

Mears Care Limited

Mears Care - Richmond

Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Good ●

Is the service safe?

Good ●

Is the service caring?

Good ●

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

Summary of findings

Overall summary

The inspection took place because the Home Office Immigration Enforcement Department had found that some of the staff employed at the location were working illegally in the UK. This had resulted in a number of staff leaving the employment of the agency without any notice impacting on the service being provided. We wanted to make sure people's needs were being met and the agency had plans in place to recover from this.

The last inspection of the service was on 12 May 2015 when we found no breaches of Regulation.

Mears Care – Richmond is a domiciliary care agency providing personal care and support to people living in their own homes within the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. The majority of people had their care funded and organised by the local authority. Mears Care Limited is a national organisation and has branches in different counties and London boroughs. The Richmond branch was located in an office with four other branches. There was a manager in post who had worked at the branch since May 2015. He had applied to be registered with the Care Quality Commission. 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 and associated Regulations about how the service is run

The agency had experienced a sudden loss of staff and this had impacted on the care provided meaning some people had received visits later than planned. However, most people felt safe with the agency. The agency had employed additional resources from other branches of Mears Care Limited and had recently recruited new staff to make sure care was delivered to everyone as planned.

People told us their care workers were kind, caring and considerate.

The provider had followed their contingency plans to manage the changes in staffing level and make sure people's needs were met. They had contacted people using the service, staff and other stakeholders to make sure they were involved in planning how care would be provided and to inform them about how the agency was recovering from the situation.

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

Good ●

The service was safe.

The agency had experienced a sudden loss of staff and this had impacted on the care provided meaning some people had visits later than planned. However, most people felt safe with the agency. The agency had employed additional resources from other branches of Mears Care limited and had recently recruited new staff to make sure care was delivered to everyone as planned.

Is the service caring?

Good ●

The service was caring.

People told us their care workers were kind, caring and considerate.

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service was well-led

The provider had followed their contingency plans to manage the changes in staffing level and make sure people's needs were met. They had contacted people using the service, staff and other stakeholders to make sure they were involved in planning how care would be provided and to inform them about how the agency was recovering from the situation.

Mears Care - Richmond

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 checked 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.

This inspection took place on 17 November 2015 and was announced. The provider was given 48 hours' notice because the location provides a domiciliary care service and we wanted to make sure someone was available.

The inspection visit was conducted by one inspector. A second inspector and an expert-by-experience supported the inspection by making telephone calls to people who used the service to find out about their experiences. An expert-by-experience is a person who has personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses this type of care service. The expert-by-experience on this inspection had personal and professional experience of using care services.

Before the inspection visit we spoke with 40 people who used the service and 13 relatives of other people using the service. We also spoke with the senior contracts manager at the London Borough of Richmond who monitored the care they had purchased from the agency.

During the inspection we met with the manager and regional manager. We looked at the provider's records for monitoring the service.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

People who used the service told us they felt safe with the agency. Most people said that care workers usually arrived on time, stayed the agreed length of time and were suitably qualified and experienced. However, some people said they had not always been told when new or replacement care workers were due to work with them and this made them feel unsafe and unsure of who would be caring for them. People told us that this had been a particular problem in the few months before our inspection. Some people knew there had been staff changes and shortages at the agency and this had led to their normal care workers not being available. Some people were also concerned that care workers turned up late and they did not always know when or if they were coming. People said this was a particular problem at weekends. Some people thought this was due to traffic but others said they felt some of the care workers did not seem to think it was important to turn up at the right time and this upset them.

People felt their care workers were trustworthy. Some people needed help with their shopping. They told us they trusted the care workers with their money and they always obtained receipts for their purchases. People were satisfied with the support they received to take their medicines.

In September 2015 the Home Office Immigration Enforcement Department found that some staff employed by the agency were working in the United Kingdom illegally. They undertook checks of Mears Care Limited's recruitment procedures and were satisfied that they were undertaking appropriate checks on the suitability of staff. However these checks had not been able to identify falsified documents and therefore the staff had been employed without the provider knowing they did not have permission to work in the United Kingdom. These staff were removed from Mears Care Limited.

The provider undertook recruitment checks on staff suitability to work with vulnerable people, such as references from previous employers, a criminal record check and a formal interview. Since September 2015 the Home Office Immigration Enforcement Department had provided additional checks on documentation for all newly recruited staff at the agency. They were also providing training for Mears Care Limited staff who were responsible for the recruitment and selection of new staff.

When the Home Office Immigration Enforcement Department first removed staff from the agency it had an impact on the care provided. Initially some people did not receive a visit as planned and this put them at risk. The manager told us that in the weeks following the removal of staff, people received visits later than planned and there were changes to the regular care workers for many of the people. Mears Care Limited had a contingency plan which they followed. The agency had employed temporary staff from other branches and other providers to help cover the staff absences. The manager told us they had started to recruit new staff and this had helped enable care to be delivered as planned again.

The manager showed us evidence that they had assessed the risk for all the people who used the service and ensured that those with the highest needs and the most vulnerable had received the care they needed. The manager told us there had been an impact for the less vulnerable people with care workers visiting

them later than planned. He said this had been communicated to them and their representatives. The manager or senior staff at the branch had contacted everyone who used the service about the problems with staffing and we saw evidence of this.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

People told us their regular care workers were kind and considerate. They were happy with them. Some people felt that unfamiliar care workers or those that had replaced their regular care worker were not as kind. Some people said they felt rushed and some gave us examples of staff who were rude to them. In particular they were not happy when the care workers arrived early or late meaning their care was not given when they wanted. For example, one person told us their evening meal had been given at 3pm on some days because the care worker had arrived then instead of at the planned time. Another person said that their care worker had arrived at 7pm to assist them to bed and this was too early for them. They told us that the care workers had not responded kindly when they had said they were unhappy. Others said that some care workers spoke in a different language or did not speak with them at all.

However the majority of people felt care workers were kind. Some of the things they said were, "(the care workers) are caring, compassionate and provide a good standard of care", "I am very happy with the person who comes to my wife. She is reliable, punctual and treats my wife very kindly. She is very good", "my regular carer is wonderful, he's very helpful. He chats to me, and would do anything I ask him – nothing's too much trouble. If he's late, he'll ring me so I don't worry", "I have the same lady who comes every week. She's very respectful and kind, never leaves early, and will do whatever I need her to do", "I have no complaints at all with my girls, I wouldn't change them, and I give them nine out of ten!", "I like my carer, I am very happy, thank you", "(my carer) is very good and is able to get a lot more done", "It is an ok service, it gives us peace of mind knowing that someone is calling to our relative", "they are all very respectful, kind and pleasant", "on the whole, I am quite happy", "I cannot fault it really, to be honest I have no real concerns at all, they are all very pleasant" and "they are all polite and respectful, I have never had any one be rude, mind you they would not get in here if they were rude to me."

Other comments we received included, "I have a real mixture of carers, but I know them all, they are all ok and quite respectful", "they are quite kind", "(my carer) is brilliant, he is so good with my relative, understands him so well very kind and considerate, takes times and never rushes my relative", "they are kind and never rush me", "I am quite happy with the care", "now and again I have different carers, but I usually have the same person, I'm satisfied with them and I have no complaints", "so far, so good", "I'm quite lucky really, all our carers are nice", "they are very sweet and kind to me", "I have no issues at all, they come when they say they will, do what I ask of them", "I have never had cause to complain, thank you I am very happy with the service", "they are very good really", "they are kind and never rush me", "my carer is excellent", "I'm quite satisfied thank you and happy", "I've had not trouble with Mears they are doing a wonderful job, we are extremely happy with the carer we have now and have all the support we need", "they are nice enough and no one has been rude to me", "I do not think I would have anything to complain about", "I have no complaints, yes I would have to say I would recommend them", "I think the care is going very well, we have no issues", "(my care worker) is very kind to my relative and they work well with me", "before they leave, they will always make sure I have drinks and snacks to hand and say, do you want another cuppa before I go" and "nothing to complain about."

Therefore the majority of people were happy with their care.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

Some people felt that the agency did not always respond to their concerns and they felt they did not get a good service when they contacted the agency's office. However, the majority of people told us they had the information they needed about the service. They said the manager had written to them about the changes in staffing levels and he had explained the action the agency was taking. Others told us they felt the agency consulted them and listened to their views, giving them feedback about their concerns. People told us they had received satisfaction surveys about the service and the agency had telephoned or visited them to discuss their views. One person told us, "I am very happy, I hope they keep up the good work, they do their best to accommodate me."

The manager told us they regularly liaised with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames regarding their "recovery plan." This plan included the agency's actions to address the problems of a reduction in staffing levels. The manager had also written to all staff and people who used the service to explain what had happened and the action they were taking.

The manager told us the staff at the agency had been responsive and had worked hard to make sure people's needs were met. He said the staff were, "absolutely amazing" because they had worked extra hours at short notice to provide care to everyone. The manager showed us evidence that the majority of people using the service had received a visit from senior staff to find out their views about the service and to make sure their needs were being met.

The regional operations manager at Mears Care Limited told us that they had started to recruit and train new staff and hoped to be back to their original staffing levels by mid-December 2015 and in a position to take on new care packages again early in 2016.