

Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home Limited

Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home

Inspection report

Elpha Lodge
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Tel: 01670760397

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Outstanding 

Is the service safe?

Good 

Is the service effective?

Outstanding 

Is the service caring?

Outstanding 

Is the service responsive?

Outstanding 

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding 

Summary of findings

Overall summary

This inspection took place on 22 August 2017. We gave the service 48 hours' notice of the inspection because the manager is often out of the service supporting people to attend medical appointments. We needed to be sure that they would be in.

The last inspection took place on 18 and 20 March 2015 and we rated the service as 'Good.' We found the service was exceptionally responsive and rated this domain as 'Outstanding.' However, at this inspection we found some action was needed to ensure a nominated individual was appointed. A nominated individual represents the provider and has responsibility for supervising the way that the regulated activity is managed. Following our last inspection this was rectified and a nominated individual was appointed.

Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home provides accommodation for up to 24 people. The service specialises in caring for people who have acquired brain injuries or degenerative diseases, and who, as a result, require assistance with personal care. The service consisted of a converted church and a newer purpose built bungalow. The bungalow was known as Sydney House. We will refer to the service as Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home throughout the report because Sydney House is registered as part of Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home. There were 19 people in receipt of care from the service at the time of our inspection.

There was a registered manager in post at the time of our inspection who had held this post for the last 20 years. 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.

Staff at Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home had worked collaboratively with people to assist them to ensure their voices were heard by healthcare professionals. Staff went over and above the expectations for residential care homes in order to ensure people had equity of access to healthcare and would vigorously assert the rights of people to good care and treatment. The GP and community healthcare staff we spoke with discussed how the tenacity of staff to advocate on behalf of the people and their dedication to the people who used the service had improved their quality of life. The GP, district nurse and wheelchair services staff discussed how they worked closely with the staff from Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home and had formed a strong working relationship. We also heard how staff had worked with hospital staff when people had needed to be admitted to hospital, to ensure the continuity of their care and demonstrate how medical devices were used.

The service was making a difference to people's wellbeing by working well as a team, in harmony with one another sharing the same values and principles. The service was proactive in providing people with a range of information to assist them to make decisions about their health and wellbeing. Staff worked with health and social care professionals in ways that benefited people and had supported individuals to improve their

general health. Also staff supported people to pay remembrance to their loved ones and took people to visit their graves as and when they wanted.

We found staff had formed strong therapeutic bonds between them, people who used the service and their relatives. The nature of many people's degenerative conditions meant family members could be genetically predisposed to develop this health condition. People told us how a number of their relatives had, over the years, used Elpha Lodge Residential Care Homes for respite and long-term care. All felt this had been very beneficial. People told us that if not for the care and support their relatives had received they believed they would not still be around. Also we heard how the skilled interventions of staff had enabled people to improve their quality of life.

Staff were exceptionally caring and inspired people to achieve their goals. People were cared for by staff who knew them well; understood how to support them and enable individuals maximise their potential. The service's visions and values promoted people's rights to make choices and live a dignified and fulfilled life. This was reflected in the care and support that people received. Staff understood people's different ways of communicating and how to make people feel valued. They supported people to make decisions for themselves and spoke with people about their wishes and preferences. People were listened to and their voice was heard.

We found staff were committed to delivering a service which improved the lives of the people who use the service in fulfilling and creative ways. Their drive and passion had created an exceptionally dynamic and vibrant service. The culture embedded in the service was an absolute commitment to deliver a service that focused totally on the goals and aspirations of the people who used it. Their relatives told us the service provided care that was exceptional and contrasted dramatically from any other provision they had experienced.

We found that the manager had encouraged staff to constantly think about improvements. We found that the management style had led to people who used the service and staff feeling that they were an integral and essential partner in the operation and enhancement of the service. People were involved in the operation of the home and made the key decisions about who was employed, menus, the décor and the range of activities.

Staff were devoted to ensuring each individual found their lives were enriched. We found staff empowered people to voice their wants and aspirations for their lives and then supported them to achieve these goals. Alongside the activities coordinator we saw that a number of volunteers came to the service and supported people to join in activities. The volunteers were supported by the manager to complete a wide range of training and received regular supervision sessions.

Staff told us they received supervision on a monthly basis and they received annual appraisals. Staff were respected within the organisation and were provided with comprehensive range of training. We found staff were consistently striving for excellence and assisting people and staff to reach their maximum potential. We heard how the manager had supported staff to further their careers and those staff who had left had gone on to do nurse training. Staff were supported to achieve excellence in their roles by attending specialist training around working with people who had specific conditions and through self-reflection. The provider also supported staff to complete external training.

We found staff had an understanding of safeguarding and how to whistle blow. The manager was aware of risks within the service and was undertaking an analysis of risks. The service had emergency plans in place and took action when they became aware someone was at risk.

Staff safely managed medications. People's care needs were risk assessed with risk management plans in place and support for staff when they needed it. Recruitment checks were carried out. Most staff had worked at the service for many years, which provided consistency of care for people.

We found the manager had provided strong leadership and constantly critically reviewed the service. They routinely identified how they could enhance the service and ensure the staff remained at the forefront of best practice when working with the people who used the service. Their oversight of the service and encouragement of staff to keep abreast of developments and be innovative had led to excellent outcomes for the people who used the service and their relatives.

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.

Staff recognised signs of potential abuse and reported any concerns regarding the safety of people to senior staff.

There were sufficient skilled and experienced staff on duty to meet people's needs. Robust recruitment procedures were in place. Appropriate checks were undertaken before staff started work.

Risks were monitored and managed appropriately with the least restrictive option always considered

People lived in a clean and well maintained service with environmental risks managed appropriately.

People's medicines were managed safely and audited regularly.

Is the service effective?

Outstanding 

The service was exceptionally effective.

People were referred to healthcare professionals promptly when needed. The staff were champions for people and ensured they had equitable access to healthcare. Staff had formed extremely good working relationships with all of the local healthcare professionals.

Staff were appropriately trained and had an exceptionally good knowledge of how to meet people's individual needs. They had been trained to provide high quality stoma, catheter and pressure area care, which was well above and beyond that normally seen in a residential setting.

Staff understood the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and acted in accordance with the legal requirements. People were only provided with care when they had consented to it.

People were supported to eat and drink sufficient amounts to meet their needs and were provided with a choice of suitable food and drink.

Is the service caring?

Outstanding 

This service was exceptionally caring.

People were extremely well cared for. People were consistently complimentary of staff and the support they provided. People were treated with respect and their independence, privacy and dignity were promoted.

Staff interacted with people in a way which was particularly knowledgeable, kind, compassionate and caring.

Staff took time to speak with people and to engage positively with them. People were consistently involved in conversations and reviews about their own care and contributed to making decisions with the help and support of staff and other professionals.

Is the service responsive?

Outstanding 

The service remains outstanding.

The service was tailored to meet the individual needs of people in receipt of care. There was an emphasis on meeting people's social needs and ensuring that people maintained their hobbies and interests.

There was a complaints procedure in place. Feedback systems were in place such as meetings and surveys to obtain the views of people.

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding 

The service was exceptionally well led.

The manager was effective at ensuring staff delivered services of a high standard. We found that they were very conscientious and critically reviewed all aspects of the service then took timely action to make any necessary changes.

Staff told us they found the manager to be very supportive and felt able to have open and transparent discussions with them through one-to-one meetings and staff meetings.

There were very effective systems in place to monitor and improve the quality of the service provided. Staff and the people we spoke with told us that the service had an open, inclusive and positive culture.

Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection was planned to check whether the provider is meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008, to look at the overall quality of the service, and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014.

One adult social care inspector completed this inspection on 22 August 2017.

We reviewed information we held about the service, including the notifications we had received from the provider. Notifications are reports about any changes, events or incidents the provider is legally obliged to send us within required timescales.

We contacted external healthcare professionals as part of our inspection to gain their views of the service provided at Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home. During the inspection we spoke with a GP, district nurse and wheelchair services personnel about their views of the service.

Over the course of the inspection we spoke with 18 people who used the service and 10 relatives. We spoke with the manager, deputy manager, three senior care staff, six care staff, the activities coordinator, the cook and a domestic staff member. We looked at five care records and associated medicine administration records. We also looked at two staff files, which included recruitment and training records, as well as records related to the management of the service.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

At the last inspection we found that the provider had processes in place to ensure people received safe care and at this inspection we found these systems remained in place.

People and relatives we spoke with told us they felt the service was safe. One person told us, "I love it here." Another person said, "The staff are great and nothing is ever too much for them." Another person said, "The staff really know what they are doing and made sure I got all the right equipment and that. It has really made a big difference."

A relative said, "I can't praise the staff enough." Another relative said, "[Person's name] has come on so much since they have been here and this home has really made a difference. I don't think they would have survived without the support from the staff." Another relative said, "I can't fault them at all and it is not like coming into a care home, it's like we are all part of a big family."

Risks to people using the service were assessed and plans put in place to reduce the chances of them occurring. For example, one person had been at risk of dehydration because they found it difficult to drink. Staff worked with them, their family and healthcare professionals to determine the best way to manage this risk and it was agreed that a Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG) would be fitted and used to support the person have fluids. A PEG allows nutrition, fluids and/or medicines to be put directly into the stomach, bypassing the mouth using a flexible tube which is inserted into the stomach. The manager told us this intervention had a very positive impact on the person's life and removed the previous risks. Risk assessments were regularly reviewed to ensure they reflected current risk.

Regular checks of the premises and equipment were also carried out to ensure they were safe to use and the required maintenance certificates were in place. Accidents and incidents were monitored for any trends, and plans were in place to support people in emergency situations.

Safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures were in place to protect people from the types of abuse that can occur in care settings. Staff told us they would be confident to report any concerns they had. There had not been any safeguarding incidents since our last inspection but the manager told us how these would be investigated, including making referrals to relevant agencies.

People's medicines were managed safely. Staff received safe handling of medicines training, and the administration records we reviewed were correctly completed. Medicines were checked, monitored and safely stored. People had access to their medicines when they needed them.

There were enough staff deployed to keep people safe. Two seniors and five care staff were on duty during the day and overnight there was a senior and three care staff members. Domestic staff were on duty seven days a week. The manager and deputy manager worked five days a week as did the activities coordinator. One member of staff said, "There is always plenty of staff and we never feel rushed or that we can't support everyone." The manager explained that they closely reviewed people's level of dependency and used this

information to determine how many staff were needed per shift. Also, that they deployed extra staff if people wanted to go to different activities or people experienced issues with their health or had appointments.

The provider's recruitment processes minimised the risk of unsuitable staff being employed. These included seeking references from previous employers and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. The Disclosure and Barring Service carry out a criminal record and barring check on individuals who intend to work with children and vulnerable adults. This helps employers make safer recruiting decisions. People who used the service took part in interviewing the prospective employees and their views were very much at the forefront of any decision to employ the candidate.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

Without exception the people and relatives we spoke with found the staff were extremely skilled and able to meet everyone's needs. People told us, "All of the staff are fantastic and really do make sure I get the best possible care." Another person told us, "They [staff] are wonderful and really know what I need and how to look after me." Another person said, "They really do a good job."

Relatives told us that staff had an exceptional understanding of people's needs and their knowledge far exceeded most other healthcare professionals that they met. One relative commented, "We have worked with many healthcare staff over the years and can only re-iterate that staff at Elpha Lodge knowledge is much greater than others. In fact when I was in hospital with my relative recently the Elpha Lodge staff stayed with us throughout and were showing the nurses how to use the equipment. It was marvellous and gave us such great reassurance that they were there."

All of the relatives we spoke with told us staff were exceptionally adept at meeting people's healthcare needs. That staff went the extra mile to make sure people had all the equipment and support they needed. They said that when people had been unwell and needed to stay in hospital they had been extremely impressed by the dedication of the staff. They found that the manager, deputy manager and staff would stay with the person for the full duration of their stay. A relative said, "I would give them 100% and find the care staff provide is outstanding. I don't believe you would find anywhere else where the staff have such knowledge about these health care conditions. I have found they often know more about the condition than the nurses on hospital wards and they are always happy to share their knowledge."

Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home specifically caters for people who have experienced a brain injury or have degenerative genetic conditions such as Huntington's disease. The manager's tenacity to ensure people received support tailored to their needs had led them to form very close working relationships with clinical teams who were leading experts in these particular conditions. This included the consultants and clinicians from the Huntington's disease team, who are recognised as at the forefront in Europe medical circles for treating people with this condition. This team receive referrals from across England and regularly complete research into the condition. They develop treating regimes, which are individually tailored to each person. We observed that the care staff offered was completely tailored to people's needs and enabled individuals to continue to lead an active and fulfilling life.

The manager explained that they shared this knowledge within the local manager's forum they attended and with visiting nurses.

One relative said, "The staff really do go the extra mile. [Person's name] was just on a visit to see if they liked the home and the staff noticed they looked uncomfortable in their wheelchair so asked the wheelchair services man to have a look at. This man got straight to business and sorted them out with a proper adapted chair. If it hadn't been for the staff spotting this we would not have known they could have got a better chair."

The staff team had good working relationships with professionals such as community nurses and GPs and referred people to these services when needed. A GP told us, "They will try everything in their power to support people and work closely with us. The manager is always on the ball and calls us promptly if there are any changes in people's health. This has led to lots of illnesses being spotted quickly and certainly has ensured people have the best quality of life possible." The community nurse told us, "The manager is really dedicated and makes sure people get the best care possible. You can trust the staff to support people to manage their health conditions. I have absolutely no concerns that the staff will ensure people get the right care at the right time."

The manager also discussed with us how they make sure staff are fully equipped to appropriately manage equipment such as PEGs and catheters but also make sure that people are supported to do as much as they can for themselves. We heard how when people go to hospital with devices that are not commonly used, staff go with them and show the nursing staff what to do. The manager also discussed how they had worked with clinicians to learn how to identify signs that people were becoming unwell so they could respond quickly. We found staff had an in-depth knowledge of signs of ill-health for this client group. The staff's knowledge of the healthcare needs of the people who used the service surpassed those expected within residential settings.

Staff recorded clearly in the records the advice provided by the health care professional whilst at the service or, if appropriate, when at home in order to support the person to follow the guidance. The care records provided very detailed information about how to meet people's physical healthcare needs and included the full information on how to use the specialist equipment such as adapted wheelchairs, pressure relieving cushions, hoists, and slide sheets.

Staff were proactive in providing people with a range of information to assist them to make decisions about their health and wellbeing. For example, people were supported to weigh up the pros and cons around making changes to their adapted equipment and taking decisions as to whether to have a PEG fitted or not. Staff were also actively contributing to supporting people to understand how to manage their mental and physical well-being.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is required by law to monitor the operation of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards. 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 who lack mental capacity to consent to arrangements for necessary care or treatment can only be deprived of their liberty when this is in their best interests and legally authorised under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA). The procedures for this in care homes and hospitals are called the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) authorisations.

Staff were very clear that even when people had a mental health disorder or impairment to the brain, this did not automatically mean they lacked capacity. We saw that staff had carefully considered how people could be supported to make decisions and only looked to take decisions on individual's behalf if no means could be found that would assist them to share their view. All of the records reviewed showed they used all available mechanisms, such as computer assisted technology to enable individuals to make decisions. We saw that the manager kept abreast of developments in technological aides that would assist people to express their views. For instance the manager was exploring the use of eye-laser technology for one person

who could no longer verbalise their views. This technology allows the person to use eye movements to instruct a computer what they want to say and also to complete other tasks such as painting.

We found that the manager and staff had attended a variety of MCA and DoLS training courses. They had used this learning to inform the way they worked with people who may lack capacity to make decisions. We saw mental capacity assessment forms had been completed when needed and these ensured staff adhered to the requirements of the MCA. Best interest decisions were clearly recorded and carefully considered. Decisions always involved the family representatives and healthcare professionals, and adopted least restrictive practices. For instance since one person had their accident they no longer enjoyed drinking but would eat. No matter what persuasion was used they found it really hard to take sufficient fluid and became distressed that they were asked to drink. Staff found that the person did not fully grasp the consequences of not drinking and therefore found they lacked the capacity to refuse fluids. The manager organised a 'best interests' decision meeting and the multi-disciplinary team agreed that a resolution was to use a PEG for the administration of fluids. Since this had been put in place the staff and relatives found the person's mood had lifted, they ate more and engaged more in discussions with staff. Thus the removal of worries around fluid intake had greatly increased the person's wellbeing.

We saw evidence that people had provided consent in care plans, for example consent to medicine support or holding information about the person. We saw evidence in care files to show that staff regularly checked with the people who used the service that they were still happy with the support being provided. People told us that they were fully involved in the development of their care plans and their agreement was always sought before any changes to the plans were made.

We found the manager was committed to ensuring staff had all the skills and knowledge needed to create an effective, person-centred service. Staff received mandatory training in a number of areas to support people effectively. Mandatory training is courses and updates the provider thinks are necessary to support people safely. This included training in areas such as health and safety, fire safety, first aid, infection control, moving and handling and food hygiene. Additional training was also provided in areas such as working with people who live with degenerative disease, working with families who have a genetic predisposition to developing health conditions, using specialist equipment and PEG care.

The clinicians from the Huntington's disease team regularly visited the service and routinely provided, at the request of the manager, training around recent developments in the field of care and treatment for people with Huntington's disease. The staff worked collaboratively with this team to ensure the care and support being offered was in line with current best practice. The manager also asked other specialists such as the local clinical team working with people who had acquired brain injuries to provide additional training. Staff found the training the clinicians provided greatly enabled them to enhance the lives of people who used the service. They also used this information to assist people's family members to understand the condition.

Training was closely monitored by the manager and they ensured staff regularly attended refresher courses to ensure they followed current best practice guidance. Staff told us they found the training was really informative.

Staff, including volunteers were supported with regular supervisions and appraisals. Supervision is a process, usually a meeting, by which an organisation provides guidance and support to staff. Staff said they found these meetings useful and records confirmed they were encouraged to raise any support needs or issues they had.

People's nutritional needs and preferences were assessed and recorded in their care plans. We saw that staff

ensured people were actively involved in managing their own diet. People were very complimentary about the meals on offer at Elpha Lodge. One person said, "The food is really good and staff are good at cooking." The cook told us they had the freedom to make any meal the people wanted and the provider expected high quality meals so imposed no budgetary constraints.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

People, their relatives and visiting healthcare professionals were exceptionally complimentary about the caring nature of the staff. People told us that the staff were 'fantastic', 'wonderful', 'lovely', 'marvellous' and "the best in the world." One relative told us, "They make us feel so welcome and go out of their way to make this feel just like visiting my relative in their own home. The first thing staff always do is offer me a cup of tea and if I am staying for a while make sure I have something to eat." Another relative said, "There is a wonderful atmosphere, [name of person] tells me all the time how happy they are and that the staff are so kind." Another relative said, "They go the extra mile here to make sure [name of person] gets the best possible care. The manager is absolutely brilliant and does go above and beyond to champion my relative's right to have the best treatment possible. The staff do go above and beyond what you see in other care homes." Another relative told us, "The staff are brilliant and each person is treated with such compassion and respect. It is humbling to see."

People told us that they found staff were attentive, kind and really thoughtful. One person told us how they had lost a lot of relatives to the same condition they had and the staff always assisted them to celebrate these relative's lives. They said, "The manager and staff always take time to talk to me about my relatives. On every anniversary of people's deaths the manager goes with me to visit their graves and we lay flowers. It does really help to be able to talk about the people I have lost and to think about what they were like. It is special that staff will always remember anniversaries and can recall funny stories about my relatives and remind me of nice events that happened."

Without exception the visiting professionals we spoke with complimented the staff and highlighted their compassionate and kind nature. A GP told us, "Elpha Lodge provides an exceptional caring service where the staff are truly dedicated to delivering personalised and sensitive care." The wheelchair services person told us, "You are always made to feel very welcome and nothing is a problem. I find the commitment to giving people high quality care is outstanding." A community nurse said, "I couldn't praise enough the work and level of care being provided. The staff are so committed to making sure they provide people with everything they need and do truly care about people." Visiting professionals also discussed how the staff team were committed advocates for people and would not hesitate to challenge practice that was not effective.

The nature of some people's conditions meant these were life limiting. We found that the manager and staff had received a wide range of training around delivering effective palliative care. It was refreshing to find that staff were comfortable discussing the losses people had experienced and their wishes around the end of life care they would want. We found staff were very skilled at delivering this type of care and sensitively dealt with all of the concerns people may have. We heard from relatives that previous members of their family had used the Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home. They found that it had been effective in supporting them through every stage of their illness. One relative said, "Every one of us who used Elpha Lodge found the staff were brilliant, knowledgeable and so kind this is why other members then choose to come here. When the time comes I will have no hesitation about using Elpha Lodge."

Staff told us how they worked in a way that protected people's privacy and dignity. They told us about the importance of encouraging the people to be independent and also the need to make sure people's privacy was maintained. For example, they had enabled people to find new adapted wheelchairs, which had led to them being able to spend the majority of their time enjoying activities in the service or out and about in the community. One staff member said, "I love working here and could not think of a better place to work. It is our aim to make sure people are getting the best possible care and the most out of life. I am confident that we achieve this goal."

We found staff placed great emphasis on the service's visions and values, which aimed to promote people's rights to make choices, receive compassionate care and live a dignified and fulfilled life. This was reflected in every aspect of the care and support that people received. The manager and staff showed genuine concern for people's wellbeing. Staff had an absolute commitment to deliver a personalised and responsive service, which relatives described as fantastic. A GP commented, "It is clear that the manager has cultivated a very strong, person-centred care team."

Throughout the inspection we saw that staff were not rushed in their interactions with people. We saw many examples of staff providing support with compassion and kindness. Staff spent time chatting, encouraging, laughing, and joking with people. We saw that where people requested support, it was provided promptly and discreetly by staff. Everyone we spoke with was complimentary of the staff who supported them.

The manager told us how they made sure people received the appropriate treatment and described one instance when a person they were supporting was in hospital and received the incorrect medicine so they (on the behalf of the person) complained. It was not taken up immediately by staff at the hospital so they wrote a formal complaint and raised safeguarding alerts. The manager said, "Just because they have degenerative conditions doesn't mean you should expect anything less than the best when using any healthcare service."

Staff were committed to delivering a high quality service for people and had created an environment that people thrived in. A staff member said, "People have the absolute right to get the best care and our goal is to always make sure people have a good quality of life. We always make sure everyone feels very much the centre of service."

Staff were devoted to ensuring each person found their lives were enriched by their experience of life within the service and their local community. The manager and staff told us how they worked with people who used the service to enable them to continue to live a fulfilling life. We found the staff empowered people to voice their wants and aspirations for their lives and then supported them to achieve these goals. For example people and relatives told us how the staff had supported them to work through the implications of the impact of the physical condition on their and families life. One relative told us how the staff had worked through their emotions when another of their relatives, with a similar condition to the person being supported at the service, wanted to move out of their home. They told us this had now gone very well and they all recognised the benefit of the person being able to live independently for as long as possible.

Staff were passionate about their work. They actively listened to what people had to say and took time to help people feel valued and important. Staff understood people's communication methods and readily assisted people to express their views and join in conversations. Staff supported people to join in conversations with us and we found these were very lively and enjoyable exchanges of views. One person discussed with us their experiences of the service and how Elpha Lodge staff had made their life much more interesting. They told us that staff had given them hope and supported them to come to terms with their condition.

The manager and staff knew how to assist people to access advocacy services, if this was needed. An advocate is a person who works with people or a group of people who may need support and encouragement to exercise their rights. We heard how the manager and staff had actively ensured people were enabled to voice their opinions about how the care should be delivered. They supported people to access a wide range of technology that assisted them to communicate their views about the care and support being offered.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

At the last inspection we found the service was exceptionally responsive and judged this domain as 'outstanding.' At this inspection we found the manager and staff had sustained their practice and in areas introduced additional innovations.

Without exception all the people we spoke with said that staff were responsive to their needs. One person told us, "I cannot praise it highly enough, staff seem to have a sixth sense and know when I am feeling a bit down and are straight there." Another person told us, "The staff are outstanding carers; they come as soon as I ask and nothing is ever too much trouble." People described the support they received as "excellent" and "fantastic."

Health and social care professionals informed us that they found that Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home was exceptionally responsive to people's needs. They told us that since the last inspection the staff had maintained an outstanding service and there had been no dip in practice, in fact they found this had developed to exceed their previous experience. A GP stated, "The manager is very responsive and they, with the staff, pick up on the slightest change. The manager is very good at reporting incidents or changes in presentation to us. As you heard today the manager can directly contact me and I am always happy to take their call as I know they will be appropriately making a request for me to provide a treatment or visit. I am never called about spurious matters and find that the call is very timely for the person. I have found that the manager has taken a lot of time to learn and understand signs and symptoms of developments in people's condition. They do really have an excellent understanding of the conditions people at Elpha Lodge have and at times I think this is better than some generic clinicians understanding."

Another healthcare professional we spoke with commented, "The service they get at Elpha Lodge is second to none. In my opinion it's a centre of excellence and the work they've done has been fantastic." The wheelchair services person told us, "They keep a very close eye on people and always are looking to see that the equipment continues to meet the person's needs. If there are any changes they always get in touch with me straight away. I think they are excellent. Their quickness to follow guidelines is fantastic and the little things they do impress me greatly. I don't have any problems." The community nurse said, "They are a really good service. They always follow my recommendations implicitly. They are really outstanding; they are always on the ball and have thought of things before I even suggest them."

People had a detailed plan identifying their background, preferences and needs. These plans were up to date and clearly stated how staff should support each person. The manager told us, and records confirmed that there was an emphasis on making sure that even the smallest things were documented. They said, "I am all about ensuring people are happy. I make sure minute details are captured in the records, like if they want a morning shower and when they like to have a cup of coffee. I think we can't go far wrong if we have these recorded as it also means we will have all the information for the bigger picture. Then if any of these little things change it will tip us off quickly that there may be a change to their health condition or deterioration and we can get straight onto calling other healthcare professionals for advice." We found that people's care and support reflected what was written in their support plans.

The manager told us and relatives confirmed that there was a system in place to ensure that people were accompanied to hospital. The manager said, "We make sure there is continuity of care when anyone goes for a hospital appointment, either I or [name of deputy] goes to ensure that the person get the best possible care." A relative said, "When [person's name] was unwell recently and had to go to hospital [manager's name] took them and stayed for the whole time. This gave us a great deal of peace of mind and it not something most people would expect to happen."

The manager told us and a consultant confirmed, that consultants' clinics were held at the home. The manager said, "We've worked hard to develop such a good rapport with the consultants and this now means that the residents don't have to travel for hospital appointments."

People informed us that they were encouraged to maintain their hobbies and interests. An activities coordinator was employed to help meet the social needs of people who lived at the home. People told us they never had a dull moment at the service and the activities co-ordinator provided an exceptionally good programme of interesting and innovative activities.

An activities programme was in place. There was a cinema club and the service had their own mini bus. Trips into the local community were planned. Relatives confirmed that people were supported to continue their hobbies and interests. Several people showed us the books, tapes, CDs they collected and art work they had completed. A relative said, "There is always plenty of things going on and they all get together to make these lovely murals at the change of every season." One person said, "I find that the staff tailor activities so if you don't like one thing there is something else on offer. It is always busy and I find there is always something to do."

When we visited people were completing crosswords, an art project and went out and about. Staff praised those who took part telling them they were "brilliant." A member of staff encouraged people to think of answers to crossword puzzles by expanding the clues. This session generated a lot of laughter as some interesting solutions were offered. On the afternoon, the activities coordinator had organised an art session, which lots of people enjoyed joining in. The activities coordinator told us they had previously worked as a care home manager but found this role far more rewarding, as it gave them an opportunity to explore a wider range of ways to enhance people's lives.

One of the people told us that their relative had worked on the service's mini bus before they died, supporting people to get on and off. The manager informed us this person had been a very valuable asset to the service and had been dedicated to supporting people to get out and about. This person had been living with a degenerative condition but wanted to be as useful as possible throughout their life and the manager explained how the staff had supported them to achieve this goal.

The activity coordinator told us that a large number of volunteers worked at the home supporting them to provide a wide range of activities. The activity coordinator found these people were extremely committed to the role. The manager told us that they made sure these people completed all of the training and had supervision sessions. They found by valuing these people in this matter it increased the effectiveness of the support they offered.

We observed that staff also spent time with people on a one to one basis. We saw one person was using the internet to search for computer games that he wanted to download.

The manager explained the importance they placed on making sure people who lived at the service were actively involved in the local community. A member of the Rotary Club confirmed that Elpha Lodge

Residential Care Home is extremely well thought of in the local community. People told us about a wide range of community groups they joined and how they felt fully involved in the local community life. They discussed the local groups they joined and visits to church events.

People's spiritual needs were met in a wide range of ways, from being supported to visit the graves of their relatives and celebrate their lives to enabling people to continue to practice their faith. People, who wanted to went to the local church each week. In addition, a Roman Catholic Church representative visited the service each Saturday to offer Holy Communion. A relative said, "A lay preacher comes in and several residents go to church." The service was also involved in church social events such as coffee mornings and tea dances.

The manager told us that they supported people to develop and sustain their personal relationships. They explained that some people who came to live at Elpha Lodge were married and their spouses still lived at home. They said, "For [name of person] we got the OT [occupational therapist] on board and got the equipment to facilitate home visits and family relationships." One relative told us, "Without the staff support I don't think I could have gone on as I have. The staff have helped me keep up such a close relationship with [name of person] and gave me great advice about how to support my daughter. Sadly she has the same condition as [person's name]. The staff take a positive interest in all of us and always check that everyone is ok. I find this means I always have a shoulder to lean on and people to call upon if I needed them. All I can say is the staff and manager is excellent."

The manager told us that they had supported one person who is related to one of the people who used the service to access the help of the occupational therapist and this had led to them being able to move out of the family home. They hoped that this could mean the person enjoyed an enriched and independent life whilst they were still physically able to and in the future more specialised equipment could be installed to enable them to live as independently as possible.

The manager provided an update about the people they told us at the last inspection they had supported to move into a bungalow with their husband so they could "set up home and have a normal relationship." The manager had maintained contact with these people and offered a respite service for them, which was working effectively at enabling the people to live together as a couple.

The manager had also organised sexual health counselling for people and supported individuals who lived at the service to establish relationships with people outside of the service. One person told us they were a member of an online dating agency and the manager had organised access to a personal computer so they could have conversations and so forth in the privacy of their own room. The manager said, "Obviously, we are aware of the vulnerable aspects of them doing this, but the person has the capacity to do this and it's all part of normal daily life."

The manager told us that people were involved in all aspects of the service. This included staff meetings, recruitment and the planning of social and recreational activities. People told us they were involved in interviewing potential staff and that if they were not happy the individual was not employed by the service.

There was a complaints procedure in place. The manager told us that no complaints had ever been received. None of the people or relatives with whom we spoke said they had any complaints or concerns. We asked each person individually whether they had any complaints or if there was anything they were not happy with and they all said "no."

Surveys were sent out to people and their relatives to obtain their views about the care delivered. We looked

at the recent questionnaires which had been completed and all had no negative ratings for any of the questions asked. Comments made in them, included, "[Name of person] is very happy", "[Manager's name] is a kind person and excellent manager", "The home and staff are brilliant. I am very happy" and "There is nothing more they could do the home is perfect."

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

At the last inspection in March 2015 we noted that one of the directors of the company was the nominated individual. At that time they were subject to an on-going investigation because of events which were not connected with Elpha Lodge Residential Care Home. On 11 June 2015 a new nominated individual was appointed and they have completed the required supervision and monitoring of the service since then.

People, relatives and visiting professionals were extremely complimentary about the management of the service. One relative told us, "[Manager's name] runs a very tight ship and everything is always top notch." Another relative said, "The staff here provide high quality of care. [Manager's name] has really been the essential ingredient in making sure the home delivers such an excellent standard of care. I have never seen another care home as good as this one."

We found staff routinely consulted the people and displayed the findings of recent surveys in a format everyone could understand. People thought the service was well run and completely met their needs. They found staff recognised any changes to their needs and took action straight away to look at what could be done differently. People were involved in all aspects of the running of the service from recruitment to determining what improvements could be made to the service. People told us about how they planned the questions they asked at interview and the manager confirmed that they had an equal say on how was employed.

The manager had been in post for the last 20 years. People and staff spoke positively about the management style. They reported that the manager supported them and included them in the running of the service. Staff told us they thought the service had an open and honest culture. Staff told us they had regular meetings and made suggestions about how they could improve the service for each person. Staff told us, "I love working here because the manager really goes out of their way to look at ways we can make each person's life better every day." Another comment by staff was, "We really take pride in making the home run for the people and making sure they receive quality care. The manager is clear we should always deliver the care we would want to get."

We found the manager had provided very strong leadership and their constant critical review of the service had led to year-on-year improvements. They in consultation with staff, people who used the service and relatives routinely identified how they could enhance the service and ensure they remained at the forefront of best practice when working with the people who used the service. We found the manager's knowledge of people's health conditions was exceptional and this understanding had enabled them to readily engage with local and regional healthcare teams. For instance they had forged strong links with the regional clinical team supporting people who are living with Huntington's disease.

Their oversight of the service and encouragement of staff to keep abreast of developments and be innovative had led to excellent outcomes for the people who used the service and their relatives. Staff were able to clearly explain the governance procedure, their role and how suggestions were implemented. All of the staff we spoke with had a comprehensive understanding of people's needs and their level of knowledge

exceeded that seen in a residential setting. The passion for knowledge displayed by staff was directly attributable to the manager's leadership and commitment to the people who used the service. We found their leadership and management skills were exceptional and although they had been in post for 20 years they had not become complacent and therefore the service remained abreast with all of the latest treatments and approaches that could be used.

We saw that the staff team were very reflective and all looked at how they could tailor their practice to ensure that the support delivered was completely person centred. We found the manager was the integral force ensuring the service was safe, responsive, caring and effective. We found that under their leadership, the service had developed and been able to support people with complex needs lead ordinary lives. We found staff had developed an exceptionally in-depth knowledge of how to support the people who used the service.

Feedback was sought from people on a daily basis. Feedback from staff was sought in the same way and via surveys. Relatives and visiting healthcare professionals were routinely asked to comment about their satisfaction with the service.

The provider had systems in place for monitoring the service, which the manager fully implemented. The manager completed monthly audits of all aspects of the service, such as medicine management and staff development. They took these audits seriously and used them to critically review the service. The audits had identified areas they could improve upon. The manager produced action plans, which clearly detailed when action had been taken. The provider also completed monthly reviews of the service and discussed the operation of the service. These two elements combined ensured good governance arrangements were in place.

Services that provide health and social care to people are required to inform the CQC of deaths and other important events that happen in the service in the form of a 'notification'. The manager had informed CQC of significant events in a timely way by submitting the required notifications. This meant we could check that appropriate action had been taken.