

Sense

SENSE - Community Services (South West)

Inspection report

Woodside Family Centre, Kingswood Estate
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Bristol
Avon
BS15 8DB

Tel: 07714250695

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29 September 2020
30 September 2020

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service	Inspected but not rated
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Is the service safe?	Inspected but not rated
Is the service well-led?	Inspected but not rated

Summary of findings

Overall summary

About the service

Sense Community Services (South West) provides care and support to people with complex disabilities living in the community. The part of the service we inspected is a 'supported living' setting.

People received personal care and support to live in shared flats and houses as independently as possible. The service is spread across two houses. Up to eight people can live in one of these properties, whilst the other can accommodate two people. A total of eight people were living in the two houses at the time of our inspection.

In 'supported living' settings, people's care and housing are provided under separate contractual agreements. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) does not regulate premises used for supported living; this inspection looked at people's personal care and support.

The service has been developed and designed in line with the principles and values that underpin Registering the Right Support and other best practice guidance. This ensures that people who use the service can live as full a life as possible and achieve the best outcomes. The principles reflect the need for people with learning disabilities and/or autism to live meaningful lives that include control, choice, and independence.

The service applied the principles and values of Registering the Right Support and other best practice guidance. Although one of the houses was larger than recommended by best practice, the provider had arranged the service to ensure it did not feel institutional. People were supported to have choice and control, as well as opportunities to gain new skills and become more independent.

People's experience of using this service and what we found

Some support plans were not consistently completed or easy to follow. This could lead to care not being personalised or needs not being clearly understood by staff. Support plans at Monks Park Avenue were more comprehensive. We made a recommendation about reviewing the information kept by the service.

There had been staffing changes at all levels. A large number of new staff had been recruited to work in the supported living services. This was positive, although the changes had been challenging at times. Support staff were still developing skills and knowledge, although the staff we spoke with appeared confident and professional. A registered manager was being recruited to lead the supported living services. We made a recommendation about prioritising the recruitment and retention of staff and experienced managers. We will continue to monitor progress in this area.

Relatives felt they had not received enough information about their loved ones. They recognised that this

was mainly due to the numerous staffing changes but were clear they would like to receive more communication and feedback from the service. We made a recommendation to the provider about improving communication.

The provider had regular reviews with specialists following incidents and to plan person centred care. Some actions had not been implemented or clearly communicated due to staff changes.

People were protected from the risk of harm or abuse as far as possible. Staff knew how to keep people safe, and guidance was available if staff needed to report concerns. Risk assessments reflected people's needs and were up to date.

At the time of our inspection, there were enough staff to meet the identified needs of people who lived at the service. This was a combination of permanent and agency staff. Staff received training and induction to ensure they had the skills and knowledge to support people.

People were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible and in their best interests; the policies and systems in the service supported this practice.

For more details, please see the full report which is on the CQC website at www.cqc.org.uk

Rating at last inspection

SENSE - Community Services (South West) was last rated good (published 13 December 2017). At the time of the last inspection, the supported living services were not in place. This rating related only to the Communicator Guide Service for people with a dual sensory loss and, the Intervenor Service for congenitally deafblind children, adults and their families.

The supported living services were registered with CQC in October 2019. This is the first inspection of these services.

Why we inspected

We undertook this targeted inspection to check on a specific concern we had about staffing and the management of incidents.

CQC have introduced targeted inspections to follow up on Warning Notices or to check specific concerns. They do not look at an entire key question, only the part of the key question we are specifically concerned about. Targeted inspections do not change the rating from the previous inspection. This is because they do not assess all areas of a key question.

Follow up

We will continue to monitor information we receive about the service until we return to visit as per our re-inspection programme. If we receive any concerning information we may inspect sooner.

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

We have not reviewed the rating at this inspection. This is because we only looked at the parts of this key question we had specific concerns about.

Inspected but not rated

Is the service well-led?

We have not reviewed the rating at this inspection. This is because we only looked at the parts of this key question we had specific concerns about.

Inspected but not rated

SENSE - Community Services (South West)

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

The inspection

This was a targeted inspection to check on specific concerns we had about staffing and incident management. The inspection took place during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Inspection team

The inspection was carried out by one inspector.

Service and service type

This service provides care and support to people living in two 'supported living' settings, so that they can live as independently as possible. People's care and housing are provided under separate contractual agreements. CQC does not regulate premises used for supported living; this inspection looked at people's personal care and support.

Although Sense Community Services (South West) had a manager registered with the Care Quality Commission, the supported living services did not have a registered manager at the time of the inspection. A process was in place to recruit a manager who would apply to register with the Care Quality Commission. The registered manager and the provider are legally responsible for how the service is run and for the quality and safety of the care provided. The supported living services were being supported by the Operations Manager and a deputy manager.

Notice of inspection

We gave a short period notice of the inspection. This was because we needed to be sure the operations

manager would be available to support the inspection, and to let people know about our visit to their home.

What we did before the inspection

Before the inspection we reviewed information we had received about the service since the last inspection. We sought feedback from the local authority and other professionals who work with the service. We reviewed notifications. Notifications describe events that happen in the service that the provider is legally required to tell us about.

The supported living service had not been asked to complete a provider information return prior to this inspection. This is information we require providers to send us to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make. We took this into account when we inspected the service and made the judgements in this report.

During the inspection

During the inspection we spoke with three people about their experiences. We spoke with seven members of staff, including the operations manager, deputy manager and specialist trainer.

We reviewed a range of records relating to the management of the service, including policies and procedures and audits. We looked at the support records of four people.

We considered all this information to help us to make a judgement about the service.

After the inspection

The provider sent some data and information after the inspection. We had contact with the family of seven people who used the service and 12 professionals who visited the service. Their comments have been incorporated into this report.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

Safe – this means we looked for evidence that people were protected from abuse and avoidable harm.

We have not changed the rating of this key question, as we have only looked at the part of the key question we had specific concerns about.

The purpose of this inspection was to check on specific concerns we had about the supported living services provided by Sense Community Services (South West).

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- During the previous 12 months, we had received concerns that people were not being protected from risk and harm. At the time of our inspection, the service was being monitored by the local authority and other agencies in regular strategy meetings. Strategy meetings are held to share, discuss and consider any actions needed to ensure people are safe when concerns have been raised. There had been improvements, but monitoring was ongoing.
- People told us they felt safe. Comments included, "Yes, safe," and, "All good here".
- Staff were clear about what they should do if they had concerns about safeguarding. One staff member said, "I do everything to make sure people are safe." Most staff had completed safeguarding training recently. Plans were in place for all staff to complete the required training.
- Systems and policies were in place to ensure people were protected from the risk of abuse or harm. The policies provided guidance and information for staff.
- A log was kept to enable managers to monitor and track safeguarding concerns or allegations. This had not been completed when there were various changes in managers earlier in the year.
- Information in support plans was not always clear or up to date. This meant people might not always be safely supported. We discussed this with the managers during our inspection.

We recommend the provider reviews and updates the records it holds on site to meet information governance standards.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- Risk assessments had been completed and were recorded in individual support files. This included assessments of activities such as accessing the community, managing medicines and safety in the kitchen. These risk assessments gave staff guidance about how they should support people safely whilst maintaining their independence. Comments from staff included, "I have the information I need to know what to do," and, "Now I feel more safe with this".
- Fire drills were being planned by the operations manager, and emergency plans were in place to ensure staff and people knew how to respond safely in unforeseen circumstances.
- Relatives felt the basic safety needs of their family members were met at the supported living services.

Staffing and recruitment

- We had previously received concerns that there were not enough staff to meet people's needs safely. At the

time of our inspection, a large number of new staff had been recruited to work in the supported living services.

- Although it was positive to have permanent staff available to support people, there had been concerns raised about the amount of change. Comments from relatives included, "There have been too many changes of staff," "It would be nice to have consistent staff" and, "I don't know who's who." CQC will continue to monitor progress in recruiting and retaining permanent staff at the supported living services.
- People told us they liked the new staff. One person said, "They seem alright," and another gave a 'double thumbs up' to show they were happy with the staff who supported them.
- In some cases, experienced agency staff continued to provide support to people. Often agency staff knew people well, but we had received concerns about the conduct and performance of some agency staff. Some professionals felt these concerns had not been adequately addressed. Managers reported that actions had been taken as necessary and staff who did not meet the required standards no longer worked at the service.
- Before the inspection, we had received concerns that staff did not have the training, knowledge or skills they needed to safely support people.
- Most staff were new to working at the service, and their knowledge and experience was being developed. Staff had received training in most of the mandatory training subjects required of them and plans were in place to complete remaining training. Staff told us they felt well equipped to carry out their role.
- One staff member told us they hadn't been sure to who to ask for advice initially because everyone was new to the service. They explained this had now improved, and they were confident in seeking help. Although many of the newly recruited staff were new to working in settings such as this, those we spoke with appeared confident and professional.
- We did not look at recruitment procedures in detail on this inspection because no concerns had been identified in this area. Managers were in the process of establishing local staff files. These will provide immediate access on site to information about supervision, induction and training.
- We will continue to monitor progress in recruiting and retaining permanent staff, safe staffing levels and competencies and effective working with agency staff.

Learning lessons when things go wrong

- Accidents and incidents were recorded, and actions taken where necessary.
- We had received concerns about incidents not being managed or reviewed consistently. This included information not being shared with professionals in a timely manner. At the time of our inspection, incidents were being reviewed with support from specialists within the organisation.
- Information about incidents was available at the location but records were not organised. We discussed this with the managers during our inspection. They planned to organise and review records and support plans.
- Records were kept of debriefs which had been held after incidents. Debriefs are meetings in which staff and managers discuss what happened in an incident, reflect on actions taken and consider changes or improvements needed in the future.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

Well-Led – this means we looked for evidence that service leadership, management and governance assured high-quality, person-centred care; supported learning and innovation; and promoted an open, fair culture.

We have not changed the rating of this key question, as we have only looked at the part of the key question we had specific concerns about.

The purpose of this inspection was to check on specific concerns we had about the supported living services provided by Sense Community Services (South West).

Promoting a positive culture that is person-centred, open, inclusive and empowering, which achieves good outcomes for people

- We received concerns that the culture at the service was not person centred, open or supportive towards people. There had been many changes at the service and to the staff team since the start of the year. During our inspection, we found staff, people and relatives felt there had been, "challenging times" in the recent past, but most were positive about the future.
- We spoke with people who lived at the service. Their comments included, "I like it [here]," and "Staff help me".
- Relatives felt the culture had suffered because there had been inconsistent staffing at all levels. One relative said, "There aren't the relationships because everyone's new," and, "There's been no consistent manager. It's been like a rudderless ship at times."
- Relatives and professionals told us they felt some managers had been defensive when errors or inconsistencies were highlighted.

We recommend the provider continues to prioritise the recruitment and retention of staff and suitably skilled and experienced managers.

- The staff we met told us they felt supported in their role and were happy working at the service. One staff member said, "This is a lovely staff team. We're creating the culture." Another staff member told us, "We're moving forward, but it is a journey. It's important that we maintain this good culture."
- The provider had a clear aim and mission statement. This focused on ensuring no-one is isolated, left out or unable to fulfil their potential. Staff supported people to attend college and educational opportunities and certificates illustrating their achievements were proudly displayed. This reflected the values of the organisation.

Managers and staff being clear about their roles, and understanding quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements

- Although Sense Community Services (South West) had a manager registered with the Care Quality Commission, the two supported living services did not have a registered manager at the time of the inspection. The relatives and professionals we spoke with raised this as a concern. At the time of our inspection, a process was in place to recruit a manager who would apply to register with the Care Quality

Commission. One professional felt the provider was making efforts to ensure suitably skilled and experienced managers were appointed. We will continue to monitor this.

- The managers in post were clear about their roles and understood quality performance, risk and regulatory requirements.
- Staff understood their roles and what was required of them. The staff we spoke with felt they had the support needed to enable them to provide a safe service to people. One staff member told us they felt the team and managers in the past had been "fractured", but added they felt there was, "A great calibre of staff now. We're playing catch up." Another staff member said, "[Manager name] is working very hard to get this place up to scratch."
- A regional support structure was in place and regular calls were in place to monitor and review service delivery and performance.
- Managers made notifications to CQC as required. Notifications are information about important events the service is legally obliged to send us within required timescales.

Engaging and involving people using the service, the public and staff, fully considering their equality characteristics

- People felt they were involved in decisions about the service and their care. One person said, "Yes, the staff ask me things. I mostly do what I want".
- During the pandemic, it had been difficult to obtain feedback in a range of ways from people and their families. A feedback questionnaire had recently been sent to relatives. Responses were positive overall, but relatives raised concerns about staff turnover and the number of shifts covered by agency staff. This echoed the feedback we received from relatives.
- People had been supported to keep in touch with friends and family members during periods of lockdown. This included phone and video calls and socially distanced meetings.
- Most of the staff we spoke with had not worked at the supported living service for very long. They felt they were asked their opinions and made aware of changes or updates as relevant.
- Relatives told us they would like to receive more communication from the service. Comments included, "There is a massive problem with communication", "I would like to know more," and, "I don't feel like I know what's going on."

We recommend the provider reviews its communication with relatives and seeks support to develop this as necessary.

- People could confidentially leave feedback in secure boxes at Passage Road. One person told us they, "Didn't really bother with things like that."
- The management team were developing a plan to introduce house meetings at Passage Road.
- Staff meetings had taken place occasionally, but these had been difficult to arrange because of the restrictions in place during the coronavirus pandemic and management changes. Managers told us they planned to set up more staff meetings. Staff would be able to attend meetings in person or via video calling.
- Staff felt able to approach senior staff for support or with concerns or queries. One staff member said, "I feel safe to challenge, and the managers have open communication." Another told us, "[Name] is always on the end of the phone. I can ask about anything. They keep us in the loop".

Continuous learning and improving care

- Professionals were concerned that frequent staff changes had meant specialist advice was not always shared or followed. This meant people may not always have the most responsive support to achieve effective outcomes and improve care. Managers told us they continued to improve communication systems and stressed the importance of sharing information with new staff.
- Staff were supported to learn and develop to ensure they met people's needs. They received supervision

and training in a range of subjects. Some training information and supervision records were out of date or not consistently filed. We discussed this with the management team during the inspection. They had begun to organise staff files to ensure these were complete and consistent.

- A business continuity plan was in place to ensure the service continued to be operationally effective in the event of an emergency. This included guidance about further pandemic outbreaks and winter pressures.

Working in partnership with others

- Staff worked with other professionals. People's care records showed they were supported by a range of professionals including GPs and social workers. Staff received support from the local Community Learning Disabilities Team and the Preparing for Adulthood Team. This ensured relevant expertise and treatment was provided and helped people continue to live as independently as possible. Professionals told us the frequent changes of staff had meant that some specialist advice had not always been followed. This reinforced the importance of a consistent staff team and clear communication.