

Linford Grange Ltd

Linford Homecare

Inspection report

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Date of inspection visit:
22 January 2016

Date of publication:
16 March 2016

Ratings

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

Summary of findings

Overall summary

This inspection took place on 22 and 25 January 2016 and was announced.

Linford Homecare is a domiciliary care agency registered to provide the regulated activity of personal care. The agency provides personal care for adults with learning and physical disabilities and older people, including people living with dementia. At the time of our visit there were 13 people using the service.

The service had a registered manager. 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 were trained in how to protect people from abuse and harm. They knew how to recognise signs of abuse and how to use the whistleblowing procedure. Risk assessments were centred on the needs of the individual and any potential risks to people had been identified. We saw that risk management plans had been completed to enable them to live as safely and independently as possible. There were safe recruitment procedures in place. All staff were subject to a probation period and to disciplinary procedures if they did not meet the required standards of practice. Rotas showed there were sufficient numbers of staff available to meet people's care and support needs. Medicines were stored, administered and recorded safely and correctly. Staff were trained in the safe administration of medicines and maintained relevant records that were accurate.

People told us and records confirmed that all of the staff received regular training in mandatory subjects. In addition, we saw that specialist training specific to the needs of people using the service had been completed. This had provided staff with the knowledge and skills to meet people's needs in an effective and individualised way. People's consent to care and treatment was sought in line with current legislation. People told us that with support from staff, they received a wholesome and balanced diet. As part of their independent living skills and development, some people were supported to prepare and cook their own meals. People told us their food was varied with options always available. There were regular reviews of people's health and the service responded immediately to people's changing needs. People were assisted to attend appointments with various health and social care professionals to ensure they received care,

The staff team were passionate about providing a service that placed people and their families at the very heart of their care. Without exception, people and relatives praised the staff for their caring, compassionate and professional approach. Everyone we spoke with said that staff went over and beyond what was expected of them and they were like family. Staff were exceptional in enabling people to remain independent and had an in-depth appreciation of people's individual needs around privacy and dignity.

People received care that was responsive to their needs and centred around them as individuals. Their needs were assessed and care plans gave clear guidance on how they were to be supported. Records

showed that people and their relatives were involved in the assessment process and review of their care. The service had an effective complaints procedure in place and we saw appropriate systems for responding to any complaints the service received. Staff were responsive to people's worries, anxieties and concerns and acted promptly to resolve them.

People receiving support, relatives and staff consistently told us that the service was well run and provided positive leadership. There was stable and positive leadership that inspired staff to provide high quality care to people. People and their relatives were able to make suggestions and actions were taken as a result. Quality monitoring procedures were in place and action had been taken where improvements were identified.

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 

This service was safe.

People had confidence in the service and told us they felt safe. Staff were knowledgeable about the principles and reporting requirements of safeguarding people from abuse.

Risks were assessed and managed effectively.

There were safe and robust recruitment procedures in place and staffing levels were sufficient to meet people's needs.

People's medicines were managed safely by staff who had received appropriate training.

Is the service effective?

Good 

This service was effective.

Staff had the specialist knowledge and skills required to meet people's individual needs and promote their health and wellbeing.

Staff obtained people's consent to care and treatment.

People were supported to be able to eat and drink sufficient amounts to meet their needs.

People were referred to healthcare professionals promptly when needed.

Is the service caring?

Outstanding 

This service was very caring.

People told us that the staff were exemplary in how they treated people. Without exception, people and relatives praised the staff for their kindness and compassion.

Staff were intuitive and were able to anticipate what people wanted and responded appropriately to them with warmth and professionalism. .

Staff were passionate about providing people with care and support that was based on mutual respect and equality. People and relatives told us they were involved in making decisions about their care and were always listened to by the service. They said the service was excellent at making sure they had been involved in determining the care they needed.

The service has a strong, visible person centred culture and staff performed duties that were over and beyond their role.

Is the service responsive?

Good ●

This service was responsive.

People told us the service engaged consistently and meaningfully with them and their families.

People's care was based around their individual needs and aspirations. People were supported to make choices and have control of their lives.

Complaints and comments made were used to improve the quality of the care provided.

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

This service was well led.

Staff said they felt supported and were aware of their rights and their responsibility to share any concerns about the care provided at the service.

The registered manager reviewed the way the service worked in order to improve how people's needs were met.

There were effective quality assurance systems in place to drive improvements at the service.

The service was committed to putting people at the centre of the care they received and they included people in the decision making process. Their voice was used in making improvements to the service.

Linford Homecare

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 inspection took place on 22 and 25 January 2016, and was announced. We provided 48 hours' notice of the inspection to ensure management were available to facilitate our inspection.

The inspection was undertaken by one inspector.

Prior to this inspection 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 by law. We contacted the local authority that commissioned the service to obtain their views.

We used a number of different methods to help us understand the experiences of people living in the service. We reviewed information we held about the service in the form of statutory notifications received from the service and any safeguarding or whistleblowing incidents which may have occurred. We also liaised with the local authority that commissioned the service to obtain their views about the service.

We spoke with six people who used the service in order to gain their views about the quality of the service provided. We also spoke with one relative, three care staff and the registered manager to determine whether the service had robust quality systems in place.

We reviewed care records relating to three people who used the service and three staff files that contained information about recruitment, induction, training, supervisions and appraisals. We also looked at further records relating to the management of the service including quality audits.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

We spoke with six people who received support from the service and one relative. Without exception, people who used the service and their relatives were complimentary and positive about the staff that supported them. One person who used the service told us, "I feel safe knowing they are there. They make me feel secure and I know if I have any problems I can always contact them and they will help me." Another person told us, "I feel 110% safe with my carers, especially [name of staff member]. They always make sure I'm safe before they leave and I know they wouldn't leave if I was not safe." A relative told us, "I have never had any concerns regarding [person's name] safety."

Staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting people from harm. All of the staff we spoke with could clearly explain how they would recognise and report abuse. Staff said they were confident that if they reported any concerns about abuse or the conduct of their colleagues, the manager would listen and take action. One staff member told us, "I wouldn't hesitate to report any concerns I had." Another member of staff commented, "I know I would be listened to and any concerns I had about a person's safety would be dealt with straight away. No messing around."

Staff told us they had received training on safeguarding procedures and we confirmed this by reviewing their records. One staff member said, "The safeguarding training we had was very good. It makes you aware." Records showed that safeguarding procedures, including those in relation to whistle blowing, were available to members of staff for guidance, in the staff handbook. We found that systems were in place to report potential concerns to the local safeguarding team. One member of staff told us, "I had to follow one safeguarding through and it was dealt with amazingly. It all happened quickly and efficiently." The registered manager was able to demonstrate a good understanding of their responsibility to report allegations to the local authority and to notify the Care Quality Commission (CQC) of these.

There were risk management plans in place to protect and promote people's safety. One person told us, "I know all my risk assessments and why they are there. To keep me safe." Another person said, "I can identify my own risks. I do like the reassurance of someone being close by at times when I may be at risk."

Staff were able to explain to us how risk assessments were used to promote people's safety. For example, one member of staff told us how one person could become low in mood and may isolate themselves from others. They described the risk management plan in place for this person and what actions the staff should take to minimise the risk. They said, "The risk assessment helps us to see if things have started to go downhill. Then we know there is a problem and work to solve that problem."

Staff told us that people were involved with the development of their risk assessments and we were able to confirm this by looking at people's risk management plans. These outlined key areas of risk, such as falls, medication and manual handling as well as any other areas of potential risk specific to each individual. They included information on what action staff should take to promote people's safety and also ensured that people's independence, rights and lifestyle choices were respected. We saw that risk assessments were up to date and reviewed as people's needs changed.

There were sufficient numbers of staff to meet people's needs. One person told us, "I have one main carer and when she is off there is a very small team of other carers who visit me. The continuity of staff is excellent. I don't want strangers coming into my home every day and thankfully that doesn't happen." Another person said, "Always enough staff who are so reliable you could set your watch by them. I have the same carers. Linford Homecare doesn't send in different people to you all the time." All the people we spoke with, without exception, confirmed they received a rota two weeks in advance so they knew who was coming to provide their care. One person commented, "Most of the time I have one main carer who has been providing my care for years and knows me very well. I get a bit anxious if she is not coming so I appreciate having a rota in advance so I can get used to the idea of someone else coming. It's really helpful and helps with my anxiety."

Staff confirmed they had a manageable workload and did not feel under pressure. One told us, "There are no issues with staffing. We have enough time and enough staff to meet people's needs. If we needed to stay longer it would not be an issue." A second member of staff said, "Everything is very well organised. I love that we see mainly the same people. You can get to know them."

We looked at rotas and saw that the service ensured there were sufficient numbers of staff to meet people's needs and keep them safe. Staff spoken with told us any shortfalls, due to sickness or leave, were covered by existing staff, which ensured people were looked after by staff who knew them.

We saw a process was in place to ensure safe recruitment checks were carried out before a person started to work at the service. One person told us, "They are very client focused. They obviously pick their staff well." A staff member commented, "No staff can start work here until all their checks are back."

We saw evidence that safe recruitment practices were followed. We looked at three staff files and found that new staff did not commence employment until satisfactory employment checks such as, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates and references had been obtained. In the staff records we looked at we saw completed application forms, a record of a formal interview, two valid references, personal identity checks and a DBS check. All staff were subject to a probationary period before they became permanent members of staff. Recruitment procedures were robust to ensure that staff employed were of good character and were physically and mentally fit to undertake their roles.

We looked at how the service managed people's medication and found that suitable arrangements were in place to ensure the service was safe. One person said, "Yes they give me my tablets on time. Never a problem."

Staff told us they supported people to take their medication safely. One told us, "We have to complete training in medication before we can give anyone their tablets."

The service had policies and procedures in place to manage people's medicines when they were not able to. There were risk assessments in place that recorded the level of support each person required to take their medicines safely. Care records had detailed information about each medication, what it was for, times of administration, dosage and any side effects.

We found all staff administering medication had completed training, which we verified by looking at training records.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

People using the service felt that staff had the appropriate knowledge and skills to provide them with effective care and support. One person told us, "They are without a doubt the best there is. They know exactly what to do. They are skilled and experienced and very professional." Another person explained, "I do have some very specific needs and the staff know the right way to care for me. Without them I would not be in a good place." A relative said, "I'm blown away by how good they are."

Staff told us that they were well supported and explained that when they first started working at the service they completed an induction. They also told us that they were able to shadow more experienced staff until they felt confident in their role. One member of staff told us, "All new staff have an induction and shadow a more experienced staff member." Records demonstrated that staff completed an induction programme before they commenced work.

Staff told us that they received refresher training and this benefitted the way in which they delivered care to people. From our discussions with staff and from looking at records we found all staff received a range of appropriate training applicable to their role and the people they were supporting. This gave them the necessary knowledge and skills to look after people properly. We looked at the training matrix, which showed staff had access to training such as: health and safety, first aid, medication, food hygiene and safeguarding. In addition staff had undertaken specialist training such as end of life care, autism and Stoma care.

Staff told us they were supported and provided with regular supervision and had an annual appraisal of their work performance. We looked at staff records that supported this. A staff member told us that supervision was used to help identify any shortfalls in staff practice and identify the need for any additional training and support in a timely manner. They said, "We usually have our supervision every four to six weeks. I could ask for further supervision if I felt I needed it."

People's consent was sought by staff. They told us that staff always asked permission from them before they carried out any task or personal care. One person said, "The carers will always discuss things with me and always ask if it's okay to go ahead with what they need to do." Staff spoken with demonstrated an understanding of the Mental Capacity Act and one member of staff told us, "The person I support can consent to things. They will soon let me know if they don't want to do anything."

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. The registered manager told us they had received training on the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) and advised that they would always liaise with the local authority if they had any concerns about a person's fluctuating capacity.

Staff had received training in the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 and understood about acting in a person's best interests. They respected people's rights to make choices for themselves and encouraged people to maintain their independence. Staff understood mental capacity assessments could be undertaken to identify if a person could make their own decisions. This meant staff understood people's rights to make choices and the action to take if someone's mental condition deteriorated.

The law requires the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to monitor the operation of deprivation of liberty. This provides a process to make sure that providers only deprive people of their liberty in a safe and correct way, when it is in their best interests and there is no other way to look after them. The registered manager demonstrated a good understanding of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). The service had no authorised or pending DoLS applications in place at the time of our inspection.

We looked at how the service supported people to maintain a healthy diet. People and relatives raised no concerns about the quality of food and nutrition during our visit. One person told us, "Sometimes I like to cook but when I am not feeling well [name of staff member] will cook for me. It's always delicious and she makes sure I always have enough to eat and drink."

In each care plan we looked at we saw detailed guidance about the support people required in respect of food, drink and nutrition, which included the level of supervision required when cooking or using the oven. For example, we saw in one person's file that they had difficulty in swallowing. Records demonstrated that they had seen a dietician and their advice had been incorporated into the persons care plan. We also saw that people's dietary likes, dislikes and preferences had been recorded to ensure they received the meals they enjoyed.

People were supported to access health services in the community. One staff commented, "There is very good information in the care plans. We have contact details of health professionals if we need them."

The service had links with other professionals, which was demonstrated in people's care and support plans. There was also clear evidence of the service seeking advice and support from other agencies and we saw that guidance from healthcare professionals had been incorporated in people's care plans. For example, we saw that the home environment posed a risk to one person using the service. Records showed they had been visited by the Occupational Therapist and their guidelines and advice had been recorded in the persons care plan.

Records confirmed that people's health needs were frequently monitored and discussed with them. They showed that people had received input from health professionals such as their GP, stoma nurse, occupational therapist, dietician, physiotherapist and speech and language therapist.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

People received care and support from staff that knew and understand their history, likes, preferences, needs, hopes and goals. We found that people were very happy with the care and support they received. One person told us, "Someone was looking down on me from above when I found Linford Homecare. This is the best agency I have been with, and I've been with a few." Another person told us, "They have been the best carers I have ever had, and it's consistent. I have had my carer for years and my care has stayed excellent." A relative commented, "My [relative] couldn't get better care than he is getting right now. It puts your mind at rest."

We spoke with staff about the people they provided care and support to and they spoke with kindness, sensitivity and compassion. One staff member told us, "We provided end of life care to one person. Their family lived quite far away so I and [name of staff member] used to take them out to lunch regularly in our time off so they had company outside of their home." We were informed that this person also attended the staff members wedding. One person said, "The carers become your friends. I have one main carer and she is a diamond. She's been 100% perfect. I would put her in the category of outstanding." Another person explained that they often became very tired because of their condition. They explained, "When I'm so tired I can't go out [name of staff] will pop over in her own time and walk the dog. I have recommended them to my friends and family."

Staff we spoke with were caring and passionate about the people they cared for. The registered manager told us that at Christmas all the staff have a collection and buy a Christmas present for everyone who uses the service." One person said, "It's wonderful. It's all the little things they do that makes it different from the other agencies. If my carer knows I'm out of milk on her way here she will stop at the shop and buy me some. If ever I need her all I have to do is phone. I did once and she was here in ten minutes. It's very reassuring." A relative commented, "The staff all go that extra mile and over and beyond what they need to do. The manager is quick to sort out any problems and treats both staff and us like good friends. She fights for us."

Staff told us that working on with the same people helped them to build up relationships and get to know people as individuals and not someone who was just part of the service. One staff member told us, "We become like family. We know if people are unwell, down or anxious and we know how to help." One person told us, "I often get low in mood. When I'm like that [name of staff] can always put a smile on my face. Sometimes if I'm really low they will come over and we might have dinner or go to the pictures. She genuinely cares about me." Another person explained, "I can get quite anxious at times and sometimes I'm in a mood or get a bit rude. [Name of staff] is like my friend. When you have someone who knows you they are not offended by your moods. She's a star."

We found a compliment received by the service from a family that had been receiving care. It read, "We can never possibly express our gratitude, love and admiration strongly enough to the three angels who over the months became our adopted daughters that we always longed for. Their care, devotion, genuine love, unbelievable kindness and tender loving care are a credit to Linford Homecare."

We spoke with people about how they were encouraged to be independent when receiving care and support. One person receiving support told us, "I attend a meeting in London about Muscular Dystrophy four times a year. It's always arranged so that a carer can come with. Then I can help other people with Muscular Dystrophy." Another person told us, "Sometimes when I get low in mood I can't be bothered to cook. [Name of staff] always cheers me up and encourages me to cook my meal. I might need a prompt now and then but she's beside me all the time." A relative commented, "The carers always encourage [person's name] to do things for themselves."

Staff understood how to support people with dignity and they respected them. Staff clearly valued the contributions people had made in their own lives and told us they respected them as individuals. This was further supported by the conversations we had with people. Without exception people told us that staff respected their privacy and their right to make their own decisions and lifestyle choices. They said they were involved in making decisions about their care and were listened to by the service. People told us they had been involved in determining the care they needed and had been consulted at every stage. One person explained, "I make the decisions about every aspect of my care. If there is something new I want to do they never say No. It's looked at and then it goes ahead." Another person informed us, "I was with a different agency before. They didn't listen to me. Now I'm very happy. I feel I'm back in control."

We observed a compliment received from a family that read, "The care my relative received was of a high standard, efficient and friendly, but at the same time having a laugh or two with us whilst always allowing [relative] to maintain his dignity."

Staff we spoke with were able to identify how they maintained people's privacy and dignity. They told us they gave people privacy whilst they undertook aspects of personal care, but ensured they were nearby to maintain the person's safety, for example if they were at risk of falls. With regard to personal care one member of staff explained, "I always knock on the door; you don't just walk in to somebody's room or home." A relative said, "[Relative] is treated with respect without question. They make sure they always look smart and wear suitable clothing."

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

People's care and support was planned proactively in partnership with them. Everyone that we spoke with, without exception, said that when their care was being planned at the start of the service the registered manager and a team leader spent a lot of time with them finding out about their preferences, what care they wanted/needed and how they wanted their care to be delivered. People told us they felt the registered manager took them seriously and if they needed to change or adapt their care they felt they only had to make a phone call. One person commented, "If I wanted to change anything, or if I wasn't happy about my care I would call [name of registered manager] and she would be straight on it. No messing around." Another person said, "Right from the very beginning I've been involved with my care. I have been with Linford Homecare for many years and as my needs change I find that they [Linford Homecare] are constantly exploring different opportunities to help me improve and make me more independent." A relative told us, "I can make suggestions and they are taken seriously."

The registered manager explained to us that people had an initial assessment before a care package was commenced. This was used to identify the areas where the person required care and support, and the skills and experience needed by the staff who were employed to care for them.

People received personalised care that was responsive to their individual needs and preferences. We saw that care plans were in place for every person that was receiving support. It listed what was important to the person and how their support needed to be delivered. They were person centred with a focus on people's care, treatment and support needs, including their social, cultural, diversity values and beliefs. People's wishes, preferences, and their likes and dislikes were also recorded. We saw clear evidence that people's care and support was planned with them and not for them. One person told us, "The care plans tell staff how we want our support to be. It's very personal." People told us that the service was responsive and was flexible in accommodating last minute appointments when needed. Staff were knowledgeable about the people they supported. They were aware of their preferences and interests, as well as their health and support needs. One member of staff told us, "What Linford Homecare does well is making sure that people are at the centre of their care. It has to all be based around the person and what they want." One person commented, "Everything is flexible and responsive; it's down to the staff knowing me and having a good knowledge, information and understanding of me."

We were told that the service engaged consistently and meaningfully with families. One relative told us, "I think they are the best out there. They are very quick to respond if there is a problem, or not even a problem but a query. You feel like they are fighting for you every step of the way."

One person told us that their main staff had been instrumental in helping them with their anxiety. They told us, "[Name of staff member] likes tropical fish. She has helped me set up a tank and I find it beautiful and very relaxing. I would never have thought to try having a tank but I'm glad I did. She also comes in her own time to clean it for me. I think I have the best of both worlds."

People told us they had regular contact with the service, were kept constantly informed about any changes

that affected their care and support and were able to provide feedback. One person told us, "I have never had to make a complaint. I'd tell them if there was anything that I wasn't happy about." Another person commented, "I would feel comfortable making a complaint. I can't see me ever needing to though. Not if they carry on the way the way they are." A relative explained, "If anything happens I know I can always contact the office."

People knew they could contact the registered manager if they needed to. One relative told us, "Any concerns or any complaints would be dealt with straight away. She doesn't mess about. They never try to hide anything."

The service policy on comments, compliments and complaints provided clear instructions on what action people needed to take in the event of wishing to make a formal complaint. We looked at the formal complaints received and saw that no complaint had been received in the last 12 months. However, we saw there were suitable systems in place to record and investigate complaints if they should arise.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

The service had a positive, open and transparent culture. People were positive about the care they received. One said, "I have been with the agency since it started and it has always been flexible and very well organised. It has always been arranged to suit me, my needs and what I want." People felt they were included in the development of their care package and their views were valued. One person commented, "I have six monthly reviews with the manager and you feel that they really want what's best for you. We have a good relationship with the manager and she is always in our corner."

Staff were also positive about the service. They felt they were well trained and supported and were committed to the care and development of the people the service supported. There was a clear relationship between people and the staff that cared for them, as well as with the registered manager and senior staff. This meant that communication between people, staff and the service was effective and concerns or issues were quickly identified and rectified. Staff felt that the registered manager was supportive of them and worked with them to ensure people received the care that they needed.

Staff felt that when they had issues they could raise them and felt they would be listened to. One staff member told us, "I would be more than comfortable raising any concerns. I know, through experience, that any concerns I raise would be taken seriously and dealt with quickly." All staff without exception told us they would be happy to question practice and were aware of the safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures. All the staff we spoke with confirmed that they understood their right to share any concerns about the care at the service.

There was a registered manager in post and management had been stable since the service started. The staffing structure in place made sure there were clear lines of accountability and responsibility. Staff told us that the registered manager was a good role model who actively sought and acted on the views of people. One staff member told us, "[Manager] is all about putting people first and making sure they get what they need. We never cut corners. Quite the opposite, we do more than is expected." All the staff we spoke with were positive about the registered manager. They told us there was good leadership, effective management and they felt valued as a staff member.

There were internal systems in place to report accidents and incidents and the registered manager and staff investigated and reviewed incidents and accidents. Care plans were reviewed to reflect any changes in the way people were supported and supervised. The registered manager was aware of the need to report certain incidents, such as alleged abuse or serious injuries, to the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and had systems in place to do so should they arise.

There were quality assurance systems in place to carry out checks as the service developed. We were told that satisfaction surveys and internal audits to ensure paperwork was up-to-date and the service was operating in accordance with their policies and procedures were in place. We saw evidence of care plans being reviewed regularly and there were systems in place to monitor other areas of performance, such as staff supervision and complaints.

The registered manager and staff were committed to continuous improvement of the service by the use of its quality assurance processes and its support to staff in the provision of training. The views of people and their relatives were included and the focus of the evaluation was on the experiences of people who used the service. Areas were identified where improvements could be made so the service met the needs and preferences of people better. Action plans were devised where it was identified improvements could be made in service provision.