

St Andrews Care Homes Ltd

Elcombe House

Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Outstanding 

Is the service safe?

Good 

Is the service effective?

Outstanding 

Is the service caring?

Outstanding 

Is the service responsive?

Outstanding 

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding 

Summary of findings

Overall summary

About the service

Elcombe House is a residential care home providing personal and nursing care to 22 people at the time of the inspection. The service can support up to 23 people. The service had been designed to support people living with dementia or physical disabilities. People had their own bedrooms and shared communal areas such as a dining room, a lounge, bathrooms and a garden.

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

Without exception, people and their relatives told us they received exemplary support at Elcombe House. One person told us, "It is fantastic here. The staff are so wonderful and [support] could not be better." A relative said, "I do not have the words to explain Elcombe House. They are exemplary in every area and exceed all expectations."

Everyone told us how dedicated, caring and supportive the staff team were and the positive impact these caring relationships had upon them. Staff had a passion for their job roles and this was reflected in the support which they gave to people. There was an extremely positive atmosphere at the service which promoted compassion and care. Staff had developed meaningful relationships with people and treated them with kindness and respect. Promoting people's dignity, privacy and independence was a top priority for all staff members.

People received incredibly personalised care because of the effort made to get to know them as individuals and to support them in line with their preferences. The management and staff team were exceptionally responsive to people's changing needs to ensure that they were able to stay in control of their lives and make choices about their support. People took part in a wide range of stimulating activities depending on their likes and dislikes. People were encouraged to speak about any concerns and these were used to improve the service where this was necessary.

The registered manager and staff team worked hard to ensure that people received high quality, effective care and achieved good outcomes. Best practice and innovations were used to improve people's quality of life and well-being. The impact this had for people was clear to see. The number of falls for people who were at risk had reduced, people at risk of malnutrition had put on weight and were eating well and people did not have any pressure sores.

Staff training was very successful at giving staff the skills to understand and support people effectively. Promoting a healthy diet was a key value at the service and people were well supported in this area. Collaborative working with health agencies was central to people's support and the outcomes they achieved.

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.

People were kept safe from harm and abuse by systems in place at the service and risks to people had been thoroughly assessed. There were enough staff to support people safely and staff were recruited safely. People were well supported with their medicines and the service was clean as good infection control measures were implemented.

There was a positive, open and inclusive culture and atmosphere at the service. Staff were supported to be involved in the running of the service to achieve good outcomes for people. People living at Elcombe House benefitted from management and staff sharing a strong set of values which put people at the centre of their care.

Robust quality monitoring was used to identify areas for improvements and take actions to continually improve people's experiences. People, relatives and the staff team were encouraged and enabled to work together to feedback about and shape the direction of the service.

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

Rating at last inspection

The last rating for this service was good (published 11 May 2017).

Why we inspected

This was a planned inspection based on the previous rating.

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?

The service was safe.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Good 

Is the service effective?

The service was exceptionally effective.

Details are in our effective findings below.

Outstanding 

Is the service caring?

The service was exceptionally caring.

Details are in our caring findings below.

Outstanding 

Is the service responsive?

The service was exceptionally responsive.

Details are in our responsive findings below.

Outstanding 

Is the service well-led?

The service was exceptionally well-led.

Details are in our well-led findings below.

Outstanding 

Elcombe House

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 Care Act 2014.

Inspection team

This inspection was carried out by one inspector.

Service and service type

Elcombe House is a 'care home'. People in care homes receive accommodation and nursing or personal care as single package under one contractual agreement. CQC regulates both the premises and the care provided, and both were looked at during this inspection.

The service had a manager who was registered with the Care Quality Commission. This means that they and the provider are legally responsible for how the service is run and for the quality and safety of the care provided.

Notice of inspection

This inspection was unannounced.

What we did before the inspection

We reviewed information we had received about the service since the last inspection. We received feedback from the local authorities who work with the service. The provider was not 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. We used all this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

We spoke with seven people and three relatives about their experience of the care provided. We observed interactions between staff and people who used the service. We spoke with 11 members of staff including care staff, senior care staff, the wellness coordinator, the cook, a housekeeping staff member, deputy managers and the registered manager. We also spoke with two professionals involved with the service and an independent resilience, well-being and performance coach.

We reviewed a range of records. This included two people's care records which included all aspects of care and risk. We looked at two staff files in relation to recruitment, training and staff supervision. A variety of records relating to the management of the service, including audits, policies and procedures were reviewed.

After the inspection:

The deputy manager sent us further evidence in relation to training data, quality assurance records and how the service supported positive outcomes for people.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

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

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has remained the same. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- People told us they were safe. One person said, "I do feel safe here, especially as I did not feel safe living by myself anymore. Nothing unsafe ever happens here."
- Staff had received training in safeguarding people and had a good understanding of how to report any concerns. They knew how to report concerns to outside bodies such as the CQC or the local authority safeguarding team.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- People had risk assessments in place depending on their needs in areas such as mobility, accessing the community, using equipment and health conditions. One person told us, "I have my walking frame to get up and about and the staff know how to help me with this."
- Risk assessments were updated as people's need changed. One deputy manager explained that this was important as people became more independent or made different choices about how they wanted to be supported.
- The staff team carried out health and safety checks in all areas of the premises including fire safety. This helped ensure that people were kept safe in their environment.

Staffing and recruitment

- People told us that there were enough staff to meet their needs and staff were able to spend meaningful time with them throughout the day. One person said, "There are enough staff about to keep us all going. They all have time to do their jobs so well."
- Staff told us there were enough staff to support people. We observed a relaxed atmosphere during our inspection with staff members having time to complete all aspects of their job roles.
- The registered manager completed robust recruitment checks for all staff members to help ensure that they were suitable to work at the service.

Using medicines safely

- People were supported safely with their medicines. This included 'as and when required' (PRN) medicines and homely remedies.
- Staff received training in administering medicines and had their competency checked regularly. We observed good practice when medicines were administered. Senior and management staff completed checks and audits to ensure that medicines were given safely.

Preventing and controlling infection

- People told us that the service was clean. One person told us, "There is always [staff] cleaning and keeping everything nice here. Nothing is too much trouble." The service was clean and pleasant during our inspection.
- Staff members received training in infection control and told us there was enough equipment such as gloves and aprons for when they delivered care and to complete cleaning tasks.

Learning lessons when things go wrong

- The deputy manager's reviewed accidents and incidents when things did not go to plan. Any learning or improvements were shared with the staff team in team meetings and supervisions.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

Effective – this means we looked for evidence that people's care, treatment and support achieved good outcomes and promoted a good quality of life, based on best available evidence.

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has now improved to outstanding. This meant people's outcomes were consistently better than expected compared to similar services. People's feedback described it as exceptional and distinctive.

Assessing people's needs and choices; delivering care in line with standards, guidance and the law

- People received exceptional care that met their individual needs and choices. People and their relatives told us that living at Elcombe House had a considerable, positive impact on their lives and that they were overwhelmed by the high standard of care that staff gave to people.
- People told us, "[Staff] really made an effort to get to know me and know how I like to be treated and how I like to be talked to. Very lucky that I found this place." and, "[Staff] here understand that you cannot do for one what everyone else wants. I am very happy here." Relatives said, "If [person] wants something I will let [management] know and it will be in place the next day. They are brilliant." and, "I think Elcombe House is just incredible. [Staff] are able to do everything here and I cannot speak highly enough of them."
- One professional told us, "[Staff] tailor very well to people's individual needs. [Person] has very complex needs but [staff] work with them and find creative ways to engage with them and ensure they are comfortable with their care. This has allowed them to build an excellent rapport with [Person]." Feedback and records showed that this person was much happier living at Elcombe House thanks to the support they received.
- The registered manager had a passion for achieving good outcomes for people and was involved in local and national care forums to keep up to date with best practice. Best practice guidance was shared with staff and used to guide practice in relation to areas such as skin care, falls and nutrition. Because of this, people had improved in various aspects of their daily living. The number of falls for people who were at risk had reduced, people at risk of malnutrition had put on weight and were eating well and people did not have any pressure sores.
- The registered manager and staff team put a large emphasis on people's needs and choices when they started living at Elcombe House. One person, who had recently moved in had found the transition very difficult and initially was refusing care. Following several initiatives put in place by the management team and from using information from the person's relative, the person very quickly settled in and began accepting support from staff members. The person's relative explained this to us. "For the first few days, [Person] was not too happy. [Person] was refusing care but it was lovely that [staff] phoned me and said that [Person] had started to accept care after only being at the service two nights. [Person] has been very well supported absolutely. Just amazing."
- The registered manager had invested in new pieces of equipment which improved the outcomes for people. We saw an example where this allowed one staff member rather than two to support someone to move. This had improved the person's experience during this aspect of their care and they were much happier as a result. The registered manager had also invested in a chair that helped support people to stand up from the floor following a fall in a respectful and dignified manner. The deputy manager explained to us

that this had reduced people's fear should they experience a fall as the chair was a lot less distressing for people to use than a hoist.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- Staff received ongoing, planned, in-depth training and supervision to ensure they had the skills and experience to meet people's needs. One staff member told us, "The training is so good here. It really helps us to understand people. Most of the training is face to face as well, which is excellent."
- People and their relatives had great confidence in the skills of the staff team and their training. One person said, "[Staff] here are gems. They all know what they are doing and know how to help us all so well." A relative told us, "[Staff] are exemplary. The skills they have go above and beyond for making sure [Person's] needs are met." A professional who regularly visited the service said, "The atmosphere at the service is excellent. [Staff] have a real understanding of people and treat them all individually."
- Staff told us 'virtual dementia training' had helped them understand people's experiences and led to them introducing innovative ways of supporting people. This included playing relaxing music during meal times which had been proven to help some people eat and drink more. Staff had also reduced noise levels as this had been proven to cause distress for some people. Staff said they were more aware of the how noise coming from televisions and radios could confuse or disorientate some people so they had actively worked to ensure there was a calm atmosphere which avoided sudden loud noises and/or movements.
- Staff members were encouraged to reflect, learn and develop in their job roles and had regular meetings and conversations with managers to discuss this. One staff member told us, "I feel one hundred percent supported and we are encouraged to share our ideas. It is a real family atmosphere here."

Supporting people to eat and drink enough to maintain a balanced diet

- People received fantastic support with their dietary needs and eating a balanced diet. One person told us, "It is really good food. We always get a good choice and if you want more you can always have more. You don't have to have what is on the menu and they will always make you whatever you want. I cannot think of any other place that would do that." A relative said, "The food looks and smells exemplary. It is just to die for and they always make sure they get in the food that [Person] wants."
- The cook was enthusiastic about supporting people to eat and drink to knew each person's likes and preferences. The cook spoke with passion about how they ensured that meals were varied, nutritious and met people's needs. All meals were freshly prepared and people also enjoyed having freshly baked cakes and desserts daily. Food looked and smelled appetising as a result of this extra effort, which encouraged people to eat and drink a balanced diet.
- The management and staff team had embraced an initiative called the 'hydration project' which raised staff awareness of the importance of fluid intake. A 'hydration station' with a large choice of different drinks was available to people in communal areas throughout the day. This prompted people and the staff team to promote regular fluid intake. Throughout the inspection, people were constantly supported and reminded to use the hydration station if they wanted a drink. People were also offered their preferred snacks consistently throughout the day.
- Staff knew the importance of meal times and supporting people to eat and drink enough. One relative said, "[Person] had given up on eating before they came to Elcombe House. Within a short time and with the support of the staff team [Person] started eating again. Incredible place." A deputy manager proudly explained to us that no one living at Elcombe House currently needed their intake of food and fluid monitored as they had been supported so well with their diets.
- People were encouraged to take part in menu planning and meals were discussed with people in meetings and individual conversations. Staff members supported people who needed assistance to eat and drink at a pace that they were comfortable with.

Staff working with other agencies to provide consistent, effective, timely care; Supporting people to live healthier lives, access healthcare services and support

- The management team worked extremely well with other agencies to ensure positive outcomes for people with regards to their health and wellbeing. Various health and social care professionals were involved with people's support and people were supported with regular checks in areas such as oral care and eyesight to promote healthy living.
- People and their relatives told us that they received exceptional support to maintain their health. One person told us, "[Staff] sort all of the health appointments out. I had to see the GP last week, I told the staff, they took me to the appointment. Absolutely fantastic." A professional told us, "[Staff] know everyone so well. They know exactly what signs to look for if a person is unwell or might need more support."
- People who lived at Elcombe House had improved in their health and well-being in areas where they needed support. People who were unable to mobilise before living at Elcombe House had now regained the ability to walk independently. This was thanks to the work and support that the management and the staff team gave to people. One relative said, "Within a fortnight of coming in to Elcombe House [Person] was a changed person. They had colour back in their face and [staff] had got [Person] up and about walking again. I cannot praise them enough."
- The management team ensured that staff were up to date with new initiatives and best practice with regards to supporting people to live healthily. This included oral health care and nutrition. Staff members told us how having this knowledge raised their awareness of the importance of people's health in these areas. Staff members and the management team were proud to explain that people had not needed support in these areas for some time as they promoted people's independence in maintaining their own health and well-being.

Adapting service, design, decoration to meet people's needs

- People and their relatives were happy with the premises and the service was described as having a 'calming' and a 'homely' atmosphere. One person said, "It's great here. I sleep in a room that is large, so I have lots of space." People's bedrooms were personalised according to their likes and dislikes.
- A deputy manager explained to us that several areas of the home had been improved. There was a large 'garden room' where people could meet with relatives and friends in private. A large garden area had been specifically designed to meet people's needs. A large water feature had been installed and the garden had been extended so that people had more room to use this part of the service. Several flower beds had been installed to involve people who enjoyed gardening to take part in this activity. One person said, "We have a lovely garden here which is excellent. It really makes you feel like going outside."
- The service was well maintained. Equipment and appliances were in good working order and if repairs were necessary, these were organised and carried out quickly.

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 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.

People can only be deprived of their liberty to receive care and treatment when this is in their best interests and legally authorised under the MCA. In care homes, and some hospitals, this is usually through MCA application procedures called the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). We checked whether the service was working within the principles of the MCA, and whether any conditions on authorisations to deprive a person of their liberty had the appropriate legal authority and were being met.

- People told us that staff asked for consent before supporting them. People said, "[Staff] are very polite and if you do not want them to do something then they will stop and do something else." and, "You will always find that the staff here talk to you before helping you out. Really good here." We observed staff members asking people for consent before supporting them throughout the inspection.
- Where people lacked capacity, detailed assessments were completed, and decisions were made in people's best interests. The management team consulted with people's relatives and professionals to ensure that people's wishes, likes and dislikes were considered if decisions needed to be made on their behalf.
- Staff members had a good understanding of the MCA. People had DoLS in place where these were necessary, and these were in place in line with legal requirements.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

Caring – this means we looked for evidence that the service involved people and treated them with compassion, kindness, dignity and respect.

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has now improved to outstanding. This meant people were truly respected and valued as individuals; and empowered as partners in their care in an exceptional service.

Ensuring people are well treated and supported; respecting equality and diversity

- People were incredibly positive about the care they received. Without exception, staff members were described with words such as wonderful, marvellous, kind, caring, fantastic and exemplary. People told us, "Nothing is too much trouble for [staff]. They are all excellent and you simply cannot fault them." and, "I am very happy here. I would never want to change anything ever. This is now my home; the staff are wonderful and have become like my family." We observed exceedingly caring and respectful interactions between staff and people living at the service. It was clear that staff had taken the time to understand people as individuals and build meaningful relationships
- Relatives and professionals were also complimentary about the caring nature of staff at the service. One relative said, "I think the staff are very compassionate and caring. They see things from people's point of view. [Person] does not always recognise who they are but they are lovely and really caring all the time. They always make the extra effort to sit and talk with [person] and make them feel good about themselves." Another relative told us, "The [staff] are absolutely brilliant. The biggest thing is that they made [person] feel like a person again. They make [person] feel worthwhile and they are just so happy now." A professional said, "The atmosphere at the service is always calm and really caring. I would happily have a relative of mine stay there and would trust them with all aspects of their care."
- One person found hospital visits very difficult and a relative explained how the deputy manager had gone above and beyond to care for this person in an emergency and have a positive impact on their lives. The relative explained, "[Person] was poorly a few weeks ago and [deputy manager] sat with the person all night in the hospital to make sure they felt safe. An exemplary service- what else could you call it?" The deputy manager explained that they did not see this as something above and beyond their role which demonstrated the caring nature of the staff at the service.
- One person had found it difficult to settle and live in care services before living at Elcombe House. A deputy manager explained that this person used very specific ways to manage their own anxieties. These had been explored with the person and detailed guidance for supporting them had been put in place for staff to follow. This person had gone from isolating themselves in their bedroom, to socialising and taking part in activities happily with other people. A professional who worked with this person said, "[Person] now wants to spend time socialising with others and is so much happier as a result. This is because of the total respect given to the person and how they were supported in the way they wanted to be supported."
- Another person had also struggled to live at care services in the past. This person enjoyed walking around the service independently and had been described as having 'challenging behaviour' before moving in to the service. Staff had worked with this person and enabled them to walk at their leisure whilst promoting their safety. As a result of this the person had settled well at the service and was visibly happy. The deputy

manager explained, "We do not talk about people being challenging here. The staff are encouraged to see that we are the ones being challenged. People should be able to live how they want to live."

- Staff were very positive about their work and were very eager to talk to us about the support they gave to people and the impact this had on their lives. One staff member said, "I love being here. It is like my second home. It just feels like a big family and it is very homely here."

Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- People felt in control of their own lives as they were supported to maintain daily living skills and things that were important to them. People told us, "[Staff] make sure I do everything that I can by myself. My aim is to look after myself if possible and the staff are so good at helping me to do this." and, "[Staff] know what I can and cannot do by myself. I can do things by myself if this is appropriate, but staff are always there to help me if I need them."

- One person spoke to us about how they were unable to walk when they came to the service. Thanks to the perseverance and hard work of the staff team they were able to regain this ability, and this had a huge impact on their life. This person's relative told us, "[Person] was not walking when they started living at Elcombe House. Then one day [Person] just walked in to the lounge to see us. [Person] was so happy and it brought a tear to my eye as I know how important independence is to them. [Staff] have obviously kept the support up as each week [Person] is getting better and better."

- We observed staff members prompting and encouraging people to complete daily living tasks and household chores as independently as they possibly could. One person who communicated non-verbally was supported to sit and stand with minimal support from staff and was delighted to have been able to do this. They showed this by their interactions with the staff supporting them who clearly made them feel that they had achieved.

- People's privacy and dignity was respected, and high importance was placed upon this. One person said, "[Staff] are incredibly polite. They always treat me with dignity and respect." A professional explained how staff supported people to maintain their dignity, "[Staff] member dealt with a situation where [Person] needed support in a very kind and dignified manner. It was clear that it was very much about maintaining the person's dignity with utter respect for [Person]."

- Protecting people's confidentiality was an important value at the service. The management team had developed innovative methods of letting staff know if people needed extra support. For example, a small coloured sticker was placed on people's doors to let staff know that people may need more support. This ensured that only staff members knew about this rather than everyone who visited the service.

Supporting people to express their views and be involved in making decisions about their care

- People were encouraged to be as involved as they wished to be in their care planning and relatives were consulted to help inform people's needs and wishes. One relative explained, "We are kept informed about [Person] and are always involved in chats about how they are supported. [Person] living at Elcombe House has totally lifted the pressure off us as we know person is receiving excellent support."

- A deputy manager explained how respecting people's unwise choices had enabled them to lead a better quality of life in the long run. The deputy manager explained that one person chose not to engage in an area of their support. By supporting this person's choice and working with them slowly to understand that they had other options, this person eventually accepted support in this area of their care.. This person now looked forward to staff supporting them in this area.

- One person who had very specific likes and dislikes about food was supported to make choices and be in control of this area of their support. This person told us, "I am a fussy eater, but they always give me a huge choice of what to eat. They always explain to me exactly what is in each meal choice and what else I can have instead. This helps me so much." A relative of this person said, "The staff make sure [Persons] needs are met above and beyond the call of duty. [Person] fancied a certain food one day and the staff went out

and got it. This means so much to them."

- We observed staff members offering people choices in all aspects of their support. People told us, "You can choose anything you want here. The staff understand that you cannot do for one what everyone wants so we all make our own choices." and, "We are in control and choose how things go here. If we feel that there is something that needs changing, then it is changed."

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

Responsive – this means we looked for evidence that the service met people's needs.

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has now improved to outstanding. This meant services were tailored to meet the needs of individuals and delivered to ensure flexibility, choice and continuity of care.

Planning personalised care to ensure people have choice and control and to meet their needs and preferences

- People and relatives were incredibly complimentary about the individual care and support people received. One person told us, "[Staff] really get to know you as a person here. They are marvellous." Relatives told us, "[Staff] are excellent and I cannot fault them. They accept [Person] for who they are and treat them as an individual." and, "[Staff] think on their feet when they are looking after [Person] and respond to them depending on how they are feeling on that day."
- Staff were proactive at finding new ways to support people to continue to live the life they wanted despite changes in their needs. There were many examples including supporting people to continue to socialise when they could easily have withdrawn and become isolated. Changes had been made to access the garden so a person could continue to enjoy their hobby. This person explained, "I was getting tired going up and down the chair lift. Now I can just go in my wheelchair and use the ramp. I can go to the garden whenever I want which is really important to me. Just gives me that piece of mind and I am now much more comfortable. I was going to stay in my room but now I have the ramp I can go out whenever I want. It's fantastic." Another person had been supported to enjoy a prize they had one in a raffle. The staff team had been proactive at working out how they could organise this to limit the person's anxieties and ensure they enjoyed and benefited from it.
- Another person's needs had changed which meant that they were unable to mobilise and used different communication methods. Socialising at meal times was very important to this person. The provider had purchased specific equipment which enabled the person to still join their peers at meal times and for social occasions. This person was visibly delighted to still be able to spend time in communal areas of the service.
- A deputy manager explained to us that several people previously rode a bike and had a desire to do this again. The deputy manager and staff team had worked hard to fundraise for a specially adapted tandem bike. This allowed people with mobility issues to be supported by staff members to have the experience of riding a bike again. The deputy manager showed us evidence and explained the positive impact that this had on people living at the service.
- Care plans provided staff with detailed information about people's likes and dislikes as well as their life histories. The deputy manager explained that this information helped staff to start conversations with people and helped staff to build relationships. Care plans were also used as a way of celebrating people's achievements and these were clearly recorded. This helped to remind people and the staff team how well supported people were and the positive impact that this had on their lives.
- The management and staff team had a passion for providing person-centred care. One staff member said, "Being person-centred is what we are all about here. We work hard to give people a sense of identity and promote their individuality above anything else."

- Staff members were incredibly responsive to people's needs throughout the day. People were relaxed and happy in the presence of a staff team who consistently checked that people were happy or if there was anything else that people needed to enrich their day.

Supporting people to develop and maintain relationships to avoid social isolation; support to follow interests and to take part in activities that are socially and culturally relevant to them

- People and relatives told us about the large variety of activities on offer at the service. People told us, "We have a Christmas party coming up. We have a film night as well. We have such a choice - we do not just sit around and do nothing here." and, "There are exercise classes and hairdressers. Someone comes to play games with us and then there is a singer who comes and does karaoke with us. One day a boy came to play a violin for us which was lovely."
- Staff members were encouraged to understand the importance of engaging people in meaningful activities. People were constantly engaged in preferred activities which staff members knew they enjoyed throughout the day. This included choosing flavoured coffees, an exercise game using a balloon and nail painting. One relative told us, "All the staff engage with [Person] so well. They do things which make [Person] feel valued like painting their nails or having their hair done. [Staff] make every effort that they can."
- The wellness coordinator and management team made extra effort to record people's feedback about activities. It was lovely to see evidence that people had become more engaged in activities as staff members adapted their support methods based on what worked and did not work last time, and the positive impact this had for people. One professional said, "Social interaction and engagement was very hard for [Person]. Since living at Elcombe House, [Person] laughs a lot more. They are so much happier to socialise now, which is great for them."
- The wellness coordinator organised activities based on people's individual choices. This included poppy flower decorating and a mobile clothes shop visiting the service, so that people could have the experience of clothes shopping if they chose not to access the community. They had also turned a room at the service in to a 'cinema' for the afternoon and had produced cinema tickets. This gave people the feeling that they were going to the cinema. The wellness coordinator told us, "I think the most important thing to do is to connect with people and make things meaningful. I am a big fan of making sure that activities actually mean something to people."
- A wide variety of opportunities to explore hobbies and interests were available to people. People had enjoyed activities such as garden parties, barbecues, decorating the house and parties for various occasions. Outside entertainers including singers, music therapy and professional quiz masters visited the service regularly. The deputy manager showed us evidence that these activities were thoroughly enjoyed by all. Pictures of activities and community trips were placed in the foyer of the service and people were happy to speak and reminisce with us about the good times they had living at Elcombe House.
- The provider had ensured that people could maintain strong contacts with family and those important to them in their life, and visitors were welcome any time. One relative said, "We are always made to feel so welcome. There is a large room which is used for individual parties or just to spend some time with [family member]. We can stay all day if we want to."

Meeting people's communication needs

Since 2016 onwards all organisations that provide publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). The standard was introduced to make sure people are given information in a way they can understand. The standard applies to all people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss and in some circumstances to their carers.

- People's communication needs were assessed before they lived at the service. The management team put measures in place to support people who required more support in this area. Information was available to

people in a variety of formats depending on their communication needs.

- One person did not have English as their first language. The management team ensured that staff members knew how to communicate with them in their preferred language by producing a sheet and flash cards with common phrases on them. A relative explained, "[Person] does not really speak much and their sentences are quite short and repetitive. It was great that [staff] used the phrases that they were given and has helped [Person] settle at the service much more quickly."
- We saw staff communicating with a person who was unable to respond verbally, in a kind manner using short and simple sentences. This person clearly understood staff and appeared happy and relaxed. A professional told us, "[Person] is non-verbal and [staff] are so lovely and respectful to them. Just treating them like anyone else and you could see this really meant a lot to [Person]."

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- There was a complaints policy and procedure in place at the service. The service had received very few complaints, but those that had been received were dealt with promptly and to the complainant's satisfaction.
- People were supported to talk about any concerns that they may have in regular formal and informal meetings. One person said, "If there ever was a problem then I know it would be sorted out right away."

End of life care and support

- People had been supported to put plans in place for the end of their lives and their choices and wishes were clearly recorded in their care plans.
- Staff had training in end of life care and spoke to us with great understanding about how they would care for people with dignity and respect at this time. Compliment cards received from relatives of people who had passed away expressed how grateful they were for the staff team's support for their loved ones.
- The deputy manager explained that when a person had passed away electronic candles were turned on around the service. These candles were placed near a heartfelt poem which explained that a person had recently passed away. This was a kind and caring gesture which made visitors to the service aware of people who had passed away in the home and the impact that this may have on their loved ones.

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 the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has now improved to outstanding. This meant service leadership was exceptional and distinctive. Leaders and the service culture they created drove and improved high-quality, person-centred care.

Promoting a positive culture that is person-centred, open, inclusive and empowering, which achieves good outcomes for people; Managers and staff being clear about their roles, and understanding quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements

- The registered manager had a clear set of values that supported a positive culture at the service and these were shared and understood by the staff team. People were kept at the heart of the service and staff passionately provided them with the best support that they could to give them a good quality of life. Our findings during this inspection explained in other areas of this report demonstrate this.
- People were supported in a person-centred manner and the impact of innovations, activities and staff support on people's well-being was abundantly clear. People had been supported to regain lost skills, learn new ones or improve in their health and well-being because of support at the service. One professional said, "Elcombe House is such a great place. Just the feel of it and how the staff support people with a smile on their face. It is just perfect for people living there."
- People and their relatives were very complimentary about the management of the service. People told us, "[Management] work hard to keep this place on top form. I think this place is superb." and, "[Management] are wonderful. Simply wonderful. They always come and see me to make sure I am happy. Absolutely marvellous." Relatives said, "[Management and staff] are very passionate about working at Elcombe House. Everyone is happy to be working there and that means that people are happy living there." and, "[Managers] are excellent. They sort everything out that you want, and they even go out of their way to talk to you about how to help [Person] out in areas they are not completely involved in. Exemplary."
- The registered manager and deputy managers were working with an independent resilience, well-being and performance coach. This person's role was to support the management team to focus on staff's well-being. The staff team were supported to share the philosophy of 'always building on what is already working well' and 'making every day extraordinary.' Staff members told us that they felt incredibly valued at the service and that they ensured that they followed this mantra in their day to day work. Our observations of how happy staff were at work whilst supporting people showed the positive impact that this approach was having at the service.
- Staff members consistently told us how much they loved their job role and how they understood the importance of their roles on people's quality of life. Staff members told us, "It is the best place I have ever worked because people and their choices are put first." and, "Coming to work feels like working in people's home rather than a care home. People are just free to be themselves and do their own things." The way that staff members supported people in a calm manner with dignity and respect showed that the providers values had been fully embraced.
- The management team completed robust quality audits in all areas of service provision. They

management team were highly driven to identify any areas that may need improving and put actions in place to ensure that improvements were made. Managers also made sure that successes and things that people enjoyed were recorded and shared with the staff team. A deputy manager said, "We celebrate the small achievements here. It really helps keep the staff team motivated and reminds them of our values."

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; Continuous learning and improving care

- The registered manager met their regulatory requirements by notifying CQC of events which they are required to do so. There was an open and transparent culture at the service and if things went wrong people were informed and actions were taken to make things right. We saw evidence that learning happened from internal and external audits and improvements were put in place if this was necessary.
- The management team were dedicated to continuous learning and improvement. They spoke passionately about the various care forums and groups which they were a part of and how attending meetings with these groups helped inform best practice and drive improvements. Excellent outcomes were achieved for people and they, their relatives and professionals all found the service to be exceptionally caring, responsive, effective and well-led.
- The registered manager held 'good to outstanding' meetings with the management team to discuss improvements to the service and how best to have positive impacts for people. Ideas discussed in these meetings were promptly put in to place at the service.
- Feedback from professionals further showed how passionate the management team were to continually improve the service. Professionals told us, "[Management] are really open, honest and transparent. They are appreciative of any advice and are very open to learning." and, "No matter who I speak to they know exactly what is going on and do not hold anything back. They are very open and honest."

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

- People and relatives were regularly engaged at the service in formal and informal meetings. People were also able to chat to staff about anything throughout the day and staff were extremely attentive to people throughout the day. One person said, "I have never been disappointed at all. [Staff] are always asking if I am alright and if you have any problems you just tell them, and they sort it out for you." A relative told us, "[Staff] are brilliant. I feel like I can talk to any of them about anything."
- We saw one staff member kindly and patiently introducing a new member of staff to people. This helped involve people in the recruitment process for new staff without placing them in an 'interview' situation. We could see that people were delighted to meet the new staff and happy to tell them about themselves.
- Staff members felt very involved at the service and were supported to feedback about the service in regular meetings, supervisions and handover discussions. Minutes from these meetings were documented and ideas were trialled to see if they improved people's quality of life. The registered manager proudly spoke to us about how the values underpinning the service had been discussed and created by the staff members at the service rather than the management team.
- Regular surveys were sent to people, their relatives, staff and professionals. Feedback from these surveys was analysed and used to inform the service. The deputy manager explained that they adapted the laundry system based on people's feedback and that people had appreciated being listened to in this area.

Working in partnership with others

- The registered manager was heavily involved in a number of organisations which were nationally recognised for discussing and implementing best practice. The registered manager was eager to talk about their role setting up and working with the 'trusted assessor' programme at local hospitals. 'Trusted assessors' worked with services when people were admitted and discharged from hospitals to ensure the

sharing of information and good outcomes for people. The work the registered manager completed in this area did not just impact outcomes for people at Elcombe House, but also other services in the local area.

- There were links with local schools in the community. Children would come in and read or take part in activities with people using the service. One relative told us, "It's lovely to see [Person] interact with children. This is what I mean when I say that nothing is too hard for the staff team."
- The management and staff team worked well with health professionals to ensure and maintain good outcomes for people.