

Next Steps Ltd

Next Steps Northamptonshire

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?	Good ●
Is the service responsive?	Good ●
Is the service well-led?	Good ●

Summary of findings

Overall summary

Next Steps Northamptonshire provides supported living to 7 people living in Northamptonshire. The service specialises in supporting people with a learning disability.

At the last inspection in September 2015, the service was rated Good. At this inspection we found the service remained Good.

People continued to receive safe care and support. Staff were knowledgeable about the risks to people and effective plans of care had been developed to guide staff in mitigating people's known risks. People could be assured that sufficient numbers of staff were available to provide their care and that they would receive their prescribed medicines safely.

People were supported by staff that knew them well and had received the support, supervision and training that they needed to provide effective care. People were supported to maintain adequate nutrition and staff promptly referred people to medical professionals when required.

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 treated with dignity and respect and could be assured that they would be supported to pursue their interests and hobbies. Staff were committed to providing care according to people's individual preferences.

There was a strong system of quality assurance overseen by a visible and supportive management team. People felt able to approach the management team and they actively promoted a person centred culture that was focussed upon people's strengths.

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe? The service remains Good	Good ●
Is the service effective? The service remains Good	Good ●
Is the service caring? The service remains Good	Good ●
Is the service responsive? The service remains Good	Good ●
Is the service well-led? The service remains Good	Good ●

Next Steps Northamptonshire

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 unannounced comprehensive inspection took place over two days on the 27 and 29 June 2017.

Before the inspection we checked the information we held about the service including statutory notifications. A notification is information about important events which the provider is required to send us by law. We also contacted and met the health and social care commissioners who monitor the care and support of people living in their own home.

During this inspection we spoke with three people living in the home and seven members of staff including the registered manager and the provider. We also spoke with two people's relatives.

We reviewed the care records of three people that used the service and the recruitment records for three members of staff. We also reviewed records relating to the management and quality assurance of the service

Is the service safe?

Our findings

People told us that the care that staff at Next Steps provided continued to maintain people's safety. One person's relative told us "We have consistent carers; it's the same small group. They know [Person] well and know just what to do to make sure they are safe. It's reassuring knowing that he is well looked after." Risks to people had been assessed and regularly reviewed and detailed plans of care had been developed to guide staff in mitigating people's known risks. Staff told us "We know what to do to ensure people are safe. For example; I help [Person] cook because if they did it on their own they may burn themselves." The provider had utilised assistive technology to support people to maintain their safety in their home.

People were protected from the risk of harm because staff were confident in recognising if people were at risk and knew how to report their concerns. One member of staff told us "I feel confident in raising any concerns about people's safety; I would tell the manager or the provider. I also know how to contact the Council or CQC." The provider and senior management team had taken appropriate action in response to safeguarding alerts and had implemented learning as a result of the investigations that they had completed.

Staff had been subject to robust recruitment procedures to ensure that they were of a suitable character to support vulnerable people living in their own homes. One person's relative who had been involved in the recruitment of staff told us "I have helped to interview staff; it's good to be able to ask them the questions that are important to people and their relatives."

There were sufficient numbers of staff available to meet people's care and support needs safely. People could be assured that they would receive their prescribed medicines at the right time. One person told us "the staff look after my tablets for me and give them to me every day." Staff had received training in the safe administration of medicines and had been observed by senior staff to ensure that they were competent in administering medicines to people.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

People were supported by staff that continued to receive the training, support and supervision that they required to provide effective care and support to people. One person's relative told us "The staff are very knowledgeable and know just what to do to help [Person]. There was an ongoing programme of training that was available to staff that also included formal qualifications such as Diploma's in Health and Social Care.

In response to the changing needs of the people supported by Next Steps the provider had commissioned formal training in supporting people living with dementia. Staff told us "The training is really good here. I am doing Positive Behavioural Support training at the moment and it really makes you reflect on how you support people." Staff received regular formal supervision and support from senior staff and felt supported in their work. One member of staff told us "We get regular supervisions here; about every six weeks. But the manager is always available for us to contact if we need to and the provider phones the service on a Sunday to check how things are going."

Staff were vigilant of changes in people's health and made referrals to health professionals promptly. For example, we saw that one person had been referred to the Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities (CTPLD) to support them to maintain good nutrition. One person told us "We have a menu at home that the staff follow. I get to choose what they help me cook for dinner."

People were asked to give consent for their care and support and staff were knowledgeable about their responsibilities in relation to the Mental Capacity Act 2005. One member of staff told us "We always give people choices. Some of the people we support need lots of encouragement to make choices but it's important that we do this." 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.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

People were supported to maintain relationships that were important to them. One person's relative told us "The staff helped [Person] arrange their birthday party. [Person] chose a Hawaiian themed party and invited all of [Person's] friends and family; it was a great day." Another person's relative told us "The provider arranged a big day out for last weekend, it was great fun. We all went on a boat trip and people could invite their friends and family to join them."

We observed the interaction between staff and people and it was evident that people felt comfortable in the presence of staff and that staff knew people well. For example staff were aware of the signs of one person's body language and nonverbal communication that highlighted they felt unsettled and wished to leave the provider's office. A member of staff told us "Next Steps are good. They enable us to spend time with people and get to know them so we can build a positive relationship."

People were involved in planning and reviewing their plans of care. People had allocated keyworkers who had been matched with them because they shared similar interests. Keyworkers worked with people to review their plans of care and to ensure that the care that people received was focussed upon their individual preferences. One person's relative told us "[Staff] is helping [Person] to choose where they want to go on holiday. They know them so well and will choose somewhere [Person] loves. They know that she loves hand massages so will choose somewhere where she can have those."

People were treated with dignity and respect. One person's relative told us "The staff are always so kind." Staff referred to people positively and described how they maintained people's dignity by ensuring that people's curtains were closed when they provided care and by knocking on people's front doors before entering; even when using a key.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

People had detailed plans of care in place that provided guidance to staff in relation to people's interests, care and support needs. One person's relative told us "The staff know exactly how to help[Person]. They have used lots of services in the past but Next Steps are the best. They work hard to get it right." One member of staff told us "People's care plans are regularly updated and we have handovers between each shift so we always know what help people needs or if there have been any changes that we should be aware of."

People were encouraged and supported to pursue their hobbies and interests. A member of staff told us "I supported [Person] to go on holiday. We went to the theme park while we were away and went on all the big rides because [Person] loves these." Another person had been supported to source and purchase sensory items to create a sensory area in their home to support them to relax and increase their well-being.

People could be assured that their concerns and complaints would be managed appropriately. The provider was committed to gathering and learning from people's feedback. One person's relative told us "I have never needed to complaint but I would feel able to. The staff are so welcoming and always take an interest in our feedback. They resolve any problems before they escalate so we don't need to make a complaint."

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

There was a registered manager in post who was visible and accessible to staff, people and their relatives. 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 senior management team and provider created and promoted a positive person centred culture. One member of staff told us "The aim of the service is to support people in the way that they want to be supported and to enable people to live fulfilled lives."

The provider was accessible to people and staff and contacted the service regularly to ensure that staff felt supported and that they were accessible to people to gain feedback. The provider was committed to providing a person centred service that enhanced people's sense of well-being and was aspiring to provide a consistently outstanding service to people. The provider had plans to implement systems to involve people in the development of the service and recruitment of staff to embed a person centred culture in all aspects of the service.

There was a robust system of quality assurance with audits completed in key areas such as care plans, finances, medicines and health and safety with weekly reports being sent to senior staff to enable them to maintain an oversight of the service. When areas for improvement had been identified these were targeted and improvements were monitored. The provider advised us that they were looking to further develop the service with the implementation of an electronic care monitoring system.

The provider was in the process of sending satisfaction surveys to people and their relatives and had commissioned an external independent organisation to facilitate this in order to obtain meaningful feedback that could be used to develop the service.