

# Nurse Plus and Carer Plus (UK) Limited

## Nurseplus UK - Fellowes Court

### Inspection report

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### Ratings

Overall rating for this service	Good ●
Is the service safe?	Good ●
Is the service effective?	Good ●
Is the service caring?	Outstanding ☆
Is the service responsive?	Good ●
Is the service well-led?	Good ●

# Summary of findings

## Overall summary

Nurseplus UK - Fellowes Court ("Nurse plus") is a service that provides care to people in their own home. The inspection took place on the 7, 8, 9 and 10 August 2018. The inspection was announced 48 hours in advance due to this being a domiciliary care service. This was to enable people and staff to have time to consent to our speaking to them.

This service is a domiciliary care agency. It provides personal care to people living in their own houses and flats in the community. It provides a service to older and younger adults and children. People could have a range of needs including living with dementia, mental health diagnosis, substance misuse history, physical disability and/or sensory impairment. The service is also registered with us to provide nursing care (Treatment of disease, disorder or injury) but this was not active at the time of the inspection and the service was not employing nurses. The registered manager advised that the service has struggled to recruit and retain nurses but does not want to remove the possibility of doing so in the future. Nurseplus UK- Fellowes Court provided personal care to 131 people when we inspected.

At our last inspection we rated the service good. At this inspection we found the evidence continued to support the rating of at least good and there was no evidence or information from our inspection and ongoing monitoring that demonstrated serious risks or concerns.

The feedback from people described the service in Good terms. In respect of how caring the service was, the service was described in terms that mean we have judged it to be outstanding. People regularly told us about how "excellent" the service was and the staff were "wonderful" and "lovely". Everyone felt they were special to and had a special relationship with their dedicated carers. People also felt the service was very professional in all their dealings with them and responded fully to any concerns they had. Comments typically included, "They are brilliant; wish I had them more often. They truly look after me and provide whatever I need"; "They sit and chat and just light up my day. They make me a drink or something to eat; I could not ask for better care"; "A human person to chat with each day allows me to discuss all manner of things, news, sport, our families, the weather. It's so nice" and, "My carer knows where everything is and does everything for me. It is so nice to see the same face; I enjoy her company and our friendship."

From initial assessment, through care reviews and in the day to day, we saw people mattered to Nurseplus-Fellowes Court 24 hours a day; not just for the hours they were contracted for. Responding to people's urgent need at any time of the day and night was seen as a natural part of the job. For one person, we observed this meant every effort was made to reassure them in the early hours and meet their emotional needs at a time of crises. The following day every effort was made to ensure that person had the required support to get through a very difficult time.

The leadership and governance of the service was based on clear values set by the provider. Staff were recruited that put these values into action. The provider and registered manager monitored the quality of the service and people's care to ensure the values were integral to how people experienced the service.

People confirmed they could communicate with the office directly if they had any concerns, complaints or wished to contribute to their care plan or the way the service was provided to them. They were happy and stated that they could work directly with their care worker who they had become familiar with, struck up a bond and maintained a friendly but still professional relationship. This allowed people to be more open and honest with their care worker. One person said, "Any problems, I can and do call the office who are always very helpful and nice. This is very rare as I am more than happy with my carer; she is so good and helpful. I could not honestly manage without her help, I am very grateful" and another, "My carer is great at resolving my issues and helping me with my daily requirements. He works very hard when he is here and always remains for the allocated time but never appears rushed."

Staff confirmed they felt the service was safe and very well managed and they enjoyed their working environment with the organisation. They reported they felt important to the provider and registered manager. They were also confident they were supported fully if they had any domestic, personal or work-related issues. Staff told us, "The working atmosphere and culture is so much better than where I have been previously"; "The other staff are great and there is always laughter in the office" and, "I am happy and enjoy my work with the clients and I feel we have a good team of workers."

People were supported 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. People were partners in deciding, planning and reviewing their care and how to manage any risks. Where it was not possible for them to consent and be involved, key family and professionals were involved in planning what was in people's best interests.

Staff were recruited safely and in the right number to ensure people's care could be personalised and at a time they desired. Staff were supported by the ethos of the service to get to know people and spend time with them. Care was not rushed and staff had time to spend with people supporting them to feel less socially isolated. Everyone we spoke with looked forward to their care workers coming and spending time with them. All staff were described as polite, respectful and ensured people's dignity was protected.

People were assured that staff had the training and skills to meet their individual needs. Staff were trained to a good standard and supported to gain higher qualifications in care. There was an open door and phone policy for all staff. Formal supervisions took place and there were plenty of opportunities to seek additional guidance, support and further training as needed. One person said what others did when they said, "The staff are nice and well trained."

Where staff were responsible for people's medicines, food and drinks, these needs were met fully and safely. People were supported to be healthy in their lives or see relevant medical staff as needed. People felt staff would act if they felt they were unwell or unsafe at home; this would be with consent or as a duty of care matter if needed.

The service provided planned, personalised and pain free care to people at the end of their lives. The service was accredited by the local hospice. They were also accredited to look after people living with dementia.

Further information is in the detailed findings below.

## The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

### Is the service safe?

Good ●

The service remains Good.

### Is the service effective?

Good ●

The service remains Good.

### Is the service caring?

Outstanding ☆

The service has improved to Outstanding

The service was extremely caring.

People felt staff were very caring and went out of their way to make sure they had a good quality of life and wellbeing.

People benefitted from a service which demonstrated a very strong and visible person-centred culture and was committed to providing a service which put people at the heart of their care.

People were supported by a known team of staff who they were able to build caring relationships with.

People's privacy and dignity was respected.

People were involved in decisions about their care and support.

### Is the service responsive?

Good ●

The service remains Good.

### Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service remains Good.

# Nurseplus UK - Fellowes 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 checked whether the provider is meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008, to look at the overall quality of the service, and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014.

This comprehensive inspection took place on 7, 8, 9 and 10 August 2018 and was announced. The inspection was announced 48 hours in advance due to this being a domiciliary care service. This was to enable people and staff to have time to consent to our speaking to them.

The inspection team consisted of one adult social care inspector and two experts by experience. An expert by experience is a person who has personal experience of caring for older people and/or people living with dementia.

Before the inspection we reviewed information available to us about this service. The registered provider had completed a Provider Information Return (PIR). The PIR 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. We also reviewed safeguarding alerts; share your experience forms and notifications that had been sent to us. A notification is information about important events which the provider is required to send us by law.

We reviewed the care records of 10 people and visited these 10 people in their own homes with consent. We spoke with 24 people and four relatives over the telephone. We spoke with the registered manager and 23 staff.

We looked at five staff files and reviewed records relating to the management of medicines, complaints, training and how the registered persons monitored the quality of the service.

# Is the service safe?

## Our findings

We have continued to rate the service as Good in this key question.

Policies in relation to safeguarding and whistleblowing reflected local procedures and relevant contact information. Staff demonstrated a good awareness of safeguarding procedures and knew who to inform if they witnessed or had an allegation of abuse reported to them. The registered manager was aware of their responsibility to liaise with the local authority if safeguarding concerns were raised and previous incidents had been managed well.

All staff were confident and believed they worked in a safe working environment; being safe for both them as employees and the people they served when carrying out home visits. One staff member said, "I feel safe when working on home visits but if I felt a person may be in danger I would report any dangerous or safeguarding issues to my supervisor or the office."

Systems were in place to identify and reduce the risks to people being cared for by the service. People's care plans included detailed and informative risk assessments. People were involved in their risk assessments and supported to find ways to keep themselves safe at home. These documents were individualised and provided staff with a clear description of any risks and guidance on the support people needed to manage these. Staff understood the support people needed to promote their independence and freedom, yet minimise the risks. A staff member said, "I clear the path and tidy up so there are no trip hazards – and I always check windows and doors are closed when I leave".

Staff were trained in fire safety and every person was offered the opportunity to have fire alarms fitted for free if they did not have them already. This was due to the close relationship the service had with the local fire service. Carbon monoxide detectors were also mentioned to people as something to consider to keep themselves safe.

People, relatives and staff told us there were enough staff available to meet people's needs and to keep them safe. People had a team of a few care workers that they saw often and were able to get to know. People told us they liked having regular care workers as this allowed them to get to know and talk with the staff in a greater depth. As a result, some had made lasting friendships while staff remained professional in their duties at all times. One person said, "They are great, I really look forward to having a regular person to talk with, instead of just the TV." People who were supported with moving and handling by staff using equipment such as a hoist or stand aid told us this was safely achieved.

Staff told us, "I work alone but there have never been any problems with shift cover [to ensure people received their visits]" and, "It is never a big problem as there is always someone willing to cover."

A robust recruitment and selection process was in place and staff had been subject to reference and criminal record checks before starting work at the service. These checks help employers to make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable staff being employed.

Where staff were responsible for people's medicines, this was achieved safely. Systems were in place that showed people's medicines were managed consistently and safely by staff. Medicines were administered appropriately. Auditing of people's medicines, against their medicine records, confirmed they were receiving their medicines as prescribed by their GP. People were encouraged to remain independent in being responsible for their medicines for as long as they could. One person said, "They support me with taking my medication, contacting the pharmacy or GP if there are any problems, but I self-medicate". Other people told us, "They always seem to be well informed regarding the changes in my medication which is a burden I worry about less because they always assist and help and remind me of my medication"; "My carer is always checking with me about my medicine" and, "My carer helps me with everything, checks on everything and reminds me of everything, particularly my medication. I would not be here but for her help."

We found some issues with where people had been prescribed medicines on an 'as required' basis, such as analgesia. There was confusion in how staff completed people's medicine records and the code to use. We raised this with the registered manager who advised that an audit had taken place of the records we saw and this had been picked up and was being addressed with all staff. All staff had been required to attend compulsory staff meetings to update their training in this area. Staff confirmed this was the case and understood the actions they then had needed to take. The registered manager advised this was being closely monitored and further action was planned in the event concerns remained. One staff member said, "Staff meetings help resolve any common problems which we are able to discuss with changes to clients care plans or medication or PRN (medicine as required) issues".

Staff ensured they followed safe infection control procedures when caring for people and preparing food.

## Is the service effective?

### Our findings

We have continued to rate the service as Good in this key question.

We re-checked whether the service was working within the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA). From initial enquiry and at all times following, staff ensured they met the requirements of the MCA. The registered manager and staff were all trained and understood their legal requirements. 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 always had their capacity to consent to their care and treatment considered. People's records were clear and told staff when and how they were to act in people's best interests when appropriate.

Staff demonstrated they understood the needs of people living with dementia and other conditions that may make decision making harder. One staff member said, "I believe keeping my supervisor, the office and family informed and updated on a client's mental capacity is essential to their wellbeing and is very important." Staff knew people really well and ensured people were in control of their care and could make choices. Staff spent time with people who could not make decisions quickly and where necessary enabled them to choose from options that they knew people would prefer from past experience. People's wishes were respected when they declined staff support. Staff would then record and report this; external support with the person or representative's best interest consent was sought and acted on if it was felt the person was then placing themselves at risk. A staff member said, "I encourage but ultimately it's their choice – if they don't want to do something, I will make sure that I respect their wishes and report" and another said, "I respect every person's right to choose what they want to eat or drink. I always ask the client what they would like to eat, if they would like a drink or what would you like to wear today."

The service had an exceptional initial assessment process for people referred to or interested in their service. People were visited by an experienced member of the office staff. The initial assessment process looked at the needs of the whole person and not just the referring need. The assessing staff and registered manager would then review the person's needs and see if they could meet all their needs or whether they could also sign post them to other services in the community to ensure the person's life could be enhanced. The service would only take people's care package on when they had the staff trained to meet that need; they would ensure the staff had the up to date knowledge of the person's needs, skills and the required equipment in place to meet that need.

Where the staff were responsible for people's food and drinks, this was achieved fully with staff ensure people's health and well-being. People talked to us about the staff sitting and having a cup of tea with them which they felt was special. The service worked closely with people, their GP, district nurse, speech and language therapist and/or dietician as required. Where there were concerns, clear records were kept. Staff would go the extra mile to ensure people had the food they desired if they were a bit 'off their food'. One staff member said, "If he is off his food [when they visited] I always leave a sandwich in the fridge and a drink



option." Everyone told us that staff made sure they were left with a drink before they left and staff ensured they were drinking enough during the hot summer weather that was taking place during the inspection time.

Other staff commented, "They always choose what they like to eat and drink but I do encourage them to choose nutritional options where possible" and, "It is always important that I try wherever possible to ask and check what it is that each individual person wants or requires. I do my best with what is available to eat and drink."

People had their health needs met by staff. Everyone told us that staff would ask them about their health and would encourage them to seek advice and support if they were concerned. Family also confirmed that the service would call them if they were worried about their relative. Staff said there was good support from the office and the on-call system, so that if a person is unwell, they would get advice and guidance on whether to call the GP or another health professional. Staff would also call the NHS 111 service for advice or an ambulance if necessary.

People and relatives told us they felt the staff were trained to a high standard and demonstrated skill and confidence when they were caring for them or their relative. Staff were trained in the core skills identified by the provider which were updated often. Staff were also trained in key care skills needed to look after individual people. For example, PEG feeding a person (feeding through the stomach wall) in line with the professional in charge of this person's care. A clear protocol was in place that staff followed; as the person's dependency on this equipment changed, staff were updated in their training and knowledge. The person confirmed there was no gap between visits by the lead professional and the actions and skills demonstrated by the staff during day to day care.

People told us, "The staff are nice and well trained"; "They are very efficient with what I want doing. They know me very well" and another person said, "I couldn't do without them".

Staff told us the training and support they received had given them the skills, knowledge and confidence they needed to carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively. They told us how supervision gave them time to reflect on their practice and development. One staff member said, "I am in regular contact and have supervision with my supervisor which allows me to do a professional job. I am updated on any changes to a client's care plan or PRN" and another said, "I like the many training courses available, as well as work discussions and service user updates during our regular staff meetings."

## Is the service caring?

### Our findings

We have improved the rating of the service to Outstanding in this key question.

Everyone we spoke with spoke about the staff, the management and how their caring needs were met in outstanding terms. The staff had an amazing approach to people and the care they needed. They knew each person to the highest level possible. They were continually looking at how they could impact on people to the level they needed to have full control of their care and be as independent as possible. One person summed up the comments we received by saying, "[Nurse plus] are friendly, professional, polite and a great service for my needs and help I require" and another, "An excellent care service who provide very good staff and they are professional."

People said of the staff, "Absolutely brilliant"; "They are my friends"; "I can't say a bad thing about them"; "We have a lovely routine – they help me with lots of things"; "They help with anything that I want them to do"; "I could tell them if anything was wrong"; "All the staff are wonderful, nothing is ever too much trouble" and, "I feel very relaxed now (since the change to Nurse Plus). They have improved things".

The service had an extremely strong, active person-centred culture. Both staff and management were fully committed to ensuring people received the very best possible care in a loving, supportive and caring way. For example, from initial enquiry and assessment, the registered manager and staff strived to get to know people personally and what was important to them. This then became central to how their care was planned and delivered. Also, staff and people were very carefully matched with each other and staff were encouraged to get to know people well and spend quality time with them.

Staff were reported to be very friendly, polite and always treated people in a very caring, dignified and professional manner. The service was highly recommended by all those who participated in our telephone interviews and visits. There were no complaints or negative comments regarding staff appearance, behaviour, manners, punctuality or working standards.

Staff readily described how they supported people to feel special during the time they spent with them. One member of staff said, "If people are feeling low, I will do whatever they want like take them for a walk around the block, or just chat whilst having a cup of tea. They are most important at the end of the day". Another staff member stated, "The people are all unique and special. I always read the care plan first, so that I know the little things about them, their hobbies and interests – it helps me to give good care". Other staff commented, "When you get that smile – it is a great breakthrough"; "I love the job, helping people to stay in their own homes"; "I was told that it is important to understand that each and every client is different, with their own likes and dislikes about the way things are done"; "I enjoy care and have done it for many years – I like the rapport and getting to know people" and, "I always go in with a smiley face and I'm cheery. A lot of older people like a friendly face".

The company values of being caring, trustworthy and positive were played out in front of us and expressed

by the people and family receiving their care. There was a 'can do' attitude in meeting people's individual needs in as creative and caring way as possible.

From initial assessment people, regardless of their identity mattered to the staff at Nurseplus- Fellowes Court. The office staff, care staff and registered manager all spoke about people with care and passion. Each person was known to them and their individual needs and characters. All expressed wanting the best for people with people in the driving seat of their care. People told us they were encouraged and supported to be independent in their care. A person said, "They try to help me remain independent" and another, "The staff are polite and patient never rushing me. They are very good all the time."

We observed during inspection that the service cared about people 24 hours a day; not just in respect of the hours and times they were contracted for. There was an on-call service that people or their relatives could call throughout the night. We heard in handover how staff embraced people during these calls, showing genuine care and ensured they were physically and emotionally alright. Help and support was sought if necessary but sometimes people just needed someone to talk to. We heard, for example, how a person was emotionally unhappy at 2am and the care and passion the member of staff had for this person at this time. They described in the most caring terms how they spent time on the phone with this person talking over how they were feeling. First thing in the morning, the person was contacted and support sent to their home. The staff who cared for them were told what had happened so they could support them. Round the clock support was offered to them during their time of crises.

Staff said, "It is important to make people feel involved in their care". Another person said, "The staff certainly support me and let me use my strengths". One family member described how the staff knew their relative well stating, "They understand her very, very well and know her moods, I know I can leave her with the carer whilst I do the shopping and she is absolutely fine." Another relative said, "The care staff are fabulous – they know their job".

Staff confirmed a very good working, friendly but professional relationship with people and when speaking to people they agreed with this. Although, staff acted professionally, they were not afraid to show love and affection when they needed to. Staff said, "I enjoy and like the regular people I look after. I have built up good relationships and we have good times together in the main"; "It is satisfying getting to know my service users which builds confidence and trust in my work"; "We have regular chats, this always leads to a friendly professional working relationship"; "People like to talk about most things, my work, kids, the weather" and, "People do seem interested in me and my working day and my family which is nice".

## Is the service responsive?

### Our findings

We have continued to rate the service as Good in this key question.

People had personalised care plans in place and were a partner in planning, reviewing and saying how they wanted their care to be given to them. People and their relatives, staff and key professionals were involved in the planning and review of their care. From initial assessment through to the full care plan and review, there was an active exploration of people's needs, likes, dislikes and character to be able to provide "just right care". People were encouraged to have or take back and maintain control as they improved in health, mental and or physical well-being. The staff looked at ways to make this happen by getting to know people, building people's trust in them and looking for ways to support communication. For example, for a person who had a stroke, time was spent helping them to communicate by using speech and language advice, talking at their pace and using good listening skills. Assisted technology was considered as necessary.

People confirmed they were listened to and their requirements and wishes adhered to. They stated that they discussed and contributed to their care plan and requirements with the care workers, office and family members. People told us, "My carer always lets me know of any changes in my medication or if I require additional help. She is always able to help and inform me"; "I am happy and they listen if I need to change anything and do a good service in looking after me" and, "We discuss everything about my care. I am informed by her daily chats so I do not need to contact the office for anything." One family said the staff gave them plenty of information and updates on care provided, and if there were any concerns, for example with nutrition or hydration.

People's care time was seen as an opportunity for staff to interact with people and reduce their social isolation. The registered manager and provider actively supported people to see the care workers as being of extra value in their life. One person said, "My carer is friendly, very helpful and polite. I live on my own so it is nice to chat."

People told us they were encouraged to give their views and raise concerns or complaints. However, none of the people spoken with had had cause to raise concerns and were happy with the service they received. The complaints records showed complaints had been fully investigated by the registered manager and a full response provided to the complainant. People's concerns and niggles were also picked up and acted on. Complaints were used as an opportunity to learn and were discussed with staff at meetings, at handover and during supervision.

People said of Nurseplus- Fellowes Court and their care workers, "Professional and know their job. I have no problems or complaints regarding my carers who do good work on my behalf"; "No concerns, pleased with my carers and the professional service they provide" and, "No complaints. They work well and do a great job all the time."

People's end of life was given careful consideration and care planning. The registered manager and another member of staff had attended the local hospice 'six steps course' designed to provide care homes and

agencies with a toolkit to provide quality end of life care that meets CQC end of life essential standards. The registered manager described how this impacted on their care planning for people wanting to die at home but required care at this time. They told us, "During the course we had to provide evidence of what training and policies we had in place on end of life. It became clear that we could improve our service by following new policies and procedures by using and adapting the knowledge that [the hospice] share." The paperwork was improved but also staff knowledge, skills and understanding of people and their family's needs at this time. Their learning was passed onto all staff with the aim of more staff attending training. There was also a commitment by the provider to ensure the required skills are available across all their services.

## Is the service well-led?

### Our findings

We have continued to rate the service as Good in this key question.

The service had a registered manager employed to oversee the running of the service. 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.

The registered manager, office staff and care team demonstrated a shared responsibility for promoting people's wellbeing, safety and security. There was a "can do" attitude and commitment to providing the care people needed to the highest possible standard. The culture in the service was one of continued learning, development and wanting to always improve. The vision and the values of the provider were embedded in how people were viewed, staff recruited and staff training in order to enable them "in continuing to make a positive difference in people's lives".

Since the last inspection, Nurseplus- Fellowes Court had taken over another care provider's portfolio of people and staff. This took place at the end of 2017. This was handled carefully by the provider and registered manager with people, families and staff supported to transition without coming to harm or experiencing disruption to their care. Everyone's care was carefully reviewed, staff checked to ensure they remained safe to work with vulnerable people and, all staff training was updated to ensure it was in line with Nurseplus' policy. People and staff who had made the change spoke highly of this time. One staff member said, "We have been treated very well by Nurseplus".

The registered manager and provider had systems in place to ensure the service was meeting its high expectations of how people should experience their care. This placed people at the heart of the auditing and planning for the service. There were regular reviews by the registered manager and representatives of the provider. Where issues were found a comprehensive action plan was developed and reviewed at each step until the issue was resolved. A staff member said, "They are a brilliant company and I am very happy working for them." Staff generally said they felt "very supported" with one saying, "I feel very supported – everyone knows what they are doing and their roles".

People were given every opportunity to feedback about the service they received and to ensure they were happy with how the service was run. Overall people felt the service provided was "excellent" and confirmed a positive experience of engagement with their carer and management. People told us, "Great work and professional. I am pleased with their work in helping me"; "Definitely would recommend this service to everyone; gives value for money"; "Outstanding work to help me; I can definitely recommend my carer and the company" and, "I would not want to lose my carer and I recommend the company to anyone struggling."

The registered manager expressed a passion for their service that was impressive. They told us how much it meant that people experienced the highest possible care from their service. We received positive feedback

from all the people and staff we spoke with. One staff member said, "The [registered] manager is lovely – you can approach her with anything, she will call you right back". Another staff member said the registered manager was "very efficient and is on top of everything". A third member of staff said they had raised a concern with the registered manager who was then "very supportive and dealt with the issue confidentially and promptly".

The registered manager's dedication and commitment within the care sector was recognised by winning the People's Choice Award 2017. They told us, "This was a great honour and achievement following the nomination from staff and the clients and public vote." The registered manager had recently completed their level five in leadership and management course, which they described had helped them to further improve their skills and knowledge as a manager. They were also part of the local forums telling us, "As a local provider it is important to attend Plymouth City Council's domiciliary care forums; this is a very positive forum and I get a lot of information and networking from this."

People and family spoke highly of communication with the registered manager and office staff. We were told they were good and responded to concerns and complaints very quickly and efficiently. A family member said, "The [registered] manager is very helpful".

The registered provider worked in partnership with other organisations and had taken part in several good practice initiatives designed to further develop the service. In September 2017 at the Plymouth Council care awards the service received an award for achieving their Dementia Care Mark. This award recognised the high quality of service to people living with dementia who they were caring for.

The registered manager operated an "open door" policy with all staff encouraged to visit the office base at least weekly. This provided an opportunity for staff to see them if they have any concerns. All staff were free to contact the registered manager directly and there was always a member of the office staff on call. They told us, "The office staff are aware that when a service user or staff member calls and may want to speak to me that they can call me and that I will return the call."

Staff spoke consistently about the service being an exceptional place to work. Staff told us, "We have a good team of guys and girls and we always cover for each other"; "We have regular staff meetings where everyone is encouraged to speak their minds and their opinion regarding the service"; "Staff meetings are very good for updating on any issues with individual service users" and, "I am able to talk to office staff if I encounter any care issues for a client."

Staff said they felt very supported, received regular supervision and had access to plenty of training opportunities. Staff also had regular staff meetings and a monthly newsletter to keep up to date on developments, complaints and new skills. The newsletter also gave staff hints and tips on best practice, birthday celebrations and a suggestion page. The suggestions could also be submitted anonymously by being placed in the suggestion box in the office. The registered manager advised, "Having the newsletter is a great way to communicate and give staff a chance to have their say. We also promote 'carer of the month with a twist' with all staff names going in to a hat and three are picked out each month meaning that throughout the year all staff will be recognised". Every month there were two coffee and cake days for staff so they can catch up with each other, discuss any new people, concerns and/or good practice ideas.