

Hand In Hands Ltd

Hand in Hands

Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Outstanding ☆

Is the service safe?

Outstanding ☆

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding ☆

Summary of findings

Overall summary

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

About the service

Hand in Hands is a supported living service providing personal care to people living with a learning disability and/or autism. At the time of the inspection the service supported 13 people across four supported living services and 15 people in the community.

Not everyone who used the service received personal care. CQC only inspects where people receive personal care. This is help with tasks related to personal hygiene and eating. Where they do, we also consider any wider social care provided. At the time of our inspection 11 people using the service received the regulated activity of personal care.

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

Right Support

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.

Staff worked tirelessly to support people to make decisions even if initially, decisions had to be taken by others involved in people's care. The support provided by staff enabled people to develop an understanding and to take the decisions, leading to positive changes in their health and well-being.

People were supported to overcome their anxieties and fears. The support they received focused on their strengths and promoted their independence. With support from staff people lived fulfilling lives, took positive risks and accomplished their dreams and aspirations.

Right Care

People were in control of their life and the care they received. Staff treated people as equal partners in their care. This increased people's self-esteem and made them confident in enjoying life to the full.

People, professionals and family members we spoke with told us about the significant positive changes people experienced due to the care received from staff. Staff understood how to provide care to people with protected characteristics to help them break down the barriers of their disability and live a life like any ordinary citizen.

The care and support people received was shaped to their individual needs. Staff were skilled getting people interested to learn new skills and develop their knowledge and understanding about what was important to them and how they wanted to live their life.

People learnt about how to stay safe from abuse, about confidentiality and being safe when using social media. They also learnt how to be more resilient, control their anxieties, fears and behaviours to enable them to have a good time when going out, going on holiday or to work. These achievements were celebrated and acknowledged by everyone involved in their care.

Right Culture

The registered managers promoted a positive, inclusive culture amongst the staff team and people. Staff morale was good, they felt equal and essential part of the service. They were motivated and supported to progress in their career and develop their knowledge and understanding about best practice when supporting people with a learning disability and/or autism.

The inclusive culture promoted by the registered managers led to a long-standing permanent staff team. This gave people continuity of care and an opportunity to build strong, trusting relationships with staff who supported them for several years. Professionals and family members, we spoke with attributed the positive outcomes people achieved to the managers and staff who placed people in the centre of the service.

Recruitment had not been difficult for the provider due to the good reputation they built on the market. They received applications without the need for advertising and on the rare occasion when a staff member left, their position was quickly filled.

The registered managers and the provider used a range of audits and governance systems to quality assure the service provided. Systems in place were designed around people and their input and feedback was directly impacting on how the service was changed and shaped to meet their needs. People felt accomplished and happy living in the service.

The registered managers and staff demonstrated an excellent understanding about Right Support Right Care Right Culture guidance. The service enabled people to live their life like ordinary citizens.

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 outstanding (published 03 November 2018).

Why we inspected

We undertook this inspection as part of a random selection of services rated Good and Outstanding. We undertook a focused inspection to review the key questions of safe and well-led only.

For those key questions not inspected, we used the ratings awarded at the last inspection to calculate the overall rating. The overall rating for the service remained outstanding. This is based on the findings at this inspection.

You can read the report from our last comprehensive inspection, by selecting the 'all reports' link for <https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-1724411627> on our website at www.cqc.org.uk.

Follow up

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

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

Outstanding 

The service was exceptionally safe.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding 

The service was exceptionally well-led.

Details are in our well-led findings below.

Hand in Hands

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

The inspection

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

Inspection team

This inspection was carried out by one inspector.

Service and service type

This service is a domiciliary care agency. It provides personal care to people living in their own houses and flats. The service provides care and support to people living in four 'supported living' settings, so that they can live as independently as possible. People's care and housing are provided under separate contractual agreements. CQC does not regulate premises used for supported living; this inspection looked at people's personal care and support.

Registered Manager

This service is required to have a registered manager. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. 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.

At the time of our inspection there were two registered managers in post.

Notice of inspection

This inspection was announced. We gave a short period notice of the inspection because some of the people using it could not consent to a home visit from an inspector. This meant that we had to arrange for a 'best interests' decision about this.

Inspection activity started on 17 May 2022 and ended on 14 June 2022. We visited the location's office/service 14 June 2022.

Between 17 May and 14 June 2022, we received feedback from people, relatives, professionals and reviewed information the service sent us.

What we did before the inspection

We reviewed information we had received about the service since the last inspection. We used information gathered as part of monitoring activity that took place on 17 March 2022 to help plan the inspection and inform our judgements. We used the information the provider sent us in the provider information return (PIR). This is information providers are required to send us annually with key information about their service, what they do well, and improvements they plan to make. We used all this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

We used the Short Observational Framework for Inspection (SOFI). SOFI is a way of observing care to help us understand the experience of people who could not talk with us. We spoke with five people using the service, received feedback from five relatives, five staff members and both registered managers. One of the registered managers was also the nominated individual. The nominated individual is responsible for supervising the management of the service on behalf of the provider.

We reviewed four people's care and support plans with additional care records for medicine management, risk assessments and other documents relevant to the management of the service.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

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

At our last inspection we rated this key question good. At this inspection the rating has changed to outstanding. This meant people were protected by a strong and distinctive approach to safeguarding, including positive risk-taking to maximise their control over their lives. People were fully involved, and the provider was open and transparent when things went wrong.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- People were protected from abuse and empowered to protect themselves to have maximum control over their lives. People we spoke with were proud in telling us their understanding of safeguarding. They told us they were confident in discussing their concerns with staff and the registered managers and understood they could not share confidential information with everyone. We saw evidence of this when a person asked for one of the registered managers support when in crisis due to being financially abused by a member of the general public. The registered manager followed all appropriate safeguarding processes swiftly and the person was safe and happy with the outcome.
- Staff and the registered manager understood the importance in supporting people to understand what safeguarding meant and how they could keep themselves safe from any form of abuse. They developed easy read and pictorial booklets and various other aids including using Makaton sign language to help people's understanding. One staff member said, "We had safeguarding training and I report any concerns I have to [registered manager], however safeguarding is more about supporting people to understand what to do, who to speak to if something happens."
- Staff used a person-centred and unique approach for each person when learning from these booklets and this had a significant impact on people's life. For example, one person had been enabled to move to their own flat with only a few hours support in the community. Another person had been supported to move to live independently without the need of any support. This was only possible due to the extensive personalised support they received from staff to understand how to protect themselves and how to get support if they needed it.
- A social care professional told us, "I can only emphasise how well [people] are supported by Hand in Hands. The impact their care has on individuals is very positive. Safeguarding is at another level, it's all about the person and everything is centred around their wishes and needs."

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- The provider supported people to have full and meaningful lives by using imaginative or innovative ways to manage risk, while supporting people to stay safe. People achieved over and above what they, their family or professionals thought they could. Everyone we spoke with told us this happened because staff had a positive enabling attitude towards people and truly listened to what people wanted. They then made sure risks involved were lowered as much as possible and supported people safely to take positive risk and achieve what they aspired to. For example, a person told us they were now able to sit on a plane and go on holiday abroad. Before they were hardly leaving their home due to feeling scared. Now they were looking forward to the holidays they planned throughout the year. Another person who had lived in a secure setting

previously had been supported by staff to learn to understand how they responded when they felt scared or worried. They had been able to stop taking medicine when worried. This had all resulted in them being able to move into more independent living as they now recognised their emotions and acted early to keep themselves safe.

- Breaking down barriers for people to achieve and live the life they wanted was embedded in all the processes and staff's thinking. One staff member said, "It's not about why we cannot do something. It's about how can we do it? We find ways to manage the risks and help people do what they want."
- Behind each person there was a fully dedicated staff team who worked tirelessly to manage risks and enable people to achieve positive outcomes. Risk assessments included a range of environmental risks, risk to people's health and well-being but also clear guidelines and a consistent review and approach from staff. Staff involved people in discussing and managing the risks. One staff member said, "We sit down with people and discuss what they want to do and what they need to expect when they are doing things. This way people are prepared, they know what to expect and what they need to do if it is getting too much so the risk is lowered." Whilst we had this conversation with staff a person had been present and were nodding and smiling suggesting their agreement with what staff were telling us.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) provides a legal framework for making particular decisions on behalf of people who may lack the mental capacity to do so for themselves. The MCA requires that, as far as possible, people make their own decisions and are helped to do so when needed. When they lack mental capacity to take particular decisions, any made on their behalf must be in their best interests and as least restrictive as possible.

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. When people receive care and treatment in their own homes an application must be made to the Court of Protection for them to authorise people to be deprived of their liberty.

We checked whether the service was working within the principles of the MCA.

- Staff enabled people's understanding to make decisions and choices by giving them information in a way they could understand, retain and make a decision. For example, a person had been assessed as lacking the mental capacity to take a decision about treatment they needed for their health. A best interest decision had been made by professionals for the person to receive the treatment. Until their appointment staff supported them to understand what was happening and why and the person willingly accepted the treatment. This empowered the person, made them more confident and in control of their life.
- The registered managers and staff had a profound understanding of human rights and the principles of The Act. They promoted people's right to liberty and security. When through assessments staff identified a possible risk of harm, the least restrictive measures were taken, and these were clearly identified and in place only if it was the only option. For example, a decision had been taken to keep the front door of the service locked for a short period of time when and if a person was scared. Staff took all steps necessary to prevent such events and restrictions were not used.

Staffing and recruitment

- The service is recognised as having an exceptional and inclusive approach to promoting the safety of its staff, and is seen as a good place to work by staff and external organisations. The provider had built a positive reputation in the local area for being a good employer. This helped recruit staff when there were vacancies. The management structure was effective and provided senior management cover as well as enough experienced and skilled staff to meet people's needs at all times.
- People had their permanent staff group supporting them and this provided continuity and allowed

trusting relationships to be formed. We saw evidence that people were confident in asking for different staff members support depending on the activity they were doing. This suggested they knew staff well and knew if their personalities, likes and dislikes matched.

- People told us there were always enough staff to be flexible to support them not just with their planned agendas but also if they suddenly decided they wanted to go out. Staff told us the management team stepped in whenever there was a need for extra staff to accommodate people's choices and wishes.
- A relative told us they were assured every time they visited there were enough staff to support people to live an ordinary life like any other citizen. A relative told us, "We came on Saturday and staff and people were having a BBQ as normal on a Saturday afternoon. It was no difference between people or staff. They were smiling and having a good normal time. Like a family."
- Staff never missed any care and support shifts or care visits in several years and this continued to be the case during the COVID-19 pandemic when there were no missed care visits or suspensions of any support to people.
- The provider operated robust recruitment procedures; appropriate checks were undertaken to help ensure staff were suitable to work at the service. Criminal record checks and satisfactory references had been obtained for all staff before they worked with people.

Using medicines safely

- People had support based on their needs for taking medicines. Some people knew what medicines they were taking, others relied fully on staff managing medicines for them. People received the support they needed when they needed it.
- There was a drive from registered managers to overcome the need for people to receive medicines as and when needed if people became distressed or felt scared. We found that often people who received these medicines in previous placements no longer needed to take them after being supported by Hand in Hands staff. This meant that people had not been exposed to side effects from these medicines and they could enjoy their life to the full.
- The registered managers represented people's best interest and voice when they felt that these medicines were unnecessarily prescribed or given to people. They could demonstrate that effective support for people and positive engagement meant people were happy, comfortable and able to understand and respond to how they were feeling without the need of medicines.

Preventing and controlling infection

- People were protected from the spread of infection. The service had effective infection, prevention and control measures to keep people safe. We observed staff following government guidance when using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- People were supported to live in an environment with a good level of cleanliness.

Learning lessons when things go wrong

- Lessons learnt processes were embedded in the service. The process was used not just when things went wrong but regular discussions and meetings were held between people, management and staff to discuss constant improvements, innovative practice and implementation of best practice guidance in the support people received.
- One relative said, "They [staff and management] are always open and honest and will take ownership of when things go wrong and identify learning which can be used to minimise or eliminate the opportunity of it happening again. They don't have a blaming culture rather a learning one."
- One social care professional said, "It is obvious why Hand in Hands are outstanding. From the way they write the care plans with people. The way they constantly improve the support and the effective communication to how they place people in the centre of everything they do makes this service stand out."

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

Well-led – this means we looked for evidence that service leadership, management and governance assured high-quality, person-centred care; supported learning and innovation; and promoted an open, fair culture.

At our last inspection we rated this key question outstanding. The rating for this key question has remained 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

- People felt that the way the service was led was exceptional and distinctive. Its vision and values were imaginative, and people were at the heart of the service. Everyone we spoke with were extremely complimentary about the ethos, values and the culture promoted by registered managers. One relative told us, "From day one the purpose and the culture of staff and managers came through as extraordinary. They totally get [person] and they worked with [name of person] to build their understanding about what is healthy for them. When I feel under the weather I just come for a cup of tea as [name of person] always has a big smile on their face and it's great. It's a massive relief for us as a family."
- Relatives told us how the management team stepped up their support when other services let them down in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and they were in crisis. One family told us they had the most frightening experience when they were let down by other services supporting their loved one who had complex support needs. They told us, "Hand in Hands are without doubt a group of outstanding, quite extraordinary and special people, and we count ourselves extremely lucky to have their support and to know them."
- Throughout the inspection staff and the management team demonstrated a deep understanding of what personalised support meant and passionately spoke about the significant number of positive outcomes people achieved. At times people went through life changing experiences and this made them stronger and made them feel accomplished and happy. For example, a person had felt unable to socialise, use public transport and meet other people due to their physical appearance. They also had a health condition which required them to take medicines. Staff effectively supported the person to adopt a healthy lifestyle and with encouragement and personalised support the person went through significant changes in their appearance and health. Presently, the person enjoyed socialising, regularly used public transport and no longer needed medicines because their health condition had reversed.
- Relatives and all the professionals we spoke with told us how staff on numerous occasions went over and above expectations for every person they supported with a clear focus on making a positive change and enable people to flourish and breaking down barriers to live the life they wanted.

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

- Staff were extremely passionate and proud for working at Hand in Hands. Every staff member we spoke with told us they felt valued and important contributors to how the service was managed. They told us they

were motivated and supported to go the extra mile for people. For example, staff moved into the service during COVID-19 for several days living away from their families. This was to protect people and lower the risk of infection and had a positive impact on people not getting ill. One staff member said, "I do feel valued here and this company really cares. Not just for people but for us staff as well. I had so much support when I needed it due to my personal circumstances changing and I never felt alone." Staff told us that in addition to the praise and thank you's they received from management they also received rewards and bonuses as well as numerous development opportunities. One staff member told us that following the success of the activities they organised for people through COVID-19 they were now developing the programme further and were hoping they were able to roll this out to all the supported living services.

- Staff and managers worked together for a common goal to support people in achieving their life goals. The effective management structure and organisation supported a personalised approach to care. One social care professional said, "I have been involved with the provider through many complex situations and have found them to be very professional in their approaches especially with communication, quick timely responses, excellent multi-disciplinary working to ensure the best outcome for each individual. More importantly always ensuring that the [people] are at the heart of it all and are able to make their choices and needs known."
- Governance systems were used effectively with the view of constantly looking for areas of the service where further improvements could be made for people's benefit. For example, a staff member proudly spoke about a project they engaged in. The project included looking at new, innovative activities for people to try and through these to open new opportunities for them. The staff member was enthusiastic, felt valued and supported to have a positive impact on people's lives. They told us they started the project during COVID-19 lockdown when people had to stop doing the activities they liked. Staff together with people engaged in a project to transform the outbuildings in creating the space for a fully equipped gym, home cinema, beauty salon and art room. Projectors and videos were purchased for the gym so that people could enjoy the routine and things they liked. A hot tub and pool were purchased for people to enjoy water activities outside. When we visited a person was having a great time cooling in the pool telling us what a great time they were having. The staff member told us how people were now able to enjoy these activities in the community. Therefore, they were planning to use all these resources to engage people in developing new skills and build up confidence and independence in acquiring life skills.
- The registered managers constantly analysed accidents, incidents and records. Discussing these with people and staff they were looking to understand the what caused people to feel fearful or worried and why they responded the way they did in specific circumstances. Positive strategies were implemented, and this led to major improvements in people's daily lives where they were supported to overcome their concerns and enjoy their lives without the need for taking medicines to help them feel calm. As a result, people were able to enjoy holidays, days out in the community, seek employment and build relationships.
- There was an open and honest attitude shared by staff and management in the service. The open communication with everyone involved in people's care about events and the support people received only strengthened and helped form trusting relationships with all parties. This benefitted people greatly in creating a safe environment where everyone pulled together to support them through their life journey.

Engaging and involving people using the service, the public and staff, fully considering their equality characteristics; Continuous learning and improving care

- The provider found innovative and creative ways that enabled people to be empowered and voice their opinions. People told us they discussed everything with staff about what support they wanted and how they liked their support delivered. People were empowered and encouraged to take control over their care and shape the service to meet their needs. For example, people were actively involved in decisions about the staff who provided their care and support, for example in relation to recruiting or choosing the staff who worked with them. People were invited and participated in staff meetings to discuss what was going well

and what changes they wanted to the way the service operated. Staff used people's preferred communication methods to ensure everyone could share their views. For example, some people were confident in speaking up in meetings, others filled in questionnaires or had meetings in private with staff or the registered manager. We found that people's feedback was always listened to and their views, wishes and requests were taken seriously and implemented.

- Their feedback was captured through regular surveys. Staff told us they were learning every day about people, their likes and dislikes and personality traits. The in-depth knowledge they accumulated about people helped them forward seeing any difficulties people may have when in different situations. They discussed these scenarios with people who then were prepared and knew how to react.
- Learning was an important part of the service where not just the registered managers, but all the staff team were engaged and constantly looking for development opportunities and further their knowledge. This was recognised by relatives and professionals we spoke with. One relative said, "[Name of person]'s team went through extensive training and supervision in order to develop skills [needed to support person]. Every single member of the team without exception are absolutely brilliant." This had a huge impact on relatives who could now enjoy time away knowing that the person was safe and well supported. They told us they crumbled when previous services stopped their support suddenly, but their life was saved by Hand in Hands staff and they were very grateful for this.
- The registered managers and staff won awards in recognition of their successes in supporting people where previous placements failed, supporting people to achieve positive outcomes and for their caring nature. Awards won included a gold medal in a campaign for "continually challenging the behaviour of those people and systems that stop people getting a good life" and a Community Award for how successfully they planned, managed and delivered support to people.
- The registered managers shared their vision, knowledge and understanding of good support practices with others. One of the registered managers was a National Representative for Social Care, they worked in partnership with Skills for Care (an independent charity and the strategic body for workforce development in social care in England), attending strategic meetings, developing qualifications, writing staff competence workbooks and delivering bespoke training to social care providers.

Working in partnership with others

- The registered managers worked in partnership with other health and social care professionals as well as relatives to ensure the care and support people received was seamless and met their needs.
- Together, the registered managers worked in partnership with a local secondary school to present talks to students about Social Care and provided days of work shadowing and weeks of work experience. They supported several local charities including a hospice, a homeless shelter and a local food bank.
- They offered support to other care providers, including the Local Authority with training and compliance as Hand in Hands has been recognised as an excellent role model of best practice for others to follow.
- One of the registered managers completed qualifications in both criminal and forensic psychology. These qualifications enabled them work in partnership with the Police and the Offending Behaviour Intervention Service (OBIS), to develop safeguarding and risk management plans for people. This had a positive impact not just on people, but the wider community.