

Sterling Care Partners Ltd

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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

Sterling Care Partners Ltd is registered to provide personal care for people who live in their own homes. 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 adults, younger disabled adults, children.

At the time of our inspection 35 people were receiving care in their own homes. Not everyone using this service received a regulated activity; CQC only inspects the service being received by people provided with 'personal care'; help with tasks related to personal hygiene and eating.

At our last inspection we rated the service good. At this inspection we found the evidence continued to support the rating of good and there was no evidence or information from our inspection and ongoing monitoring that demonstrated serious risks or concerns. This inspection report is written in a shorter format because our overall rating of the service has not changed since our last inspection. At this inspection we found the service remained Good.

This inspection took place on the 22 and 23 August 2018 and was announced. We gave the service notice two day's notice of the inspection site visit because we needed to be sure that people who wanted to speak to us and management were available during the inspection.

People told us they felt safe when care workers visited their homes. One person said, "I know I can trust them." Another person said, "Staff are all very good at what they do which makes me feel safe."

Everyone we spoke with told us the staff were kind, caring and friendly, and treated them with dignity and respect at all times. They told us staff knew them well and provided their care in the way they wanted. People's privacy was respected. Everyone was supported to be as independent as they wanted to be. One person said, "They go above and beyond. They will always do anything that needs to be done."

There were enough staff available to give people the support they needed, when they needed it. People described the service as reliable and flexible. One person told us, "They always arrive when expected and if they are going to be late which is rare they will let me know." Another person said, "They always stay the time I have paid for." Staff told us they were always given sufficient time to travel between visits.

Staff were supported to meet people's needs and had completed the training they needed to fulfil their role. Checks were completed to make sure training had been effective and staff were competent.

The service promoted a culture of openness and being accessible to people who used the service. People told us they felt comfortable and confident that they could contact the management team and discuss any matters of concern. One person said, "There is always someone available to talk to if you wanted and they listen."

Staff felt supported by the registered manager and management team. They were motivated about their roles and shared the provider's vision of a good quality service. An experienced member of staff was always available to provide the support and guidance staff needed, including outside of office hours. Records in respect of each person were accurate and complete and stored securely.

The service had received a number of compliments about the quality of the service:

"Sterling Care provided excellent care with a friendly and caring approach."

"Sterling Care have given excellent, reliable care and support. They arrive on time and nothing is too much trouble carrying out tasks in a caring, friendly and cheerful manner."

"I would definitely recommend Sterling Care as the best choice in Yeovil."

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

Sterling Care Partners Ltd

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. This was a comprehensive inspection.

This inspection took place on 22 and 23 August 2018 and was announced.

We gave the service 48 hours' notice of the inspection visit because the location provides a domiciliary care service. We needed to be sure that the registered provider would be in.

The inspection team consisted of one inspector and an expert by experience. An expert-by-experience is a person who has personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses this type of care service

We used information the provider sent us in the 'Provider Information Return'. This is information we require providers to send us at least once annually to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make. We also reviewed information that we hold about the service such as safeguarding information and notifications. Notifications are the events happening in the service that the provider is required to tell us about. We used this information to plan what areas we were going to focus on during our inspection.

We spoke by phone with 14 people who used the service, relatives and accompanied by a staff member we visited seven people. We spoke with four members of staff, the registered manager and a director of the service. We reviewed six people's care files and four staff recruitment and support records. We also looked at the service's quality assurance systems, the registered provider's arrangements for managing medication, staff training records, staff duty rotas and complaint and compliment records.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

People told us they felt safe when assisted and supported by care workers. One person told us, "They are very attentive and keep me safe." Another person said, "I'm definitely safe with the carers."

Care workers told us they checked people's care plans so they knew the best way to keep people safe. Carers told us how they shared information about people's changing needs. A on-call service was available to support care workers at any time [including out of hours and weekends] if there were concerns about a person's welfare.

The service used a mobile app to update changes especially where there may be concerns about a person's health and welfare. One care worker told us, "This is very good because it keeps us up to date and we know what is going on."

The registered manager undertook checks on the suitability of care workers before they started their employment. The checks included obtaining a minimum of two references and DBS, [Disclosure and Barring Service] disclosure, so people were not put at unnecessary risk and ensured perspective employees were suitable to work with vulnerable people.

Care workers told us they understood their responsibility to report any concerns about possible abuse. They were confident the registered manager would act on any concerns. One care worker told us, "I would certainly report anything worrying me. If the registered manager did not do anything I would go to the police or social services."

People told us there were always sufficient numbers of staff available to provide the care and support as detailed within their care plan. People told us staff stayed for the full amount of time allocated to ensure care tasks had been completed and to meet the person's needs. One person told us what they thought was good about the service, "They are very reliable and regular." Another person said, "Very regular, always stay the time allotted to me, do what needs to be done." A third person said, "They generally arrive on time if they are going to be late they let me know but it is never a problem." Some people had requested weekly rotas so they would know who was coming to provide their care and support and confirming the time they could be expected.

There had not been any missed calls and if staff were running late, there was usually a good reason and they contacted people to let them know what was happening. People told us this did not impact on the quality of the care and support provided.

Staff managed medicines consistently and safely. Where the service was responsible, it stored medicines correctly, disposed of them safely and kept accurate records. People were sure they received their medicines as prescribed. One person told us, "The care workers make sure I have my medicines on time." Staff told us, and training records confirmed this, they had completed training and had regular updates and competency checks in how to handle people's medicines in a safe way.

Risks to people's individual health and wellbeing were identified and care was planned to minimise the risks. People had risk assessments in relation to their health and wellbeing, moving and assisting and environment. The service had responsibility to ensure people's homes were secure and when using keys these were stored in a secure safe.

Staff had a good understanding of how to alleviate risk of infection and the importance of using protective clothing. They told us protective clothing i.e. gloves and aprons were always available.

Staff were aware of their responsibilities around reporting incidents. The registered manager had responded to concerns and was clear about learning from incidents and making changes as part of a lesson's learnt approach. Staff told us, "There is good communication especially if something has changed for a person."

Is the service effective?

Our findings

People told us they were visited at home before their service had started. This was to discuss their needs as part of an initial assessment. This initial assessment identified specific needs and helped in establishing the level of support specifically number and length of visits.

People told us they were confident care workers had the skills necessary to support them effectively. One person told us, "They all appear to be well trained." Another person said, "They are all skilled at what they do I am very happy with everything they help me with."

Staff told us they had received core skills training in areas such as moving and assisting, adult abuse, infection control and health and safety. Care workers supporting people with their medicines received medicine training and had completed competency assessments. Supervisors received additional training to support them in their role. The competency of staff was checked before they worked alone and through regular spot checks on their practice.

Ongoing support for staff was achieved through quarterly appraisals. Staff told us they felt well supported and said they always had the opportunity for informal supervision. One care worker said, "If I have any concerns or worries I can always meet with my supervisor." A supervisor told us they arranged regular meeting with care workers for coffee. They considered this as informal supervision, "It is opportunity to talk about how they are."

Staff undertook a period of induction which included shadowing of other care workers. Staff undertook the Care Certificate this is a nationally recognised professional training for those in the care sector.

Where people were supported by care staff to eat and drink they were involved in decisions about this. This meant that any dietary, cultural or religious needs were respected. One person told us, "They help me with my meals and I am always asked what I want."

The service worked with other organisations such as social services where this was needed. There were links with community health and GPs. As part of care plans health needs were identified and guidance was sought if people had more specialist health needs such as diabetes.

Staff had received Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) training and were able to demonstrate an understanding of the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and what this meant for people using the service. People told us staff always sought their consent prior to providing support.

All organisations that provide NHS care or adult social care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The standard aims to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss are provided with information that they can easily read or understand so that they can communicate effectively. The registered manager ensured people were provided with information in ways they understood, such as large print to support people to tell staff about their needs and wishes and be

involved in planning their care.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

People spoke of caring and supportive staff. One person told us, "They go the extra mile and take the trouble to make sure I have everything I need." Another person said, "They are always very caring. They always ask if there is anything else they can do." A third person said, "Care with sympathy and understanding."

One person told us how the agency had responded to support them when their carer was on holiday. How they responded promptly to an accident and helped in supporting them when they needed help in an emergency. They told us, "This really helped and made my (relative) feel so much better knowing they were there for me when I needed them."

People told us they were always treated with dignity and respect. One person who received personal care said, "I thought it would be embarrassing but that's not the case." Staff demonstrated an understanding of treating people with respect and dignity. One said, "I always make sure people are covered when helping with a bath or personal care." Another said, "I always make sure the curtains are shut, its about dignity. We also have to remember we are in their home and respect that."

People told us they had established trusting relationships with care workers. One person said, "because we see the same people we get to know them and they get to know us." Another person said, "I always get the same carers and that makes a difference. I trust them more because I know them." Staff told us they tended to visit the same people regularly. One staff member told us, "We get to see the same people so we can get to know them and have a relationship with them."

Relatives spoke warmly and positively about the care provided. One told us, "It has really made the difference and they keep me informed about how (relative) is. I cannot fault them." Another relative said, "Without your care I do not know how families like us manage."

People spoke with affection of the care workers who supported them. One person said, "They are all so friendly and like a friend." Another said, "I have a good professional relationship with them. (care workers)"

People were supported to maintain their independence. One person said how they were supported to make their own breakfast. They said, "The carers always help me keep my independence." Another person said how they were supported to move around their home with the care worker there if they needed support or assistance.

People had the opportunity to be involved in their care through regular six monthly reviews. There was a system where every person receiving support from the agency had a home visit as part of this review of their care needs. One person told us, "I felt listened too." This was where a review had taken place. Another person said, "We can always talk about the care we need especially if we need more." In this instance the agency had re-arranged the care that was needed.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

Care plans were in place and had been reviewed when a person's needs had changed. They reflected people's needs around culture, religion and specific needs around disability. They included information about people's preferences. However, there was a lack of information about the person such as life history, daily routines, important relationships. This would provide a more person centred care plan.

Following an initial assessment people had ongoing assessment and review specifically where their needs changed. One person told us how on coming out of hospital the agency had changed their care arrangements which reflected a change in their care needs. People told us the service was very flexible. One person said, "They will always do something for me if I am not particularly well." Another person said, "If I want anything they are there. Will respond if any problems, you can rely on them if extra help is needed." A third person said, "They are very responsive if I need anything." This showed there was a flexible and responsive approach to the providing of care and support.

Care workers told us how they would always report back to the agency if they felt people needed more help. We were told of one instance where there had been a change in person's health and the agency had responded by increasing the care they provided.

People told us they would always contact the manager if they had any worries or concerns. One person said, "I would not hesitate to make a complaint but have never needed to." Another person said, "I know I could make a complaint if needed but they always deal with things so have not had to make a complaint." The service had not received any complaints since our last inspection.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

People told us they felt the service was well led and the registered manager and office staff were approachable. Their comments included, "The manager is very approachable you can always ring and talk with her." and "They are easy to call and always get back to me if needs be". I can call the manager on the mobile and she gets back to me quickly". Staff spoke positively about the management team. One said, "It is very well run. We care for the clients and for each other." Another said, "There is always someone at the end of the phone. They are so supportive to staff."

Staff felt supported by the registered manager and management team. They were motivated about their roles and shared the provider's vision of a good quality service. An experienced member of staff was always available to provide the support and guidance staff needed, including outside of office hours. Records in respect of each person were accurate and complete and stored securely.

There were arrangements in place for the quality monitoring of the service. This included missed visits, care reviews, completion of training, "client" and family questionnaire survey. The outcome of these checks was undertaken by another staff member and shared with the registered manager. However, there was no formal recording of outcome and any actions undertaken as a result of this quality monitoring.

The last survey was completed in July 2018. The responses had been analysed and were positive. People confirmed they had been sent a questionnaire. Comments included: "Excellent quality of service, very patient and helpful." and "Very well looked after, trustworthy, friendly and helpful staff." and "Good service just wish everyone gave the same service."

Staff were also invited to share their views and suggestions at regular team meetings.

Comments about the service had also been provided through an online service. One person commented: "They are caring and very professional and a huge plus to my relative is that she has the same small team providing care." Another comment, "The manager has always been polite, professional and respectful in all of her communication and that gives me confidence."

Services that provide health and social care to people are required to inform the Care Quality Commission, (the CQC), of important events that happen in the service like a serious injury or unexpected death in the person's home. This is so we can check that appropriate action had been taken. Notifications had been sent to CQC when required.

It is a legal requirement that a provider's latest CQC inspection report rating is displayed at the service where a rating has been given. This is so that people, visitors and those seeking information about the service can be informed of our judgements. The provider had displayed their rating in the office and on their website.