

Sense

# SENSE - Community Services (South West)

## Inspection report

Woodside Family Centre, Kingswood Estate  
Britannia Road  
Bristol  
Avon  
BS15 8DB

Tel: 07714250695

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## Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Good ●

Is the service safe?

Good ●

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

# Summary of findings

## Overall summary

### About the service

SENSE - Community Services (South West) is a domiciliary care agency providing personal care to children and young people in their own homes. The service provides support to children and young people who may have sight and hearing impairments but may also have other disabilities or complex needs.

Not everyone who used the service received personal care. CQC only inspects where people receive personal care. This is help with tasks related to personal hygiene and eating. Where they do we also consider any wider social care provided.

At the time of our inspection 12 children and young people were receiving personal care from the service. Staff providing this service were called 'Intervenors'. We have used this term when referring to staff directly providing the service throughout our report.

We expect health and social care providers to guarantee people with a learning disability and autistic people respect, equality, dignity, choices and independence and good access to local communities that most people take for granted. 'Right support, right care, right culture' is the guidance CQC follows to make assessments and judgements about services supporting people with a learning disability and autistic people and providers must have regard to it.

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

#### Right Support:

Intervenors focused on children and young people's strengths and preferences. They promoted what children and young people could do to support them in having a fulfilling and meaningful everyday life. Children and young people benefitted from the interactions with Intervenors.

Intervenors knew how to communicate with children and young people in ways that best met their needs.

Intervenors supported children and young people to have maximum choice and control of their lives where possible. Intervenors supported children and young people in the least restrictive way possible and in their best interests; the policies and systems in the service supported this practice.

Families were involved in discussions about how their children received support and reviewed this regularly.

#### Right Care:

Children and young people received kind and compassionate care. Intervenors understood and responded to their individual needs.

Intervenors usually supported the same children and young people. They had a good understanding of individual communication needs and supported children effectively.

Intervenors understood how to protect children and young people from poor care and abuse. The service worked well with other agencies to do so. Intervenors had training on how to recognise and report abuse and they knew how to apply it.

Families worked with Intervenors and managers to assess and manage the risks children and young people might face. Where appropriate, Intervenors encouraged and enabled children and young people to take positive risks.

Although the service had enough appropriately skilled staff to meet children and young people's needs and keep them safe, more staff were needed. There was a programme of ongoing recruitment to enable the service to expand.

#### Right Culture:

Intervenors understood the wide range of strengths, impairments and sensitivities the children and young people could face. This meant children and young people received compassionate and empowering care that was tailored to their needs.

Intervenors and managers were positive about their roles. They placed children and young people's wishes, needs and rights at the heart of what they did.

Intervenors provided consistent care to children and young people. The management team were endeavouring to recruit more staff to provide additional sessions.

Families, managers and Intervenors worked together to plan and evaluate the support provided to children and young people.

For more details, please see the full report which is on the CQC website at [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

#### Rating at last inspection

The last rating for this service was good (published 13 December 2017).

#### Why we inspected

This inspection was prompted by a review of the information we held about this service and the length of time since the last inspection.

#### Follow up

We will continue to monitor information we receive about the service, which will help inform when we next inspect.

## 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 was safe.

Details are in our safe findings below.

### Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service was well-led.

Details are in our well-led findings below.

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## **Detailed findings**

### Background to this inspection

#### The inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (the Act) as part of our regulatory functions. We checked whether the provider was meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Act. We looked at the overall quality of the service and provided a rating for the service under the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

#### Inspection team

The inspection was carried out by one inspector.

#### Service and service type

This service is a domiciliary care agency. It provides personal care to children and young people living in their family homes.

#### Registered Manager

This provider is required to have a registered manager to oversee the delivery of regulated activities at this location. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Registered managers and providers are legally responsible for how the service is run, for the quality and safety of the care provided and compliance with regulations.

At the time of our inspection there was a registered manager in post. They were on an extended period of leave, but suitable cover arrangements were in place.

#### Notice of inspection

We gave a short period notice of the inspection because it is a small service and we needed to be sure that the provider or manager would be in the office to support the inspection.

Inspection activity started on 5 July and ended on 12 July 2023. We visited the location's office on 5 July 2023.

#### What we did before the inspection

Before the inspection we reviewed information we had received about the service since it registered with CQC. This included CQC notifications. These describe events that happen in the service that the provider is legally required to tell us about.

We used the information the provider sent us in the provider information return (PIR). This is information providers are required to send us annually with key information about their service, what they do well, and improvements they plan to make.

We used this information to plan our inspection.

#### During the inspection

The children and young people who received support from the service were not able to speak with us. We spoke with 8 parents about their experience of the care provided. We received feedback from 3 professionals who worked with the service. We spoke with 5 members of staff, including managers and support staff. Everyone's comments have been incorporated into this report.

We looked at a range of records about children and young people's care and the running of the service. We looked at the support records of all the children who used the service, and reviewed 5 in detail. We looked at 3 staff files in relation to recruitment and staff support. We read documents relating to the management of the service including audits, policies and procedures and training information.

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

# Is the service safe?

## Our findings

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

At our last inspection we rated this key question good. At this inspection the rating has remained good. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- All the relatives we asked told us their children were safe when being supported by Sense Intervenor. One relative said, "I'm absolutely happy to leave [Intervenor] in charge. I know [Name] will be safe."
- Systems and processes were in place to safeguard children and young people from the risk of abuse.
- There had been no safeguarding concerns raised in the previous 12 months, but Intervenor and managers were clear about their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.
- Intervenor received specific training which was relevant to their role and were able to describe how they would recognise and report abuse.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- Records contained individualised risk assessments which described the risks to children and young people's safety and provided Intervenor with guidance on how to manage or reduce risks where possible.
- Risks were regularly reviewed, their impact monitored, and changes made where necessary to keep children and young people safe. We saw risk assessments including personal care, travelling in vehicles, choking and the management of specific health conditions.
- Relatives told us they felt the care and support provided by Intervenor was very safe. One relative explained that an Intervenor was learning how to manage their child's feeding tube system. This was being done slowly, and with the ongoing support of other Intervenor and the manager to ensure risks were understood and managed, and all staff were appropriately skilled.
- Intervenor knew the children and young people they supported very well. This enabled them to respect individual choices and preferences while managing specific risks in children's best interests.
- Information was provided about safely accessing children's homes and managing emergency situations. This helped Intervenor to keep themselves and the children they supported safe.

Ensuring consent to care and treatment in line with law and guidance

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 MCA 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.

- When we inspected, the service was supporting children and young people who were under the age of 18. This meant the provisions of the MCA did not apply.
- Information about how a child was supported to make decisions was included in their care files and known by Intervenor.

- One relative told us how the Intervenor respected their child's wishes. They explained, "[Intervenor] always gives [Name] choice. They tailor everything to what [Name] wants. They wait for [Name] to show them with tiny cues like eye movements. They understand [Name] so well."
- Intervenor were clear that they gave children choice and control whenever possible and knew how individual wishes and preferences would be communicated.
- One Intervenor told us, "I see my job as empowering the children and young people to make choices, and to know there is a choice. They need to know they're important."
- Support plans contained consent forms, and some young people had been able to sign these themselves. In other cases parents had signed to show they agreed with the support being provided and decisions which were made in the child's best interests.

#### Staffing and recruitment

- There were enough staff working within the service to meet children and young people's needs. However, the management team, Intervenor and relatives all told us that more staff were needed to be able to provide the service they would like. One relative said, "It's a good news story really. [Name] loves having them so much, we want more of their time."
- A rolling programme of recruitment was in place to expand and continue developing the service.
- The manager was clear that they would only take on new packages of care if they had enough staff and the skills necessary to provide safe, good quality support.
- Relatives told us they usually had regular Intervenor providing support at the same times. This changed during school holiday periods, and sometimes relatives felt they would like more notice about new visit times. This also reflected that the service would benefit from additional staff.
- Relatives told us the Intervenor were skilled in supporting their children. Comments included, "They have such a good relationship with [Name]", "All the staff are great" and "I can't praise [Intervenor] enough."
- Intervenor told us the induction programme and training were very good, and time was taken to ensure new staff were introduced to families and shadowed experienced Intervenor to ensure they were competent in all aspects of support.
- Safe recruitment practices were in place. This included criminal and employment checks being carried out to confirm staff were suitable to work independently with children and young people in their homes.

#### Using medicines safely

- The families of children and young people who were supported by the service took a lead in managing their medicines.
- When Intervenor were responsible for administering medicines, they received appropriate training and competency checks to ensure they did this safely. This included additional training to enable Intervenor to safely administer medicine to children with percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) systems.
- The support children needed with medicines had been assessed and individual records described the assistance individuals required.
- Medicines audits were carried out to check practice and ensure standards were maintained. Actions were taken if necessary to improve practice.

#### Preventing and controlling infection

- Children, young people and their families were protected from the risk of infections.
- Intervenor received training in infection prevention and control and followed guidance to keep children and young people safe.
- Intervenor told us they used personal protective equipment (PPE) as required.
- The provider had an infection prevention and control policy which was up to date and reflected current practice.

### Learning lessons when things go wrong

- Systems and processes were in place to ensure lessons were learned and shared when things went wrong. This included audits, analysis and action plans to improve the service or prevent similar incidents in the future.
- There had not been any accidents or incidents in the previous 12 months, but Intervenors and managers knew how to report these.
- The management team were open and willing to receive and act on feedback during our inspection.

# 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.

At our last inspection we rated this key question good. At this inspection the rating has remained good. This meant the service was consistently managed and well-led. Leaders and the culture they created promoted high-quality, person-centred care.

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

- There was a positive culture which was person-centred and empowering for the children and young people who received support.
- The management team and Intervenor had good knowledge and understanding of the children and young people they were supporting and knew them well.
- The management team shaped the culture in line with the provider's vision and values. These focused on listening to people, working together and including everyone to overcome challenges and celebrate achievements.
- Relatives were confident in the provider and happy with the service they received. Comments included, "The service is absolutely amazing" and "The people are lovely. They're helpful, skilled, trained and flexible."
- Relatives told us there had been recent changes in the management team and knew there would be further changes when the permanent registered manager returned to work. They were positive about this and felt the management structure was becoming more robust.
- Relatives told us the management team were approachable and helpful and they knew them well. Some relatives felt responses to their queries could take longer than they would like.
- Intervenor were proud of working for the service and were positive about the role they played in achieving good outcomes for children and young people. The Intervenor were happy working for the organisation. One Intervenor said, "[Manager name] is brilliant. Things are really changing."
- A professional said, "I couldn't ask for more. They are really flexible, and nothing is too much trouble."

How the provider understands and acts on the duty of candour, which is their legal responsibility to be open and honest with people when something goes wrong

- The manager was open and honest and understood their responsibilities following an incident. They told us they would act and notify appropriate agencies if things went wrong.
- There were policies and procedures to guide staff in responding to incidents, safeguarding alerts and complaints.

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

- The registered manager was on leave, but cover had been provided by a management team who had the knowledge and skills to carry out the responsibilities of their roles.
- Relatives knew the management team and told us they had regular contact with them. Relatives felt able

to highlight concerns to managers. One relative told us, "We have a good relationship with [Names]. They're approachable and we raise things with them."

- Governance, management and accountability arrangements were clear. Systems were in place to monitor, analyse and learn from data and information about the service. A senior manager carried out regular audits covering subjects such as individual support, medicines and staff training. Audits helped to identify issues and take action to improve when necessary.
- Risks and quality were also monitored by managers by carrying out spot checks and attending visits. This helped to manage performance effectively and ensure children and young people continued to receive safe, high quality care.

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

- The provider highly valued the diverse and individual needs of the children and young people who received support.
- Relatives shared examples of the ways in which Intervenor provided person-centred care to children and young people. One relative told us, "They took their time getting to know [Name]. It was so important to get the right match. Now it works really well." Another relative said, "They know [Name] so well. [Name] really enjoys when the Intervenor come – [Name] screams with excitement."
- Relatives told us they were involved in reviews of the support provided and worked closely with the management team and Intervenor to ensure plans continued to meet their children's needs. One relative said, "We communicate all the time, and have regular reviews more formally. They keep everything up to date."
- Relatives told us they felt comfortable to speak up and share their views. They said the management team and Intervenor listened to their views and acted on them where possible.
- Intervenor told us they were able to share their views in supervision, staff meetings and informally on an ongoing basis. Some staff felt their experience had varied. They noted, "Sometimes it's not been so good, but it's mostly a good company to work for. I think things are going to get better."

Continuous learning and improving care

- The management team were keen to learn and develop to continue improving the service.
- Additional managers had been appointed and they were positive about the imminent return of the permanent registered manager to support ongoing developments.

Working in partnership with others

- The service worked closely with health, social care and education professionals to ensure children and young people received support which met their assessed needs. We saw evidence of meetings and communication with social workers, a school family support team and specialist healthcare professionals.
- Professionals were positive about the service provided and the staff team. Comments included, "The staff are always friendly, kind and approachable and the parents of our families have good, positive relationships with the staff" and "All my experience of them has been really, really positive."