiness into children's lives and help our families enjoy their children."
- Young people's relatives and external professionals had all made very positive comments about the agency. One external professional said, "Care Forum is one of the top providers... I always recommend them." Comments from relatives included, "Care Forum is a unique company that offers an invaluable service to children in need and in turn that care then enables the family to flourish and support each other" and "Thanks for all your help and support this year, we couldn't have made it throughout the year without you and your wonderful team."
- Staff were highly motivated and extremely proud and pleased to be working for Care Forum (MK). One member of staff told us that this was definitely the best agency in the area. Another member of staff said, "They are a great company. They are a real personal team and have the personal supporting touch." A third member of staff told us, "I believe that we have a very high quality of staff and that everyone is very caring."

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

- The registered manager fully understood their legal responsibilities and was as open and honest as they could possibly be when something went wrong. They discussed any issues with staff, relatives and the young person themselves when appropriate. For example, one family had missed some of their support sessions because the member of staff had been unwell. The registered manager worked to alleviate their concerns about having a new member of staff and the resulting relationship was very successful.

Managers and staff being clear about their roles, and understanding quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements

- The registered manager provided outstandingly strong leadership and managed the service exceedingly well. They had developed a strong, confident management team who were fully committed to providing consistent support to the staff. This in turn meant that staff were providing the highest possible quality care and support to each young person and their family. One member of staff told us, "Care Forum put their trust in their staff." Another said, "I have always found Care Forum management team to be fully supportive of

one another, which is firstly due to [registered manager's] leadership."

- Staff felt exceptionally well supported by the management team. They received regular, meaningful supervision and knew that support was available at any time they needed it. One member of staff said, "It's nice to get the feedback from regular supervision but to be honest it is constant open dialogue between me and my managers. ...I can always get absolute guidance to help me through. I love that – there is never a time I have to wait...they are always there."
- The registered manager had several systems in place to show staff how much they appreciated them. For example, they offered bonuses for exceptional performance, had a long-service award and an 'extra mile' award. They arranged a fully paid night out for all staff at Christmas and made other gestures such as maternity gifts. They said that most importantly, they thanked the staff for what they did. One member of staff said, "We are appreciated and this is evident when we are thanked for what we do." They added, "Care Forum look after their staff."
- There was a solid structure of governance embedded into the service. Audits of all aspects of the service were carried out and any issues identified were dealt with immediately. The registered manager had a continuous improvement plan in place and ensured that all actions were completed in a timely manner.

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

- The registered manager had a wide range of ways in which they gathered the views of the young people using the service, their families, external professionals and the staff. Prior to the inspection, the registered manager sent out a quality questionnaire to everyone. The vast majority of the respondents made positive comments: the only issue raised was not within the provider's control. The management team had regular contact with people and their families and each young person had an annual review of the service being provided to them.
- The management team asked people, their families and other staff to comment on a member of staff's performance and this was fed back to staff at supervision. One member of staff had said about a colleague: "[Name] is a fantastic carer and a joy to work with. [They] have a vast amount of empathy for the young people [they] care for and also for their families. [They] are caring, considerate and consistent...[name] is a kind person who you want on your team."

Continuous learning and improving care

- The registered manager was fully committed to continuously improving the service. They undertook training and ensured they were fully up to date with current best practice as well as research. They learnt from events and near misses that happened in other services. This enabled them to adapt their practices to continually improve their service.

Working in partnership with others

- Care Form (MK) was very good at working in partnership with external professionals. They liaised with social workers at every opportunity and made sure they attended meetings relating to the care and support of the young people they provided a service to. A member of staff told us, "I attended a professionals meeting as social services are endeavouring to ensure the family are receiving the support they need and that all services are working together."
- External professionals were impressed by the service provided by Care Forum (MK) and the way the management team worked in partnership with them to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people and their families.