

# Hertfordshire County Council

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

# Summary of findings

## Overall summary

Isabel Court is a specialised short break service that provides respite care for adults with a learning disability and people with a physical disability. Hertfordshire County Council is registered to provide accommodation and care at Isabel Court for up to three people at any one time.

At the last comprehensive inspection in April 2015 the service was rated as Good. In October 2016 we received concerns in relation to staffing, medicines management and overall management of the service. As a result we undertook a focused unannounced inspection at that time and we found the concerns to be unsubstantiated, the rating remained as Good. At this inspection we found the service remained Good.

Relatives of people who used the service told us that they felt people were safe using the short break respite service. Risks to people's health and wellbeing were appropriately planned for and managed. Robust recruitment processes were followed. People's relatives told us that there were enough competent staff to provide appropriate and safe support when people needed it.

Staff had received appropriate training, support and development to carry out their role effectively.

People received appropriate support to maintain healthy nutrition and hydration. The service was meeting the requirements of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). People were supported to make choices to have maximum control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible.

People's relatives told us that people were treated with warmth and kindness by staff who respected their privacy and upheld their dignity.

People's relatives were given the opportunity to feedback on the service people received. People received personalised care that met their individual needs and were given appropriate support and encouragement to access a variety of activities. People's relatives told us they knew how to complain and were confident they would be listened to if they wished to make a complaint.

The management team had a robust quality assurance system in place and shortfalls identified were promptly acted on to improve the service.

## 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?

Good ●

The service remains good.

### Is the service responsive?

Good ●

The service remains good.

### Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service remains good.

# Isabel 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 was unannounced and carried out by one inspector on 25 April 2017.

The provider completed a Provider Information Return (PIR) and submitted this to us on 10 August 2016. This is a form that asks the provider to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make. We reviewed information we held about the service including statutory notifications that had been submitted. Statutory notifications include information about important events which the provider is required to send us.

During the course of the inspection we spoke with two senior support workers, the team leader and the registered manager. The service provides short break respite care and on the day of this inspection there were no people who used the service available to talk with us. Subsequent to the inspection we spoke with relatives of nine people who used the service and two further staff members to obtain their views about the service provided.

We reviewed three people's care records, two staff personnel files and various records relating to the management of the service.

# Is the service safe?

## Our findings

People's relatives told us they felt that people were safe using Isabel Court short break respite care service. One relative said, "[Person] is absolutely safe at Isabel Court. The care is good and the staff are very good." Another relative told us, "I do feel [Person] is safe there, if they didn't want to go anywhere they wouldn't go, they would make it very clear to us that they were not happy. I have never had any reason to doubt their safety when they are there. We have always been made welcome by staff and have good feedback from staff when I pick [person] up again at the end of their stay." A further relative commented, "I am very pleased with what they do there. [Person] is safe when they are there because there are always staff around and it is a secure place."

People were supported by staff who were able to demonstrate that they understood how to keep people safe. This included how to recognise and report any suspicion of abuse.

Records demonstrated that risks to people were identified and that control measures were put in place to reduce these risks. For example, risks were assessed in areas such as being supported to transfer by means of mechanical hoist, eating and drinking independently, the use of bed guards and bathing.

Staff members gave us mixed views about the staffing in the service. Some said there were enough staff available and others said that it was a question of the perceived staffing levels because these varied constantly in response to the numbers and needs of people who used the service at any time. Staff also told us that in an urgent situation, such as a person's escalating behaviours they could activate a buzzer to summon support from a member of the supported living team.

Relatives that we spoke with as part of this inspection process told us that they felt there were enough staff available to meet people's needs. One relative said, "Any care service could always do with more staff but I think they have enough to keep people safe." One relative said they had one slight concern about the consistency of the staff team that provided care for people. They told us, "The staff group keep changing. My [relative] hates change and takes a long time to settle with new people." We discussed this with the registered manager who said there had not been much change to the permanent staff team with one person recently recruited. However, there had been some agency staff usage whilst permanent staff were recruited to post.

The provider operated robust recruitment processes and records confirmed these were followed.

There were suitable arrangements for the safe storage, management and disposal of medicines and people were supported to take their medicines by trained staff. People's relatives told us that people received their medicines regularly and that they were satisfied that their medicines were managed safely.

## Is the service effective?

### Our findings

People's relatives told us that care and support was provided for people by appropriately skilled and knowledgeable staff. Relatives told us that they had confidence in the staff team because they knew and understood people's individual needs. One relative told us, "The staff do have the right skills to care for [Person]; they know [Person] well and cope with them well."

Staff told us that they had the training and support they needed to carry out their role effectively. Records demonstrated that staff received appropriate supervision and appraisal, and that these focused on encouraging and supporting good practice.

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 (MCA). The procedures for this in care homes and hospitals are called the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). People using the service had their capacity to make decisions and consent to their care assessed appropriately under the MCA. DoLS applications had been made to the local authority and authorised where appropriate.

Discussions with staff, management and review of records demonstrated they understood the principles of MCA and DoLS and how these applied to the people they supported. Staff encouraged people to make decisions as much as they were able.

People's relatives told us the food provided for people who used the service at Isabel Court was good quality. One relative told us, "[Person] has always been happy with the food that they have to eat at Isabel Court." Another relative said, "[Person] enjoys the food they have there and they tell me [person] helps to cook too." A further relative commented, "[Person] is not a faddy eater but they do go out of their way to make sure they have what they want. For example, [Person] does not drink milk so they make sure that there is squash or lemonade available for them to drink."

We asked people's relatives what they felt about how staff supported people's health needs whilst they were using the short break respite service. Every relative we spoke with told us they were confident that people's health needs were met and that they were kept informed. One relative told us, "They do call me if they have any concerns." Another relative said, "I am confident that they look after [Person's] health when they are there, they will either ring me or call the GP if there are any concerns."

## Is the service caring?

### Our findings

People's relatives told us that staff were kind and caring towards people that used the service. One relative said, "[Person] loves going there, they want to go there more! They wouldn't want to do that if staff weren't kind to them." Another relative said, "The staff are all caring and warm towards [Person]." A further relative commented, "[Person] is very sensitive to personalities, if the staff were not kind and caring towards them we would all know about it."

People's relatives told us that they were satisfied with the care and support provided for people at Isabel Court. One relative told us, "[Person] is happy to go there and happy to come back home again."

Staff members we spoke with all told us that they felt they provided a kind and caring service for people. They told us this was because they enjoyed working with the people who used the service. One staff member told us, "I love working there, I love my job." Another staff member said, "I am happy to be working at Isabel Court."

Because people who used the service did not have the capacity to participate in the planning of their care, their relatives and other professionals were involved in the care planning and making best interest decisions appropriately on their behalf.

Information about external advocacy support was available within the unit for any visitors or relatives to access if they needed any additional advice or support.

People's personal and private records were maintained in a lockable filing cabinet within an office that was locked when staff members were not present.

## Is the service responsive?

### Our findings

People's relatives told us that staff checked with them at each period of respite stay that people's needs remained the same. One relative said, "Each time [person] goes in there they ask me if anything about their care has changed since the last stay. Previously they questioned a dose of medicine that had changed since the previous visit. This showed that it was a genuine check and not just a paper exercise." Another relative said, "We have a form to fill in each time [Person] stays there to let them know if there have been any changes to their care or needs since the last time they stayed there." A further relative commented, "They always ask us if there is anything they need to know and if anything has changed with [person's] care needs."

People's relatives told us there was good communication with them from all staff. For example, one relative told us, "We have a communication book, I add my bit and it comes back home with [Person], they have written their bit about what [person] has done whilst they were at Isabel Court and how they have been."

People's relatives told us that staff knew people well. One relative told us, "The staff know what to do with [Person] because they know them well and are very used to them." We noted that people's care records contained very personalised information about them, such as their individual care needs, hobbies and interests, preferences and life history. This information was regularly reviewed and enabled staff to support people in the way they wished.

Relatives told us that people were provided with opportunities to take part in meaningful activities appropriate to their abilities. One relative told us, "[Person] loves watching TV, films, listening to music and dancing, colouring and doing jig saws, they are able to do all of that at Isabel Court." Staff told us that there were occasions where they were not able to support people with activities as much as they would like. One staff member said, "Sometimes we can have three people in the unit who are all totally dependent on us for all their care needs. The admissions could be planned better to have a mix of abilities which would mean we could have more time to spend with individuals."

People's relatives were supported to feedback their views on the service via a feedback survey. They told us that their comments were taken on board and they felt listened to. People's relatives told us that they would be confident to raise any concerns with the staff and management team if they felt there was a need to. One relative told us, "I have never had to raise a complaint, I can't think of anything that would need to improve." Another relative said, "I made one complaint some time ago about the laundry service. The [registered] manager called me; they were very apologetic, it has never happened since." A further relative commented, "I have only ever once complained and that was about the state [Person's] clothes came home. They were clean but screwed up like rags. I rang them [Isabel Court], it was sorted and has never happened since." This showed that the service listened to concerns raised with them and took action to ensure they did not happen again.



## Is the service well-led?

### Our findings

People's relatives told us that they thought the service was well managed. One relative told us, "I have spoken with [registered manager] I feel I could call them about anything that bothered me." Another relative responded, "No, I haven't spoken to the registered manager, I usually speak to [Senior Support Worker]. The service is run very well, it is well organised, there is a lovely atmosphere there. I am completely happy with the service and how they care for [person]." A further relative commented, "I have never met with the registered manager but I have spoken with them on the phone, they are ever so nice, I would feel comfortable to approach them with anything."

People's relatives gave us positive feedback about the service. One relative told us, "I am quite happy with [Person] going there, they always come home very happy and nice and clean." Another relative said, "The service is run well, I don't think there are any areas that require improvement."

There was a registered manager working at 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 told us that they had tried to explore ways of meeting with relatives of people who used the service. People's relatives did not all routinely visit the service as people were there purely for periods of respite care. The registered manager told us that she had arranged 'drop in' sessions every week for two months but no relatives had taken the opportunity to meet with them. People's relatives told us that they did not feel the need to meet with management specifically as the staff on the unit were able to manage any queries they had. One relative told us, "I just ring and chat with [Senior Support Worker]" Another person told us that the location of the service meant that there was limited parking available and said, "Evening relatives' meetings are tough to go to because there is nowhere to park around there at that time of day."

Staff told us that they had the opportunity to meet monthly as a team with the management team. Records showed that topics discussed included day to day management of the service, staffing levels, staff rotas, individual people's care needs and protocols and handover processes.

The registered manager carried out a regular programme of audits to assess the quality of the service, and we saw that these were capable of identifying shortfalls which needed to be addressed. Where shortfalls were identified, records confirmed that these were acted upon promptly.