

Freedom Care and Support Limited

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Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Good 

Is the service safe?

Good 

Is the service effective?

Good 

Is the service caring?

Good 

Is the service responsive?

Outstanding 

Is the service well-led?

Good 

Overall summary

Freedom Care and Support develops and provides personalised care packages for people who have a disability and receive support in their own homes. Following assessment, care plans are developed in line with the individual needs and wishes of the person who uses the service. The care provided can range from a small package of just a few hours each week to personal care throughout the day and night. At the time of this inspection there were 14 people who used the service.

The last inspection of this service took place on 1st October 2013. During this inspection the service was judged to be meeting all the standards we assessed.

The inspection took place on 29th January 2015 and was carried out by a lead Adult Social Care inspector. The

Summary of findings

registered manager was given 48 hours notice of our intention to visit the service. This was to ensure there would be someone available to provide us with the information we required, when we arrived.

Through the inspection we were assisted by the registered manager who was also the provider of the service. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they are 'registered persons'. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run.

Throughout this inspection we received extremely positive feedback about the service provided by Freedom Care and Support from people who used the service, their relatives or main carers and external professionals. Everyone we spoke with was highly complimentary about the service provided and spoke highly of the registered manager and staff team.

People's comments included, "We were very unhappy with our last service, but the service with Freedom is excellent. We are very, very happy with the service we get." "They made a lot of promises at the start and I have to say they have kept them all and delivered more besides." "We are very pleased. We cannot thank them enough. I didn't know there were services like this out

there. I hope you help other people get to know about them." "I could not wish for it to be any better." "Wonderful! I couldn't ask for more." "When I first got this service I thought, 'This is brilliant'. And it's still brilliant now!"

We found that people who used this service received highly personalised care based on their individual needs, wishes and goals. People were fully involved in the development of their care plans throughout the whole process.

People received their support from staff they had personally chosen and who were well trained and supported by the registered manager.

People were provided with safe, effective care. Any risks to their safety or wellbeing were carefully assessed and staff had a good understanding of action required to keep people safe.

People felt their support staff were kind, caring and respectful. People were provided with support in a way that promoted their independence and enhanced their opportunities to make daily choices and decisions.

The registered manager maintained supportive relationships with people who used the service and their families. People felt able to express their views, raise concerns and were extremely confident in the registered manager to respond appropriately.

Summary of findings

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. Staff were aware of risks to the safety and wellbeing of people they supported and had clear guidance in place on how to promote people's safety.

Staff knew how to identify any signs that a person who used the service had suffered abuse and knew how to respond.

Recruitment practices carried out at the service helped to protect people against the risks of receiving their support from people of unsuitable character.

Good



Is the service effective?

The service was effective. People who used the service felt they received safe, effective care and that their health care needs were met.

Staff received a good level of induction, training and ongoing support to help them carry out their roles effectively.

The rights of people who were unable to consent to any aspect of their care were promoted to ensure any support they did receive was in their best interests.

Good



Is the service caring?

The service was caring. People who used the service felt they were treated with kindness and respect by their support staff.

People were empowered to have control of their care plans and the support they received.

Good



Is the service responsive?

The service was outstanding. People's care and support was proactively planned with their involvement. Their care plans were based entirely on their individual needs and wishes.

The service was responsive and flexible to people's needs.

People received an excellent level of support to engage in meaningful, fulfilling activities.

Outstanding



Is the service well-led?

People reported an open culture within which they felt able to raise concerns.

There were effective systems in place to monitor quality and safety across the service, which included the views of people who used the service and their supporters.

Good



Freedom Care and Support Limited

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection was planned to check whether the provider is meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008, to look at the overall quality of the service, and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014.

The inspection took place on 29th January 2015. The provider was given 48 hours' notice to ensure there would be someone available at the office to provide us with the information we required during the inspection.

The inspection was carried out by a lead Adult Social Care Inspector.

Prior to our visit, we reviewed all the information we held about the service. The provider sent us a provider information return (PIR). This is a form that asks the provider to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make.

During the inspection we spoke with seven people who used the service or their main carers. We spoke with seven staff members, including the registered manager, two team leaders, three support workers and a member of the administration team. We consulted three community professionals who supported people who used the service who all responded.

We closely examined the care records of three people who used the service. This process is called pathway tracking and enables us to judge how well the service understands and plans to meet people's care needs and manage any risks to people's health and wellbeing.

We viewed a selection of records including some policies and procedures, safety and quality audits, four staff personnel and training files, records of accidents, complaints records and minutes of staff and management meetings.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

People we spoke with expressed confidence in the staff team and said they felt safe when receiving support. Their comments included, “I have no worries at all about (name removed)’s safety.” And, “I feel very safe with them, I don’t have any worries.”

Each person’s care plan we viewed contained a section called, ‘The support I need to help me stay safe.’ Within this, any risks to a person’s safety were fully assessed and where risk was identified, a care plan was in place to help staff support people in a safe manner.

Risks assessments were conducted as part of the care planning process and included a number of areas such as accessing the community or using public transport. We saw that staff at the service were not risk averse and had an understanding of the importance of balancing risk and promoting people’s independence.

Training in safeguarding was included in the induction programme for new staff joining the service. Records showed that in addition to this initial training, all staff were provided with regular updates to help ensure they maintained and developed their knowledge of the area.

Staff we spoke with demonstrated a clear understanding of safeguarding and were able to confidently describe the action they would take, if they identified any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a person who used the service.

Staff were also fully aware of the service’s whistleblowing policy which provided support and guidance for staff in the event they needed to raise a safeguarding concern. Staff told us they were very confident in the registered manager to support them in such an event and to deal with any concerns in a robust and effective manner. One care worker, when asked if she felt she would be supported by the registered manager if she raised concerns said, “I am absolutely certain I would be. You wouldn’t just be supported if you raised concerns you would be thanked for bringing them to his attention.”

During the inspection we viewed a number of staff personnel files. These records demonstrated that robust and thorough recruitment procedures were carried out, which helped protect the safety and wellbeing of people who used the service.

All applicants were required to undergo a formal recruitment process, which included formal interviews and a number of background checks. Records of background checks, such as full employment history, previous employment references and criminal record checks were present in all the files we viewed. Carrying out thorough checks such as these, helped to protect people from the risk of receiving their support from staff of unsuitable character.

The individual care package for each person who used the service had been carefully assessed, including the number of hours of support they required each week. Staff were recruited to support specific people’s care packages. This not only helped to ensure consistency, but also meant that staffing levels across the service were assessed in line with people’s needs.

The registered manager had a bank of staff available to cover for any short notice leave such as unplanned sick leave, so that people’s agreed support packages would not be compromised in such an event.

There were specific medication care plans in place for every person who used the service and required support to take their medicines safely. The care plans included clear information about the levels of support the person required and any specific instructions in relation to that support. For example, where within the person’s home their medication was stored and the details of the supplying pharmacist.

Any medicines requiring further information such as those administered by specialist technique or those prescribed on a ‘when required’ basis were clearly addressed and information to help ensure staff managed people’s medicines in a safe, effective way was included.

All care workers employed at the service were provided with training in the safe management of medicines as part of their induction. This training was updated periodically. For those staff supporting a person who required their medicines to be administered by specialist technique, clear records were in place to demonstrate they had been appropriately trained and assessed as competent.

There were systems in place to audit medicines and medicines records across the service. Records showed this was done on a regular basis and carried out effectively. We saw that through audit processes, the management team had identified an error that had occurred. We were able to

Is the service safe?

confirm that effective action had been taken in response to this, which included further training and support for the staff member concerned. This demonstrated that audit systems were effective and that issues were identified and promptly addressed.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

People we spoke with expressed satisfaction with their or their loved one's support. One person described their experience when their family member had started to use the service. They said, "There has been a very joined up approach. They have done a lot of work with other professionals who support (name removed) to obtain a really detailed picture of her needs."

People's care plans provided a good level of information about their health needs and any support they required in this area. We saw some excellent examples of joint working with community health care professionals to enhance the support provided to people.

All the community professionals we spoke with were highly complimentary about the service and the way in which staff worked closely with them to ensure people received safe and effective support. One person commented, "I find the level of professionalism excellent. The staff I have come into contact with have always set a very good example for the service."

People who used the service or their relatives, expressed confidence in the service to ensure their health care needs were met. One relative we spoke with described how staff had worked closely with specialist health care workers to understand their relative's complex health needs. They said, "I feel very reassured that they understand how to care for (name removed)."

As part of their health care plan, people's nutritional needs were assessed. Any risks they faced in this area were assessed and there were clear management plans in place to provide staff with guidance in how to support them safely. We viewed the care plan of one person who had some swallowing difficulties. There was clear information about this in their care plan and the staff team supporting the person had all received training to help ensure they could support the person safely.

Within people's care plans we saw evidence that they had been asked to give their consent for the care and support they received. The service had a policy and procedures in place in relation to the support of people who may not have capacity to give consent to any aspect of their care. In addition, all staff received training in the Mental Capacity

Act 2005, which sets out the legal rights of people who are unable to consent. This helped ensure people's legal rights were protected and that any care or support people received, was in their best interests.

People we spoke with expressed confidence in the staff team to provide safe and effective support. People felt their support workers had a good level of skills and knowledge to carry out their roles. One person commented, "They are all very professional. I think training standards must be very high."

Records demonstrated that all new staff members joining the service were provided with a thorough induction to ensure they received a good level of support and guidance and to equip them with the skills to carry out their roles. There was a programme of training defined by the provider as mandatory which all new staff were required to complete prior to working in the community.

The induction programme, which had been developed in line with common induction standards, included important health and safety areas such as moving and handling and infection control. Further courses, designed to enhance people's skills as carers, medicines management and safeguarding, were also included.

Following the completion of the mandatory training programme, new staff members were then provided with shadowing opportunities during which they would work alongside more experienced staff, whilst getting to know the people they would be supporting. Inductees also benefited from weekly meetings with a senior staff member to ensure they received ongoing support and guidance and had the opportunity to discuss their progress.

Ongoing training for staff included updates and refresher training in all the mandatory areas, as well as training in areas identified in line with the needs of people who used the service. We saw the registered manager had developed individual training plans with each staff member, which were tailored to the needs of people they supported. For example, one person who used the service had some specific health care needs and records showed that all staff had received training in supporting people with this condition.

A further aspect of the person centred training programme was that of the bespoke training packages provided to staff supporting people with complex behavioural needs. An external specialist was employed by the service to carry out

Is the service effective?

individual assessments for people with complex behavioural needs. Following this assessment a training package specifically designed around the person's individual needs and behaviours was developed and delivered to the staff team by the specialist.

One relative of a person who used the service told us their family member's staff team had all been provided with training to assist them in meeting her specific needs. This person was extremely impressed at how the training had been tailored so well and in line with her loved one's needs.

Staff we spoke with were very complimentary about the training they received at Freedom Care and Support. One care worker commented, "I feel as though we are treated like professionals. Our training is seen as important. It's not just about ticking boxes."

Staff also felt well supported and all those we spoke with confirmed they had access to regular supervision meetings with their line manager. People described the management team as approachable and supportive and felt they could contact them at any time they needed. Several staff members commented on the regular presence of the registered manager who often visited the people they were supporting.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

The feedback we received from people who used the service was without exception, extremely positive. People spoke highly about the approach of their carers and described them in ways such as, 'caring,' and 'thoughtful,' 'outstanding' and 'brilliant.'

People's comments included, "All the care staff are friendly and caring towards (name removed)." "We have our own support staff. It is good to have the same faces. They are all very good and very respectful." "I like it here, it is brilliant. I decorated my house. I picked blue." "I like the staff they are always nice. I like all the staff." "The staff are wonderful. So thoughtful and caring." "Their approach is outstanding. I cannot fault them in any way."

A community professional we consulted commented on the approach of the registered manager and his success in developing positive relationships with people who had not engaged with services in the past. They told us the registered manager had, whilst maintaining professional standards, successfully gained the trust and respect of people who used the service and their families, which had resulted in significantly increased opportunities for them.

The registered manager told us that the service was based on a strong ethos and values such as respect, promoting independence, privacy and dignity. This information was

supported by our observations, the feedback we received from people who used the service and the discussions we had with staff. Staff spoke respectfully about the people they supported and passionately about their roles.

There was a strong emphasis within the service on ensuring people had complete control over their care plans and the service they received. Each person who used the service had a bespoke care plan, which was based entirely on their individual needs and wishes. In viewing people's care plans we could see that their own views and opinions formed the entire basis of the plan and the ongoing support they received.

The empowerment of people who used the service was a strong part of the ethos of Freedom Care and Support and as such, there was a strong emphasis on people's individual communication needs, within their care plans. Individual methods of communication for people who were not able to express their views verbally, were well detailed. This enabled staff to support people in a way that promoted their independence and opportunities to make and express choices in their daily lives.

The involvement of advocates was promoted throughout the service. The relatives and main carers of people who used the service were actively encouraged to be involved in their care planning and review. In addition, people were encouraged and supported to access the services of external formal advocates to assist them in expressing their views.



Is the service responsive?

Our findings

The feedback we received from people who used the service and their relatives, about the responsiveness of the service, was outstanding. People described a service, which had been specifically tailored to their or their loved one's needs and based entirely on how they wanted their support to be provided.

One person told us, "(name removed) had a few ideas of the kind of support he wanted and to be honest it was as if his wish list had been ticked." Another said, "If I am honest, I thought we were being a bit unrealistic with our expectations, but we were told to say what we thought the perfect service would be, so we did. And that is what we have ended up with."

Other comments we received from people who used the service or their relatives included, "We are absolutely delighted with the level of involvement we have been able to have in setting the service up. We have been involved in every aspect right from the initial stages of the planning." "We have complete control." "They do want I want." "They have helped me with everything. Even to find a brilliant flat."

The registered manager told us the aim of Freedom Care and Support was to provide bespoke care packages that were developed in a meaningful way with the person using the service. We saw that at the first point of contact, people thinking about starting to use the service met with the registered manager to discuss their requirements. This could range from a few hours support each week to enjoy social activities, to 24 hour support for all aspects of personal care needs.

Following the initial discussions around a person's requirements, the registered manager took direct responsibility for creating a highly personalised care package that met the individual's needs, goals and aspirations. Care plans were described as bespoke in that they were designed to ensure the person using the service had their support delivered in the way they wanted.

The flexible and responsive approach of Freedom Care and Support was commented upon by a number of community professionals we spoke with. Their comments included, "I have used Freedom Care and Support with a number of people who I had been struggling to find an appropriate service for, due to their specific needs and complex issues

surrounding those needs. They have succeeded where other providers have failed to achieve even basic support." "This agency are a breath of fresh air, all the plans in place are fully person centred. They are easy to discuss requirements with and are open to providing a flexible service." "The manager and staff are always ready to visit any new people and deal with any queries often at very short notice. The Support Plans they complete are informative and really concise. The outcomes have been focused firmly on the service user and their family's needs."

We viewed a selection of care plans and found they were highly personalised, comprehensive documents, which gave a complete picture of the person's needs and the support they required.

We saw evidence and heard descriptions from people who used the service of assessment processes lasting for many months. One relative told us, "It's been a very long process, which has been extremely positive. It needed to take that long because of (name removed)'s complex needs. The attention to detail has been exceptional and it's very reassuring."

As well as attention to any risks to a person's wellbeing and health care needs, people's care plans included an extremely good level of information about their social needs, such as hobbies, education, relationships and their goals and aspirations.

People we spoke with expressed extreme satisfaction with the support they received to engage in meaningful and enjoyable activities and described very active and fulfilling lifestyles. Their comments included, "I've been to college today and tomorrow I'm going horse riding." "I am going on holiday to Blackpool. I went to York and did some nice things." "I go swimming, I do 20 lengths and then I have a lovely hot chocolate with cream on." "I see Mum and Dad at the weekend and I go to my Sister's too." "I do housework and all my own shopping with (name of support worker). I pick my own things. I always pick chicken because I like it the best."

A relative described how the life of her loved one had been enhanced through the service provided by Freedom Care and Support. "He now has a much better quality of life. He is spending his days with other young people having fun and accessing the community safely."



Is the service responsive?

Every aspect of what mattered to people about how their support was provided was discussed as part of the development of their bespoke care plan. This included what personal qualities and attributes they wished their support staff to have.

Every person who used the service and where appropriate their relatives, had full involvement in the selection and recruitment of their support staff, unless they expressly wished not to do so. This included the design of adverts for staff and the full interview and selection process. Once staff were selected, the registered manager supported the process by making arrangements for their employment, induction, ongoing training and support.

Many people we spoke with commented on how much they had appreciated being able to select their own staff. One person said, “We were involved in the recruitment from start to finish.” “Being able to have the final say in the staff we have has meant a great deal. It’s given us that feeling of control that you lose sometimes when you need care.” “I love going to the gym, I’ve picked workers that do as well. My support workers are sporty like me.” “(The registered manager) helps me find the right staff.”

We found that people who used the service were encouraged to express their views about the service in general and their own personal experience of the support they received. We saw there was an effective review process in place which enabled people to say what they felt worked well and what didn’t work as well for them. Changes were instantly made to people’s plans if needed. One person told us, “All you have to do is ask and is sorted out immediately.”

In information provided prior to the inspection, the registered manager wrote of the importance of being personally accessible and having a personal relationship

with every person using the service and their families. This was supported by people we spoke with during the inspection who were all very happy with the approachability of the registered manager. People’s comments included, “Communication is excellent.” “(Registered manager) comes to see me and I go into the office.” “(Registered manager) is a listener. I feel very comfortable speaking to him.”

This demonstrated that people were encouraged to express their views about the service as a whole and their own care packages. People we spoke with were also very confident that any concerns raised would be acted upon quickly and effectively. One person said, “I am sure if you had a concern you would only have to mention it once and it would be sorted.” Another commented, “I am 100 per cent confident any issues would be resolved.”

There was a standard complaints procedure in place at the service. In addition to this, a bespoke complains procedure was provided to each person who used the service, which was developed in line with their personal needs. For example, published in a large print or audio format. This demonstrated the needs of people who used the service were taken into account when developing and providing information.

In discussion, the registered manager demonstrated a positive view of complaints and the opportunity they brought for improvement. We saw there was a process for recording any complaints received as well as information regarding their outcome and any learning identified.

Records showed that there had been one complaint received at the service in the last twelve months. We were able to confirm this issue had been dealt with quickly and effectively and in a positive manner.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

The provider of this service was also the registered manager and as such, responsible for its day-to-day running. In discussion the registered manager spoke of the importance of his role in terms of his direct involvement with the service provided and people who used it.

The registered manager was personally involved in the development and review of every person's care package, which enabled him to constantly monitor standards. In information provided prior to the inspection he stated, 'Our vision is to see the people we support happy and fulfilled. We achieve this vision in a number of ways. These are staying small, knowing all the people we support, their families and the staff personally and by being accessible.'

People we spoke with were highly complimentary about the management of the service. People's comments included, "This service is very well led. The manager is very efficient, friendly and approachable." "I have worked with Freedom Care and Support on many occasions and have always found their service excellent." "I have absolute confidence in them. It is an extremely well managed service." "They are reliable and dependable and in my view always will be with (registered manager) in charge."

The service was built on values such as promoting independence and autonomy for people who used the service. All staff were introduced to these values during their induction and through ongoing training and support. Staff we spoke with were clearly aware of the values of the service and spoke in a manner that supported them.

People who used the service, external professionals and staff reported an open culture within which they could

comfortably raise concerns. We also noted the registered manager had arranged an external review of the service by an external expert, which further demonstrated the open culture.

There was a well-established management structure with clear lines of accountability. People we spoke with were aware of the structure and who to contact should they require advice or guidance. We saw that the registered manager had arranged additional training for staff carrying out senior roles to assist them in enhancing their leadership skills.

Regular management meetings took place during which ideas for future developments and any issues of concern were discussed. During the management meetings analysis was carried out of any adverse incidents such as accidents or safeguarding concerns, to ensure any learning from the incidents was identified and put into practice.

There were processes in place which enabled the registered manager to assess quality across the service. An audit schedule was in place, which incorporated the regular checks of all aspects of service provision such as care planning and medicines management.

A more wide ranging quality review was carried out on an annual basis. The main focus of this quality review was that of the views of people who used the service. Individual meetings were conducted with every person during which they were invited to express their views and any ideas or suggestions they had for future developments of the service.

From the findings of the audits and the annual quality reviews, the registered manager developed quality action plans which were reviewed on a monthly basis. We saw a number of actions that had been taken to improve quality, including the improved monitoring of medicines, fire and property safety.