

Embrace (England) Limited

Birchwood Court

Inspection report

Seaside Lane
Easington Colliery
Peterlee
County Durham
SR8 3XZ

Tel: 01915279741
Website: www.europeancare.co.uk

Date of inspection visit:
07 March 2017
09 March 2017
16 March 2017

Date of publication:
02 May 2017

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

This inspection took place on 7, 9 and 16 March 2017 and was unannounced. This meant the registered provider was did not know we were inspecting the home at that time.

Birchwood Court provides accommodation with personal care for up to 43 older people. The building is on two levels and is split into three living areas. The home caters for people who have lifelong conditions, those who are recovering from an injury or illness and those who have a dementia type illness. Birchwood Court is set in its own gardens off the main street in a residential area near to public transport routes, shops and local facilities.

There was a registered manager in place who had been appointed since the last inspection in March 2015. 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.

During the inspection the number of staff available at the home to support people's needs was reviewed by the provider following an incident where staff were not continually present in one part of the home for a period of twenty minutes. The registered manager produced a written report for CQC which gave details of what had happened and the steps they had put in place to ensure this did not happen again.

The registered provider had robust procedures in place to make sure people were protected from abuse. These procedures were subsequently followed where people were found to be without staff to support them in one part of the home. The registered manager made a referral to the Local Safeguarding Authority for further enquiry and followed their requirements.

People who used the service, and family members, were complimentary about the standard of care provided. They told us the staff were friendly and helpful. We saw staff treated people with dignity, compassion and respect and people were encouraged to remain as independent as possible. The staff team received a good level of training and support that enabled them to meet people's care needs effectively.

All the care records we looked at showed people's needs were assessed before they moved into the home and we saw care plans were written in a person centred way. The service supported people to remain as independent as possible whilst taking actions to minimise the risk of harm or injury.

The registered provider had an effective recruitment and selection procedure in place and carried out robust checks when they employed staff to make sure they were suitable to work with vulnerable people.

We saw the home had in place personal emergency evacuation plans displayed close to the main entrance

and accessible to emergency rescue services if needed.

People were supported to maintain good health and had access to healthcare professionals and services. People were supported to take medications, encouraged to have regular health checks and were accompanied by staff to hospital appointments and emergencies.

People's nutritional needs were assessed and plans of care drawn up if they were at risk of malnutrition or choking. The cook demonstrated that she had an extensive knowledge of people's likes and dislikes and prepared a selection of wholesome and popular meals to cater for people's tastes.

We found the home was clean and fresh with cleaning schedules in place to prevent the spread of infection.

Information about planned activities for the week had been displayed on a notice board in the main communal area for people to see. During our inspection we found the registered provider had given priority to a variety of interesting activities taking place both inside and away from the home and more were planned.

We saw the registered provider had a complaints policy in place and this was clearly displayed for people to see.

CQC monitors the operation of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards [DoLS] which applies to care homes. The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards are part of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. They aim to make sure that people in care homes, hospitals and supported living are looked after in a way that does not inappropriately restrict their freedom. We found the registered provider was following legal requirements in the DoLS.

The registered provider had a robust quality assurance system in place and gathered information about the quality of their service from a variety of sources including people who used the service and their family and friends. The registered provider's organisation collected this information and provided additional oversight and monitoring of the home. The staff and registered manager reflected on the work they had done to meet peoples' needs so they could see if there was any better ways of working.

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

Good ●

The service was safe.

We saw the service had an effective system to manage accidents and incidents and learn from them so they were less likely to happen again.

There were systems in place to manage risks, safeguarding matters, staff recruitment and medication and this ensured people's safety.

Is the service effective?

Good ●

The service was effective.

Staff received training and development which helped to ensure people were cared for by knowledgeable and competent staff.

People were provided with a choice of nutritious food.

People were supported to maintain good health and had access to healthcare professionals and services if needed.

The registered manager understood the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 [MCA] and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards [DoLS]. They ensured DoLS were applied for when appropriate and staff applied the MCA legislation.

Is the service caring?

Good ●

The service was caring.

People were supported by caring staff who respected their privacy and dignity.

Staff were able to describe the likes, dislikes and preferences of people who lived at the home and care and support was individualised to meet people's needs.

People, who lived at the home, or their representatives, were

involved in decisions about their care, treatment and support needs.

Is the service responsive?

Good ●

The service was responsive.

Staff encouraged people to maintain their independence and offered support when people needed help to do so.

The service provided a choice of activities and people's choices were respected.

There was a clear complaints procedure and staff, people and relatives all stated the registered manager was approachable and listened to any concerns.

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service was well-led.

There were clear values that included involvement and compassion, with emphasis on fairness, support and an open culture.

The management team had effective systems in place to assess and monitor the quality of the service, the quality assurance system operated to help to develop and drive improvement.

The service worked in partnership with key organisations, including specialist health and social care professionals.

Birchwood Court

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 registered 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.

Before the inspection we reviewed all the information we held about the home. The information included reports from local authority contract monitoring visits. We reviewed notifications that we had received from the service and information from people who had contacted us about the service since the last inspection, for example, people who wished to compliment or had information that they thought would be useful about the service.

Before the inspection we obtained information from a Strategic Commissioning Manager and Commissioning Services Manager from Durham County Council, a Commissioning Manager and an Adult Safeguarding Lead Officer from Durham and Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group, a Safeguarding Practice Officer and Safeguarding Lead Officer for Durham County Council, and a Lead Infection Control Nurse.

Before the inspection, the registered provider completed a Provider Information Return [PIR]. This is a form that asks the registered provider to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make.

One Adult Social Care inspector carried out this inspection. We spoke with 12 people who lived at Birchwood Court, nine visitors and two health care professionals. We did this to gain their views of the service provided. We also spoke with four care staff, one senior care staff, the deputy manager and the registered manager. We also spoke with the activities co-ordinator, laundry, catering and maintenance staff. We carried out observations of care practices in communal areas of the home.

We spent time with people in the communal areas and observed how staff interacted and supported individuals. We observed the meal time experience and how staff engaged with people during the day. We also undertook general observations of practices within the home and we also reviewed relevant records.

We looked at six people's care records, four staff recruitment and training records, as well as records relating to the management of the service. We looked around the service and went into some people's bedrooms (with their permission), treatment rooms, the bathrooms and the communal areas. During the inspection we talked with people about what was good about the service and asked the registered manager what improvements they were making.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

All the people we spoke with told us they felt safe. People told us, "They're always fussing about you to make sure you're alright," "I feel safe having someone around if I need them or have a fall or feel ill I know they'll call for the doctor or ambulance." One relative told us, "They have really taken the pressure off caring for my [relative]. I used to be constantly worried that something awful was going to happen and we had a few close shaves so I'm pleased she's safe here." Another relative said, "She's really picked up since she's come here, the company and the care staff have given her."

On the first day of our visit we spent time with people in one part of the home which operated as a separate area of the home where entry was restricted by a locked door. The registered manager told us people were living in that area because they required additional care and attention from staff to meet their needs. Over lunchtime we found there was a period of twenty minutes where people who lived in this part of the home were without the continual support or oversight by staff being present in that area. CQC inspectors reported that the incident had occurred to the registered manager in order to ensure the safety of service users. The registered manager took immediate steps to ensure that sufficient staff were available for that part of the home.

The registered manager and senior manager carried out a review to determine why mistakes had been made in how staff were deployed around the home. This showed that staff had omitted to be present in the separate unit because they were supporting people in other parts of the home or assisting with the delivery of meals. The registered manager and senior manager also carried out a review using the provider's dependency level tool to determine how many staff were needed so that people's needs could be met. The registered manager showed us that deployment of staff had been altered so there was more staff available to cover the separate unit at busy times and additional staff hours were designated for the care of people at the home overnight. The senior manager gave assurances that these arrangements would be sustained and monitored by senior staff and the registered manager to make sure they were effective.

Staff said their work helped people remain safe because they monitored people's health and care needs and they had undertaken safeguarding training to help them recognise and respond if they suspected or witnessed abuse. The registered manager demonstrated how safeguarding procedures worked in practice by making a referral to the local safeguarding authority following the incident where people were found to be without staff to support them in one part of the home. We looked at the referral and response which confirmed the procedure had been followed and actions agreed.

There were effective systems in place to reduce the risk and spread of infection. We found all areas including the laundry, kitchen, bathrooms, sluice areas, lounges and bedrooms were clean, pleasant and odour-free. Staff confirmed they had received training in infection control and there were measures in place to ensure that the home was properly maintained. These were overseen by the registered manager and regional manager and the providers head office staff.

We found people were protected from the risks associated with their care because staff followed

appropriate guidance and procedures. We looked at six people's care plans. Each had an assessment of people's care needs which included risk assessments. Risk assessments included areas such as pressure care, nutrition and mobility / falls. Risk assessments were used to identify what action staff needed to take to reduce risks whilst supporting people to be independent, and still take part in their daily routines and activities around the service and where possible, outside the home. For example, some people took part in visits organised by the home or families and friends whilst others accessed local shops, bookmakers and other community facilities.

The registered provider had guidance on each individual care plan on how to respond to emergencies such as a fire or flood damage. This ensured that staff understood how people who used the service would respond to an emergency and what support each person required. We saw records that confirmed staff had received training in fire safety and in first aid.

We looked at four staff recruitment files in detail. We saw that each of these had a full record of the recruitment process. We saw potential staff had completed a job application form where they were asked about their previous employment history and the reasons for any gaps in their employment. This meant the registered provider could see what experience applicants had before their interview. We saw an interview was held with each person. The registered provider maintained a record of the interview. We saw people were asked questions relevant to their specific role. This meant the registered provider ensured that staff had the right skills and knowledge and were physically and mentally fit before they were offered a job at the home.

We saw in all four staff files the registered provider had sought two references for each person employed and made sure one of these was from the last place the person had worked. One staff member's recruitment references was being followed up as they completed induction working alongside other staff. We saw this was in place before they had unsupervised access to vulnerable people. We also saw the registered provider had obtained a Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check for each person before they took up their position at the home. The DBS helps employers to make safer recruitment decisions by providing information about a person's criminal record and whether they are barred from working with vulnerable adults. This meant people who used services were protected by people of good character employed by the registered provider.

The registered manager informed us that the treatment and medicines room was due to have the flooring replaced in the near future. This meant that it would be easier to clean and remain hygienic. We noted that the staff routinely recorded the temperature in the treatment room where medicines were stored and understood that the high temperatures may reduce the effectiveness of some medications. We saw the medicine fridge daily temperature record. All temperatures recorded were within the 2-6 degrees guidelines. We saw records which showed medication audits were carried out routinely and any issues or lessons learned shared with staff and the registered manager.

The application of people's prescribed topical medicines was usually recorded on a body map, showing the area affected and the type of topical medicine prescribed, including the frequency of the application. We sampled the records for one person and found that their body map had not been updated following a recent change in pharmacy supplier although we found previous maps were available to guide staff. The deputy manager put these in place immediately. Records were signed appropriately indicating the topical medicines had been applied at the correct times. Where people were receiving medicines covertly, there was clear evidence of a multi-disciplinary rationale for this, involving an advanced practitioner from the GP practice, as well as a pharmacist. A Mental Capacity Act [MCA] decision making process had also been undertaken to make sure decisions were taken in their best interests. Guidance was available to staff about

how people should receive their medicines covertly.

We saw there was evidence of sample signatures of staff administering medicines. There was also a copy of the home's policy on administration, including covert medicines, homely remedies, and 'as and when required' medication protocols. These were readily available within the Medication Administration Record (MAR) folder so staff could refer to them when required. Each person receiving medicines had a photograph and identification sheet, which also included information in relation to allergies, and preferred method of administration. Any refusal of medicines or spillage was recorded on the back of the MAR. All medicines for return to the pharmacy were recorded and stored in appropriate containers. These were collected by contractors on a regular basis who signed these on receipt.

We observed the administration of medicines, and found this was undertaken in a safe and competent way. The MAR sheets were checked for accuracy and a small number of recording errors or omissions were brought to the attention of the registered manager. These were checked by the senior staff in charge of medicines who subsequently demonstrated that the medicines had actually been administered appropriately. Staff had up to date access to medicines reference publications such as BNF (British National Formulary) to support the appropriate use at the home.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

All of the people we spoke with told us they were happy with the care they received at the home. People said, "I was sad to give up my home but I must say it's a lot easier living here with a good group of staff who watch over you, help you when you need it and make sure you don't get up to any mischief [become unwell]." And, "The staff know their business they notice everything and keep an eye on them that's under the weather [poorly]." Relatives said, "The staff are good at talking to the older generation, listening to their stories and helping them get along with daily living." And, "They know people well, they can tell if they're not their usual self and they get the nurse involved or call the doctors straight away if they're worried."

People had access to food and drink. Staff told us menus were based on people's preferences. One relative told us, "The cook makes sure people have meals they like and she goes around asking them what sort of food they want." Another said, "They're always baking and making cakes which is very popular with the ladies and gentlemen here – and their visitors." We talked with the cook who demonstrated that she had an extensive knowledge of people's likes and dislikes. She told us that if people didn't want what was on the menu then there were always several alternatives available. She said some people regularly thought of new things they would like to eat and she did her best to make them. She told us about several people's meal preferences and was knowledgeable about how these were presented and preferred portion size. We saw that where people had a medical condition or specific dietary need or preference then these were all catered for at the home. There were also pictures and photographs which staff used to help people decide their food choices and menus.

People who were at risk of losing weight had monthly assessments using a recognised screening tool. We saw that a Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST) was used to monitor whether people's weight was within healthy ranges and found they were being accurately completed. When people had lost weight staff had contacted their GPs and dieticians to ensure prompt action was taken to determine reasons for this and improve individual's dietary intake.

We observed that people received appropriate assistance to eat in both the dining rooms and in their rooms if they preferred. People were treated with gentleness, respect and were given opportunity to eat at their own pace. The tables in the dining rooms were set out well and consideration was given as to where people preferred to sit. We found that during the meals, the atmosphere was calm and staff were alert to people who became distracted and were not eating. People were offered choices of their meal and staff knew people's personal likes and dislikes; some people had individual menus. People also had the opportunity to eat at other times of the day and night. All of the people we observed appeared to enjoy eating the food. One person said the meals were, "never going to be as good as their mothers but weren't far off."

Staff we spoke with understood people's daily routines and the way they liked their care and support to be delivered. Staff described how they supported people in line with their assessed needs and their preferences. We saw that staff were patient, took time to listen to what people told them, and explored ways to support them in the way that people wanted. One staff member told us they were effective because they, 'worked as a team together – supporting each other.' Another said they were effective because they 'knew

service user's needs'.

The service helped people to remain as independent as possible. There were some adaptations in place to make the environment dementia-friendly such as signage and familiar photographs of the area to help people find their way around the home. The registered manager told us that plans to further improve the facilities for people living with dementia were being made in response to best practice recommendations.

CQC is required by law to monitor the application of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and to report on what we find. The MCA sets out what must be done to make sure that the rights of people who may lack mental capacity to make decisions are protected, including when balancing autonomy and protection in relation to consent or refusal of care or treatment. This includes decisions about depriving people of their liberty so that they get the care and treatment they need where there is no less restrictive way of achieving this. DoLS require providers to submit applications to a 'Supervisory Body', the appropriate local authority, for authority to do so. All necessary DoLS applications either had been, or were in the process of being submitted, by the registered provider. We found in care plans that necessary records of assessments of capacity and best interest decisions were in place for people who lacked capacity to decide on the care or treatment provided to them by the registered provider. The registered manager explained how they had arranged best interest meetings with other health and social care professionals to discuss people's on-going care, treatment and support to decide the best way forward. We saw records of these meetings and decisions undertaken.

People were supported by staff who had the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge through a comprehensive training programme. Staff told us the training was relevant and covered what they needed to know. Records showed that staff had undertaken a mixture of practical courses and computer based studies.

We confirmed from our review of staff records and discussions that the staff were suitably qualified and experienced to fulfil the requirements of their posts. Some of the care staff had considerable experience of working at this and other care establishments. New staff spent time shadowing more experienced team members to get to know the people they would be supporting. This helped to promote good practice and continuity of care. They also completed an induction checklist to make sure they had the relevant skills and knowledge to perform their role. All the staff were up to date with the registered provider's mandatory training and condition specific training such as working with people who were living with dementia. We confirmed that all of the staff had also completed any necessary refresher training such as for first aid and 'moving and handling.'

All staffs' training needs were monitored through supervision meetings which were scheduled usually every two months. The registered manager told us additional meetings could be held sooner if there were specific areas where staff needed support or guidance. Staff we spoke with during the inspection told us they received regular supervision sessions and had an annual appraisal. Supervision is a process, usually a meeting, by which an organisation provides guidance and support to staff. Care staff told us that the registered manager carried out an annual appraisal. During these meetings staff discussed the support and care they provided to people and guidance was provided in regard to work practices. Staff told us that there were opportunities where they could discuss any difficulties or concerns they had and receive guidance and support from the homes management. We saw records to confirm that supervision and appraisal had taken place in line with the registered provider's policy.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

People who lived at the home, those that mattered to them and other people who had contact with the service, were consistently positive about the caring attitude of the staff. One relative said, "You couldn't find a nicer group of staff working at this home. They're polite always have a kind word and always do their best to cheer people up when they're feeling out of sorts." One visitor told us, "Some of the people working here were her neighbours and friends children. They have grown up together in the village so it's good to see that has continued now she lives here." One person living at the home told us, "I can vouch for the [staff], no one could be better looked after and I really mean that."

Staff told us they could demonstrate they were caring because they, 'respected people,' 'met their individual needs' and they 'made sure they had interesting things to do.' Every member of staff that we observed showed a caring and compassionate approach to the people who used the service. This caring manner underpinned every interaction with people and every aspect of care given. Staff spoke with us about their passion and desire to make sure people had good quality care. They were empathetic towards the people who used the service and their relatives.

Throughout the day it was evident that the staff's approach was to empower people who lived at the home. Some of the examples we heard included staff always asking permission or questions such as 'Are you alright there?' 'Do you want me to ...?' 'Can I help you with that?' When the action had been completed they were thanked by the staff. This showed staff empowered people using the service to make decisions and be in control of their care.

Staff spoke kindly and had a lot of knowledge about people. Some staff had worked at the home for a long time and knew people well. For example, they knew and understood their life history, likes, and their preferences about how people liked to have their care delivered. We observed the relationships between staff and people receiving support and we saw staff consistently demonstrated dignity and respect at all times. We saw staff knew, understood and responded to each person's diverse cultural, gender and spiritual needs in a caring and compassionate way. People valued their relationships with the staff team and said they were 'a Godsend' and 'wonderful.'

All staff including catering and domestic staff were seen to use a wide range of techniques to develop therapeutic relationships with people who used the service. We found the staff were warm, friendly and dedicated to delivering good, supportive care. We observed that the care provided was person-centred and all of the staff promoted people to be as independent as possible. We saw this had led to people leading active lives and enjoyed meaningful occupation.

The staff showed excellent skills in communicating both verbally and through body language. Staff acted promptly when they saw the signs of anxiety and were skilled at supporting people to deal with their concerns. Observation of the staff showed that they knew the people very well and could anticipate needs very quickly. For example seeing when people wanted to go to a different room, or have more food or drinks. The staff were also skilled in encouraging people to take part in activities which they appeared to enjoy a

great deal.

People were given opportunities to make decisions and choices during the day, for example, whether to go out, take part in activities, what to have for their meal, or whether to spend time in the lounges or other parts of the home. Care plans also included information about personal choices such as whether someone preferred a shower or bath. The care staff said they accessed the care plans to find information about each individual and always ensured that they took the time to read the care plans of new people or to update themselves and check the needs of familiar residents.

People were given support when making decisions about their preferences for end of life care and these were recorded in their care plans. The registered manager told us, people who used the service, those who mattered to them and appropriate professionals contributed to their plan of care so that staff knew their wishes and to make sure the person had their dignity, comfort and respect at the end of their life. This meant people's physical and emotional needs would be met, their comfort and well-being attended to and their wishes respected.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

People received consistent, personalised care, treatment and support. They and their family members were involved in identifying their needs, choices and preferences and how they would be met. People's care, treatment and support was set out in a written plan that described what staff needed to do to make sure personalised care was provided. Person centred planning is a way of enabling people to think about what they want now and in the future. It is about supporting people to plan their lives, work towards their goals and get the right support.

We spoke with staff who told us every person who lived at Birchwood Court had a care plan. They described to us in detail how people were cared for and showed us how this was written in their care plans. We looked at four people's care plans in detail with staff. We saw each person's needs had been assessed and a plan of care written to describe how these were to be supported. The care plans had been reviewed every month by the senior staff or deputy manager to make sure they were up to date and people received the care they needed. This meant staff had the information necessary to guide their practice and meet these needs safely. We saw where possible people were involved in decisions about their care, or where necessary, their family or representatives. We saw that advocacy support arrangements were available for anyone at the home. This meant that people received support to help them make decisions that were best for them.

Where people were at risk, there were written assessments which described the actions staff were to take to reduce the likelihood of harm. This included the measures to be taken to help reduce the likelihood of falls, weight loss and skin pressure damage. Risks to people were therefore reduced.

We talked with staff about the people living in Birchwood Court. They clearly had a good understanding of the health and social care needs of the people in their care. They explained to us how other health care professionals were involved in the care of people living in the home.

We saw staff kept a daily record of the care that had been provided as well as any changes to a person's health care needs. This meant staff were accountable for the care they delivered to people.

The service enabled people to carry out person-centred activities within the service and in the community and encouraged them to maintain hobbies and interests. The way that activities were planned and carried out at the home was effective. People enjoyed taking part in these a great deal and the activities co-ordinator researched the backgrounds, experiences and interests of the people resident at the home to make these relevant and interesting. The coordinator showed us records of the activities and throughout the home there were photo mementoes of these taking place. When we talked with them about the activities, people spoke very positively in particular where these took place within the local or wider community such as open days, visits to places of interest and themed activities events. Activities were regular with emphasis placed on the value of older people; their lives and experiences within their communities.

The service had links with the local community. Staff were proactive, and made sure that people were able to keep relationships that mattered to them, such as family, community and other social links. Visitors called

in constantly throughout our inspection and were welcomed and supported by staff. We found people's cultural backgrounds and their faith were valued and respected and there were links and visits to and from local religious centres.

The registered provider had clear systems and processes that were applied consistently for referring people to external services. When people used or moved between different services this was planned with the support of staff and the registered manager if required. Where possible people or those that mattered to them were involved in these decisions and their preferences and choices were respected. There was an awareness of the potential difficulties people faced in moving between services such as hospital admission and strategies were in place to maintain continuity of care.

We checked the complaints records on the day of the inspection. This showed that procedures were in place and could be followed if complaints were made. The complaints policy was seen on file and the registered manager when asked, could explain the process in detail. The policy provided people who used the service and their representatives with clear information about how to raise any concerns and how they would be managed. The staff we spoke with told us they knew how important it was to act upon people's concerns and complaints and would report any issues raised to the registered manager or registered provider.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

At the time of our inspection visit, the home had a manager who had been registered at the home for over twelve months.

People living at the home said the registered manager was 'very good at her job.' One person told us, "She's kind and approachable, you can always see her around the home and she stops to talk to you and check everything is alright." Another person told us, "She's very good at her job – if there's a problem she wants to know about it." And, "She's a grafter she's been here at night time and sometimes at weekends to check up on the staff."

A relative told us, "I am confident the manager is good at her job and if something needs doing then it gets done." Another said, "She is very hard working, we see her around the staff in the home all the time and if you need to talk to her she always makes time for you." Relatives described the leadership at the home as, 'friendly,' 'approachable,' and 'down to earth'. Visitors to the home told us that the leadership at the home supported people to make their views known. They said, "You can have your say no matter what."

Some staff were complimentary about the registered manager. They said things like, "She supports staff who try their hardest and she has helped me to improve what I do with service users. This has really helped to add a bit of quality to people's lives." The manager is well informed, she asks about each and every person at the home so she can check what the staff are doing is the right way." Staff said they were well-led because they had 'someone who is approachable' and 'made sure that service users were looked after in the appropriate manner by staff.'

Staff told us they would have no hesitation in approaching the registered manager if they had any concerns. They told us they felt supported and they had regular supervisions and team meetings where they had the opportunity to reflect upon their practice and discuss the needs of the people they supported. We saw documentation to support this.

The registered manager had in place arrangements to enable people who used the service, their representatives, staff and other stakeholders to influence the way the service was delivered. For example, we saw people's representatives were asked for their views by completing service user surveys. Other approaches included the publication of 'You Said - We Did' posters displayed in a prominent position at the entrance of the home. This explained the actions that had been taken in response to specific observations, criticisms or requests from visitor's relatives and people living at the home. This showed that the registered manager welcomed feedback about the home and took actions in response to issues raised.

During the inspection we saw the registered manager was active in the day to day running of the home. We saw she interacted and supported people who lived at Birchwood Court. From our conversations with the registered manager it was clear she knew the needs of the people who used the service. We observed the interaction of staff and saw they worked as a team. For example, we saw staff communicated well with each other to meet people's needs.

We found that the registered manager understood the principles of good quality assurance and used these principles to critically review the service. We saw there were procedures in place to measure the success in meeting the aims, objectives and the statement of purpose of the service. The registered manager showed us how she and senior staff carried out regular checks to make sure people's needs were being effectively met. We saw there were detailed audits used to identify areas of good successful practice and areas where improvements could or needed to be made. The audits we looked at were detailed and covered all aspects of care. For example, the environment, health and safety issues, how infection control was managed and bath water temperatures to make sure they were not too hot or cold. Audits also included checks on care plans, equipment to make sure it was safe, and administration of medication. We saw records which showed where action was taken following any issues identified through this process.

The registered provider had an effective system in place to identify, assess and manage risks to the health, safety and welfare of people who used the service. We saw risk assessments were carried out before care was delivered to people. There was evidence these had been reviewed and changes made to the care plans where needed. In this way the registered provider could demonstrate they regularly checked that the service was the most appropriate placement to safely meet people's needs.

There were management systems in place to ensure the home was well-led. We saw the registered manager was supported by a regional manager and there were regular monitoring visits to the service. The regional manager conducted reviews of other services operated by the registered provider and this system provided an additional layer of auditing and demonstrated there was a culture of transparency and openness in the service. The regional manager told us how issues identified through this process were included in the home's action plan, which was looked at again during subsequent 'audits'. We saw the registered provider had management systems in place to support the registered manager including finance and human resources support located at the registered providers head office.

The service worked in partnership with key organisations to support care provision, service development and joined-up care. Legal obligations, including conditions of registration from CQC, and those placed on them by other external organisations were understood and met, such as, department of Health, local authorities, including the speech and language therapy team [SALT], tissue viability staff, occupational and physiotherapists, and nurse practitioners. This meant the staff in the home were working with other services to meet people's needs.

At this inspection we looked at the registered providers arrangements for the use and storage of records. We saw all records were kept secure, up to date and in good order, and maintained and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

The registered manager had notified the Care Quality Commission of all significant events which had occurred in line with their legal responsibilities and had also reported outcomes to significant events.