

Springhill Care Group Limited

Birch Green Care Home

Inspection report

Ivydale
Birch Green
Skelmersdale
Lancashire
WN8 6RS

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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

Birch Green Care Home (Birch Green) is a residential care home providing personal and nursing care for up to 74 adults. At the time of our site visit there were 73 people living at the home.

The care home accommodates people over two floors, each of which has separate adapted facilities. The upper floor is served by a passenger lift and specialises in providing care and support for those living with dementia.

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

We assessed medicine practices within the home and found in general medicines were handled safely. However, some improvements were needed to ensure protocols for when required medicines included relevant information for the staff team. Medicine policies should also be specific to Birch Green and should cover the management of electronic records. We made a recommendation about this.

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.

Safeguarding protocols were being followed and risks to peoples' health and safety were being managed appropriately. This helped to protect people from harm. The environment was safe and well maintained and good infection control practices were being followed. One relative told us, "They [staff] bent over backwards to keep contact going [during lockdown]. They've done really well to protect staff and residents." Another commented, "I know (relative) is safe. I can sleep at night."

The provider had implemented robust recruitment practices and new staff had received a good induction period. The staff team were supervised, and a range of mandatory training modules were provided. One staff member told us, "We have a training officer on site. Staff are fully supported and trained to a high level. Carers are encouraged to further their careers with opportunities to become team leaders and assistant practitioners."

Those who lived at the home and their relatives spoke highly of the managers and the caring attitude of the staff team. Staff we spoke with felt well supported by the managers of Birch Green. The management team was co-operative during the inspection process, providing information requested in an open and transparent way. The provider had implemented systems which helped to ensure the quality of service provided was assessed and monitored regularly and those with an interest in the service were supported to provide feedback so that improvements could be made as suggested. The registered manager was described as being 'lovely', 'approachable' and 'fantastic- going above and beyond.'

Rating at last inspection

The last rating for this service was good (published 25 May 2018).

Why we inspected

We received a range of concerns about the management of the home, infection control practices, staffing levels and people's care, support and safety. As a result, we undertook a focused inspection to review the key questions of safe and well-led only.

We reviewed the information we held about the service. No areas of concern were identified in the other key questions. We therefore did not inspect them. Ratings from previous comprehensive inspections for those key questions were used in calculating the overall rating at this inspection.

We looked at infection prevention and control measures under the Safe key question. We look at this in all care home inspections even if no concerns or risks have been identified. This is to provide assurance that the service can respond to COVID-19 and other infection outbreaks effectively.

We found no evidence during this inspection that people were at risk of harm from the concerns raised. Please see the safe and well-led sections of this full report.

The overall rating for the service has not changed and remains Good. This is based on the findings at this inspection.

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

You can read the report from our last comprehensive inspection, by selecting the 'all reports' link for Birch Green Care Home on our website at www.cqc.org.uk.

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 well-led?

The service was well-led.

Details are in our well-Led findings below.

Good ●

Birch Green Care Home

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.

As part of this inspection we looked at the infection control and prevention measures in place. This was conducted so we can understand the preparedness of the service in preventing or managing an infection outbreak, and to identify good practice we can share with other services.

Inspection team

Two inspectors and a medicines inspector conducted the site visit to this service. Two Experts by Experience spoke with some relatives of those who lived at the home by telephone. An Expert by Experience is a person who has personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses this type of care service.

Service and service type

Birch Green is a 'care home'. People in care homes receive accommodation and nursing or personal care as a 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 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 sought feedback from the local authority and professionals who work with the service. We also obtained feedback from Healthwatch, who had visited the service since our last inspection. Healthwatch is an independent

consumer champion that gathers and represents the views of the public about health and social care services in England. 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. This information helps support our inspections. We used all of this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

We spoke with two people who used the service and 17 relatives about their experience of the care provided. We spoke with 10 members of staff, including the registered manager, registered nurses, a team leader and health care assistants. We reviewed a range of records. This included the care records of six people who lived at the home and multiple medication administration records. We looked at three staff personnel files in relation to recruitment, supervision and discipline, as well as a variety of records relating to the management of the service, including policies and procedures.

After the inspection

We continued to seek clarification from the registered manager to validate evidence found. We looked at training data and quality assurance records. We obtained feedback from four health and social care community professionals.

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.

Using medicines safely

- Medicines were stored securely and at the right temperature.
- Records showed that people's regular medicines were given at the right times and controlled drugs were used safely.
- The registered manager had not always introduced protocols for the use of when required medicines. Examples of 'when required' protocols shared with us after the site visit did not contain the right information.
- The medicine policy contained guidelines for safe medicines management but did not include information for staff about current practices in the home, for example the use of electronic records.
- A significant number of medicines were overstocked. The registered manager had recently introduced a new process for requesting repeat prescriptions from the GP practice which should address this issue.

We recommend the provider reviews and updates protocols for all when required medicines to ensure they provide staff with more detailed guidance about why and when these medicines should be administered. Also, the medicines policy should be reviewed and updated to include more specific guidance about current practices within Birch Green, for example the use of electronic records.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management; Learning lessons when things go wrong

- The registered manager ensured risks to people's health and safety were being managed appropriately whilst promoting independence.
- The registered manager had implemented systems to mitigate identified risk and to protect people from harm. This included risks associated with mental health, falls, malnutrition, skin integrity and moving and handling procedures.
- The provider ensured the premises was safely maintained and plans were in place for the management of environmental emergencies. We discussed our observations with the registered manager in relation to easy access of two items within the home. One was addressed immediately, and we were assured alternative systems would be introduced without delay to mitigate any potential risks. There was a pleasant outside space for service users, with level garden areas, which could be easily accessed.
- The provider had implemented fire risk assessments and had ensured regular checks had been conducted on systems and equipment to ensure they were safe for use. Personal evacuation plans detailed the support people would need in the event of necessary evacuation.
- The provider had ensured systems were in place for the reporting and recording of accidents and incidents and evidence was available to show actions were taken to mitigate any future risk. A summary of lessons learned following each incident was evident.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- The provider had systems in place which helped to protect people from the risk of abuse.
- People told us they felt safe living in the home. Relatives we contacted had no concerns about the safety of their family members. We observed staff interacting nicely with service users.
- Systems were in place to record, report and investigate any safeguarding concerns.
- The provider had introduced clear safeguarding and whistle-blowing policies, and staff had received training in safeguarding vulnerable adults. Those spoken with were aware of reporting procedures.
- The registered manager provided evidence to show disciplinary procedures were followed in response to staff misconduct.

Staffing and recruitment

- The provider had adopted robust recruitment practices, which helped to ensure new staff were fit to work with this vulnerable client group.
- One reference had not been dated by the referee. Therefore, the inspector could not be sure this was received prior to employment. However, all other references had been appropriately dated. We discussed this with the registered manager, who confirmed she would date references on receipt, should a referee fail to add the date of completion.
- People received effective and timely care and support. At the time of our site visit we observed staff to be readily available to assist people as was needed. No concerns were raised by those we spoke with about the staffing levels within the home. Duty rotas showed a good number of skilled and experienced staff members were employed.
- People were cared for by staff who were familiar to them. The service had several staff members who had worked at the home for many years. One relative told us, "The staff are brilliant" And another commented, "They [staff] will do anything for our relative and us as a family."

Preventing and controlling infection

- We were assured that the provider was preventing visitors from catching and spreading infections.
- We were assured that the provider was meeting shielding and social distancing rules.
- We were assured that the provider was admitting people safely to the service.
- We were assured that the provider was using PPE effectively and safely. Staff had access to sufficient supplies of PPE.
- We were assured that the provider was accessing testing for people using the service and staff.
- We were assured that the provider was promoting safety through the layout and hygiene practices of the premises. Domestic staff had a good understanding of the need to regularly clean high touch areas such as light switches and door handles.
- We were assured that the provider was making sure infection outbreaks can be effectively prevented or managed.
- We were assured that the provider's infection prevention and control policy was up to date.
- We were assured the provider was facilitating visits for people living in the home in accordance with the current guidance.

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 remained the same. 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

- The registered manager had implemented processes to ensure people's care was regularly reviewed, and any changes or improvements needed were acted upon in a timely manner.
- Good outcomes were achieved for people. There was a positive atmosphere within the home, which was friendly and relaxed. People who lived at Birch Green clearly had a good relationship with the staff team and staff knew people well.
- People, relatives and staff spoke positively about how the home was managed. We received many lovely comments about the current management structure and the effectiveness of the staff team.
- During our site visit we observed people being able to access the different areas of the units on which they lived without restrictions.

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

- The provider had ensured good managerial oversight of the service. Visions and values of the service were clearly displayed within the home. Senior staff had the skills, experience and ability to manage the service on a day to day basis.
- The leadership of the home provided a robust overarching structure to ensure the quality of service was thoroughly assessed and monitored. A wide range of audits had been regularly conducted, which were supported by action plans and reviews.
- The registered manager had ensured risk assessments and care plans were detailed and had been kept up to date.

Engaging and involving people using the service, the public and staff, fully considering their equality characteristics; 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 registered manager had ensured systems were in place which supported those living at the home, relatives and staff to be involved in the operation of the service and to participate in open and honest discussions.
- Minutes of meetings for service users were evident. This provided those involved with the opportunity to raise any concerns, make suggestions and discuss positive experiences within an open forum.
- Feedback was sought from a wide range of interested parties in the form of surveys, so that any suggested improvements could be implemented. This encouraged people to be involved with the service and to

engage in any relevant matters.

- The registered manager ensured effective communication systems were in place to keep staff updated and informed of any changes in the service or to disseminate any relevant information. The registered manager organised meetings for staff to give them an opportunity to discuss working practices and raise any suggestions for improving the service.
- Statutory notifications had been submitted as required. A notification is information about an event which the service is required to submit to CQC. The provider had displayed their last CQC inspection rating at the service and on their website.

Continuous learning and improving care

- Staff spoken with were happy working at Birch Green and were complimentary about the management support and training they received.
- Records showed a wide range of mandatory training was provided for the staff team and additional modules were available specific to the needs of those who lived at Birch Green.
- New staff received a thorough induction programme and continuous learning was supported by supervised practice. This helped staff members to focus on any additional learning they required to increase their knowledge and skills.
- The current registered manager had been in post for three months and she was clearly committed to continually improving care for those who lived at the home.

Working in partnership with others

- We received positive comments from health and social care professionals about the management of Birch Green and how good relationships have been developed with community professionals. We were told the staff team are caring and have the residents' best interests at heart. We were also told the home is managed effectively by the new manager who is very organised and engages well to addresses any concerns immediately.
- We received positive comments from staff members we spoke with about the management of the home. One staff member commented, "I find the management team are easy to work with, and lead with integrity and honesty. They help staff to reach their goals and are open minded to suggestions. Both the general manager and deputy manager make themselves visible around the home and both are very approachable" and another told us, "Staff morale is really good. I love my job."
- Relatives we spoke with provided us with positive feedback about how the home keeps in touch with them. They are kept up to date with any changes in current guidance in relation to the pandemic or changes in their loved one's circumstances.