

Care For Freedom Limited

Care For Freedom Limited

Inspection report

Suite 3, 35 High Street
Sandridge
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL4 9DD

Tel: 01727834557

Date of inspection visit:
05 May 2016
12 May 2016

Date of publication:
29 June 2016

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

The inspection took place on 05 and 12 May 2016. The visit was announced which meant that the registered manager was given 48 hours' notice. This was to help facilitate the inspection and make sure that people who used the service and staff members were available to talk with us. At our last inspection on 15 November 2013 the service was found to be meeting the required standards in the areas we looked at. Care For Freedom Limited is a domiciliary care service that provides care and support to people in their own homes.

There was a manager in post who had registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). A registered manager is a person who has registered with the CQC 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 and associated Regulations about how the service is run. The registered manager was supported by service and assistant service managers responsible for the day-to-day operation of each location where people received care and support.

People told us that staff helped them stay safe, both at home and when out and about in the community. Staff received training on how to safeguard people from abuse and were knowledgeable about the potential risks and how to report concerns. Robust recruitment practices were followed and there were sufficient numbers of suitable staff available at all times to meet people's needs. People were supported to take their medicines safely and at the right time by trained staff where necessary and appropriate. Potential risks to people's health and well-being were identified, reviewed and managed effectively.

People who received support, relatives and health care professionals were positive about the skills, experience and abilities of staff who received training and refresher updates relevant to their roles. Staff supported people to maintain good health and access health and social care services when necessary.

Staff obtained people's agreement to the support provided and always obtained their consent before helping them with personal care. People told us that staff supported them in a kind and caring way that promoted their dignity. We found that staff had developed positive relationships with the people they supported and were clearly very knowledgeable about their needs and personal circumstances.

People who received support were involved in the planning and regular reviews of the care provided and this was accurately reflected in their individual plans of care. The confidentiality of information held about people's medical and personal histories was securely maintained.

People received personalised care and support that met their needs and took account of their preferences. Staff were knowledgeable about people's background histories, preferences and routines. People were supported to pursue social interests relevant to their needs. They told us that the registered manager and staff listened to them and responded positively to any concerns they had. People were encouraged to raise any concerns they had and knew how to make a complaint if the need arose.

People, their relatives, staff and professional stakeholders were all complimentary about the management team and how the service operated. The management team had recently introduced systems to monitor the quality of services and potential risks.

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.

People were supported to stay safe by staff who had been trained to recognise and respond effectively to the potential risks of abuse.

Safe and effective recruitment practices were followed to ensure that staff were suitable for the roles performed.

Sufficient numbers of staff were available to meet people's support needs at all times.

Where necessary, people were helped to take their medicines safely by trained staff.

Potential risks to people's health were identified and managed effectively.

Is the service effective?

Good ●

The service was effective.

Staff obtained people's agreement and consent before support was provided.

Staff were trained and supported which helped them meet people's needs effectively.

People were supported to maintain good health and access health and social care services when necessary.

Is the service caring?

Good ●

The service was caring.

People were supported in a kind and compassionate way by staff who knew them well and were familiar with their needs.

People were involved in the planning and reviews of the support provided.

People were supported in a way that promoted their dignity and respected their privacy.

The confidentiality of personal information had been maintained.

Is the service responsive?

Good ●

People received personalised support that met their needs and took account of their preferences and personal circumstances.

Guidance enabled staff to provide person centred care and support.

People were helped and supported to pursue social interests relevant to their needs.

People knew how to raise concerns and were confident these would be dealt with in a prompt and positive way.

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service was well led.

Systems were in place to quality assure the services provided, manage risks and drive improvement.

People who received support, relatives, staff and health care professionals were very positive about the managers and how the service was operated.

Staff understood their roles and responsibilities and were well supported by the management team.

Care For Freedom Limited

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 was meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to look at the overall quality of the service and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014.

The inspection was carried out on 05 and 12 May 2016 by one Inspector who made an announced visit which meant the registered manager was given 48 hours' notice. This was to help facilitate the inspection and make sure that people who used the service and staff members were available to talk with us. Before the inspection, the provider was also required to complete a Provider Information Return (PIR). This is a form that requires them to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make.

Care For Freedom Limited is a domiciliary care service that provides care and support to people in their own homes. During the inspection we spoke with four people who used the service, two relatives, three staff members, the registered manager and the provider. We also received feedback from health and social care professionals. We looked at care plans relating to three people who used the service and two staff files.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

People told us they felt safe because of the help and care they received from the staff who supported them. One person said, "Yes, I feel safe and very well looked after." Another person commented, "They [staff] are all on the ball. They are fantastic and I feel safe."

Relatives told us they were confident that their family members were kept safe and well protected from potential risks of abuse and avoidable harm. The relative of one person said, "I am very happy that [family member] is safe in their hands and well looked after." Another person's relative commented, "I don't need to worry because I know [family member] is safe with them."

Staff received training about how to safeguard people from harm and were knowledgeable about the risks of abuse. They knew how to raise concerns, both internally and externally, and how to report potential abuse by whistle blowing. Staff had access to information and guidance about how to report concerns which included relevant contact numbers. A staff member commented, "We are aware of the risks of abuse and people are supported to stay safe." Another member of staff told us, "Safety is a main priority and all issues and incidents are reported; it's all about our client's safety."

Safe and effective recruitment practices were followed to ensure that all staff were of good character and suitable for the roles they performed. There were enough suitably experienced, skilled and qualified staff available to meet people's individual care and support needs. One person told us, "They [staff] are there when you need them. They come every day and are definitely always on time and have never let me down." Another person commented, "They [staff] turn up on time, I have continuity with regular carers who I know well."

Staff told us that the registered manager and provider both frequently stepped in to help with people's care and support needs, particularly at busy times or when short staffed. One staff member said, "Staffing can sometimes be a bit stretched but [provider and registered manager] are very hands on, well organised and know what's going on. [Registered manager] matches staff skills to people's needs." Another member of staff commented, "Rotas are based around our clients and their changing needs." A relative of one person who received support told us, "Staff are always on time and stay for as long as needed. I have never known them be late or miss a visit."

Where necessary and appropriate, people were supported to take their medicines safely, on time and in accordance with prescriber's instructions by staff who had been trained. One person said, "[Staff] are all right, they help me with my medicines; always on time."

Where potential risks to people's health, well-being or safety had been identified, these were assessed and reviewed to take account of their changing needs and circumstances. This included in areas such as mobility, physical and mental health, dietary needs, communication, behaviour and emotional well-being. We saw that information and guidance about these risks, together with steps taken to mitigate them, were accurately recorded in people's individual plans of care.

Staff adopted a positive approach to identified and potential risks to ensure that people's independence was supported and promoted in a safe way that reflected their individual needs and personal circumstances. For example, one person who lived with significant and complex mental health conditions had become socially isolated and reliant upon the health care services they needed being provided at home. Staff worked with the person to gain trust and build their confidence until they were able to help and support them to attend essential appointments at health facilities in the community, for example in relation to regular blood tests. This meant that the person became less isolated over time, more independent and less reliant upon the support of others.

Another person was supported by a staff member to develop the skills necessary to clean and maintain their own toilet and bathroom facilities properly, which in turn reduced the risks associated with poor hygiene and infection control. The member of staff concerned told us that the person had been "very proud" of their achievement and had grown in confidence and self-belief as a result.

One person commented, "They [staff] help me stay independent and in my own home. They help me in a way that suits my lifestyle and stay in my own home. I am very lucky. I can cook for myself and they let me get on with that. I'm free and they help me do that."

Any incidents or accidents that occurred were recorded, investigated and reviewed to ensure that steps were taken to identify, monitor and reduce potential or emerging risks. For example, staff noticed that one person had taken too much of their medication on two separate occasions when confused. The provider consulted relatives and control measures were introduced to prevent further errors in a way that ensured the person remained fully involved but with increased support and oversight by staff.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

People received care and support from staff who had been trained and supported to meet their needs in a safe and effective way. This included in areas such as moving and handling, medicines, infection control, emergency first aid and safeguarding. One person said, "They [staff] are all lovely and know what they are doing. Really nice people and good at what they do. I couldn't manage without them." A staff member said, "Training is quite in-depth and medicine training was very good; the trainer was superb. [Registered manager and provider] are very supportive if we need more training."

Staff told us they felt valued and supported by the provider and management team. They had the opportunity to meet with the registered manager and a senior colleague on a regular basis to discuss and review their performance, professional development and any other issues that were important to them. One staff member said, "I meet with my supervisor every three to four weeks. It is structured and we talk about each client and how things are for me. They are very supportive." Another staff member commented, "The support is really great here. We also have team meetings to discuss concerns and problems. Staff meetings are very useful."

People's identified needs were documented and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the care and support provided helped people to maintain good physical, mental and emotional health and well-being. One person's told us, "Care For Freedom have delivered excellent care, they deliver a good service that meets my needs." Another person commented, "They [staff] meet all of my needs and more really. They are the absolute best carers I have ever had, definitely." People were also supported to access health and social care services relevant to their needs, both at home and in the community. For example, staff helped one person with restricted mobility to receive home visits from a chiropodist and optician. They also arranged for them to be provided with a wheelchair tailored to their particular needs so they could be more independent and go out and about when they wanted.

Staff were clearly very knowledgeable about people's health, welfare, individual support needs and personal circumstances. One person who received support told us, "I absolutely couldn't applaud them [staff] enough; they do a great job and know my routines and what's going on in my life. Staff are absolutely supportive; they know me and are all superb." A relative said, "They [staff] are very, very good indeed; they are lovely. We couldn't cope without them. They make such a big difference to us; it means that [family member] can stay at home." A social care professional commented, "Care For Freedom offer an excellent support service for people with challenging behavioural needs when main stream care agencies struggle."

The levels of support provided were agreed with people who received a service, together with relatives where appropriate, and consent was always obtained before they were supported or helped with personal care. We saw that people's agreement and consent to the support they received was both accurately and consistently reflected in their individual plans of care. One person told us, "I'm not dictated to about the care I get. Staff always ask me what I want and need, they don't dictate." A staff member commented, "People are 100% fully involved and consent to their support and care."

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. At the time of our inspection we found that the provider was working within the principles of the MCA where necessary and appropriate to the needs of the people they supported.

Staff were very knowledgeable about people's nutritional requirements and helped those in need of support to eat a healthy balanced diet that met their needs wherever possible. The levels of support provided varied in accordance with people's individual needs and personal circumstances. Some people needed no support whereas others required help to plan menus, shop for ingredients and prepare meals.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

People who used the service, together with some of their relatives, told us that staff provided support in a kind, compassionate and caring way. One person told us, "They [staff] are all kind and caring; wonderful, absolute gems." Another person commented, "The company and care I receive from the staff is very, very good." Somebody else who received support said, "They [staff] are brilliant, best I've ever had, just brilliant. They are truly lovely and very nice. They are kind and like a laugh."

Staff provided care and support in a respectful way that promoted people's dignity at all times. One person told us, "Staff always treat me with respect and dignity. A relative of another person commented, "They [staff] are lovely, kind and happy. They don't rush and my [family member] is happy with them; looks forward to seeing them. They are brilliant, very kind and respectful. They work in a way that relaxes but doesn't embarrass people."

Staff had clearly developed positive and caring relationships with the people they supported and were very knowledgeable about their individual needs, personal circumstances and factors that influenced their moods and behaviours. One person told us, "I have respectful and regular carers who know me well; they know my routines and what to do. There is good continuity with the support." Another person's relative commented, "It's normally the same carer and we are very happy with them." A staff member said, "I cannot fault our care, it's absolutely amazing." □

People who received a service, and where appropriate their relatives, were fully involved in the planning and reviews of the care and support provided. We saw that this involvement had been accurately reflected in people's individual plans of care. Each person had a 'key worker' assigned to them who was responsible for ensuring they received the support required to meet their individual needs. One person told us, "They [staff] do reviews often and I say what I need and it's all written down." A relative of another person said, "We look at care plans once every three months, so yes we are fully involved. Staff read the care plans and communication between us is good." Another relative commented, "We are fully involved and consulted about what goes on."

Confidentiality was well maintained throughout at the service and information held about people's health, support needs and medical histories was kept secure.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

People who used the service received personalised care and support that met their individual needs and took full account of their preferences and personal circumstances. Detailed information and guidance had been drawn up to help staff provide care in a person centred way, based on people's individual health and support needs. A staff member commented, "Support plans are really useful in understanding how people want things done."

The information included in people's individual plans of care included their preferred routines, medicines, dietary requirements and personal care preferences. This meant that people's views and preferences had been considered and taken into account during the planning and delivery of their support. One person told us, "Care and support is provided how I like it and not what suits the staff. They know how I like things done and that's what they do." Another person commented, "They [staff] know what I do and don't like."

Care For Freedom Limited has established meaningful links and cooperative working relationships with a number of other service providers in the community so that staff can help people access health and social care specialists relevant to their particular needs. This includes both statutory and voluntary organisations specialising in for example, mental health care and drug and alcohol dependency.

People were supported to pursue hobbies and social interests and to take part in activities relevant to their individual needs, both in their homes and in the wider community. For example, one person who enjoyed cooking was helped and supported by staff to cook meals for themselves at home. Another person who loved animals was taken to local garden centres to see fish, reptiles and small animals. Staff are were working with this person toward a personal goal of building the confidence needed to attend a farm and further pursue their interest in animals.

People and their relatives told us they were consulted and updated about the services provided and were encouraged to provide feedback about how it operated. They felt listened to, knew how to complain and told us that the provider, registered manager and staff responded to any concerns raised in a prompt and positive way. One person who received support told us, "They [staff] have asked for my feedback. They listen to me and take notice of what I say." A relative of another person said, "They [staff] listen to [family member] and do things how they like them to be done."

Although systems were in place to record and investigate complaints about the service we found that none had been received. People who received support and their relatives told us they had no complaints about the service but were confident that if concerns were raised these would be dealt with in a prompt and positive way.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

People who received support, their relatives and staff members were very positive and complimentary about the management team and how the service operated. One person told us, "As far as I'm concerned Care For Freedom is the best of the crop and is managed very well, it's a fantastic company and I have no complaints." Another person said, "It is definitely well run and managed. Communication is absolutely fantastic." A relative of a person who received support commented, "The service is well run with good communication."

Staff told us that both the provider and registered manager were approachable and gave clear, consistent and highly visible leadership in a 'hands on' and supportive way. One staff member said, "[Registered manager] is the best I've ever had; on top of everything and very well organised. Firm but fair and very understanding." Another staff member commented, "[The provider] is amazing and very good with people. They are very knowledgeable, always there for support. I feel valued and listened to, there is lots of positive feedback and praise. It's the first job I've really enjoyed."

The provider and registered manager were very knowledgeable about the people the service supported, their needs, personal circumstances and the relationships that were important to them. They ensured that staff had the tools, resources and training necessary to meet the individual, varied and often complex needs of all the people they supported. One staff member told us, "[Registered manager] is good at keeping up to speed, letting us know what is going on and knows our clients very well; their routines and needs."

We found that the views, experiences and feedback obtained from people's relatives and professional stakeholders about how the service operated had been sought and responded to in a positive way. The provider had also commissioned a reputable organisation to carry out an independent survey of people's views and opinions. People who received a service and their relatives told us that the management team asked for feedback and took notice of what they had to say. One person told us, "The management ask about my care and for feedback about staff."

A formal and structured system for identifying and monitoring risks had only recently been introduced and so we could not assess how effective the process was. This would bring together and coordinate a number of checks and audits carried out in areas such as care planning, medicines, accidents, incidents, training, staff performance management, safeguarding and health and safety.