

A&B Home Care Ltd

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## Inspection report

Office 6 Stephenson Court  
Skippers Lane Industrial Estate  
Middlesbrough  
TS6 6UT

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17 June 2022

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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?

Good ●

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

# Summary of findings

## Overall summary

### About the service

A & B Home Care Services Limited is a domiciliary care agency providing personal care to people living in their own homes. It provides a service to younger adults and older adults, including people living with dementia. At the time of inspection, 29 people were using the service and receiving personal care.

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.

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

People were safe from the risk of avoidable harm. People told us they were well supported and cared for. Risks to people were robustly assessed and managed. There were enough staff to support people, and they were recruited safely. People's medicines were managed well, and people received their medicines as prescribed. The provider managed the control and prevention of infection well and staff wore PPE appropriately. Lessons were learnt when things went wrong and there was an open and honest culture within the service.

People's needs were thoroughly assessed, and support plans were person-centred and kept up to date. Staff had the right skills, training and experience to support people effectively. People received support to eat and drink when needed. People were referred to health professionals appropriately and supported to access other services.

People were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible and in their best interests; the policies and systems in the service supported this practice.

People were treated with kindness and respect, by staff who knew them well. People were supported to express their views and be involved in making decisions about their care. People were treated with dignity at all times, and people were supported to maintain independence wherever possible.

People were fully involved in the development of their support plans, as were families and professionals where appropriate. Support plans focused on people's individual needs, their preferences and routines, their likes and dislikes, and what was important to them. People's communication needs were well met. If people raised any concerns, these were dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

The service was well-led. The management team were open and honest, with strong person-centred visions and values. Staff were proud to work for the company and happy in their roles. People and relatives told us they would recommend the service to others. The provider carried out regular quality audits and

implemented action plans in response to points identified. People were asked for their feedback regularly and this was welcomed. The provider worked well with others to achieve good outcomes for people.

For more details, please see the full report which is on the CQC website at [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

#### Rating at last inspection

This service was registered with us on 17 March 2021 and this is the first inspection.

#### Why we inspected

This was a planned inspection to assess the standard of care delivered by the service and award a rating.

#### 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?

Good ●

The service was safe.

Details are in our safe findings below.

### Is the service effective?

Good ●

The service was effective.

Details are in our effective findings below.

### Is the service caring?

Good ●

The service was caring.

Details are in our caring findings below.

### Is the service responsive?

Good ●

The service was responsive.

Details are in our responsive findings below.

### Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service was well-led.

Details are in our well-led findings below.

# A&B Home Care Ltd

## 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 and an Expert by Experience. 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

This service is a domiciliary care agency. It provides personal care to people living in their own homes.

#### 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 was a registered manager in post.

#### Notice of inspection

We gave the service 48 hours' notice of the inspection. This was because we needed to be sure that the provider or registered manager would be in the office to support the inspection.

Inspection activity started on 17 June 2022 and ended on 27 June 2022. We visited the location's office on 17 June 2022.

#### What we did before the inspection

We reviewed information we had received about the service since the date it was registered. We sought feedback from the local authority and professionals who work with the service. We sought feedback from

Healthwatch which 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 (PIR) prior to this inspection. A PIR is information providers send us to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make. We used all this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

We spoke with six people who used the service and eight relatives about their experience of the care provided. We spoke with seven members of staff including the registered manager, the two directors (one of whom was the registered manager), and five support workers.

We reviewed a range of records. This included three people's care records and medication records. We looked at two staff files in relation to recruitment and staff supervision. A variety of records relating to the management of the service, including policies and procedures were reviewed. We looked at training data and quality assurance records.

# Is the service safe?

## Our findings

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

This is the first inspection of this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- People were kept safe from the risk of avoidable harm.
- People and relatives told us they felt safe. One person told us, "The care is safe - I trust them completely." One family member told us, "My relative is safe and cared for. The care workers are either excellent or very, very good and they are on the ball."
- The provider had up to date safeguarding and whistle-blowing policies in place. Staff understood their responsibilities around safeguarding and spoke knowledgeably about this area. One staff member told us, "I know what to look for and I know the steps and procedures. The registered manager would act on any concerns straight away."

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- Risks to people's safety were appropriately and robustly assessed, monitored and managed.
- People's support plans were comprehensive and contained individual risk assessments to keep people and staff safe. Risk assessments were in place for areas such as falls, moving and handling and choking.
- There was clear guidance for staff around people's medical conditions, including how the condition impacted the person. There was clear information alerting staff to potential signs and symptoms if a person were becoming unwell.
- The registered manager carried out appropriate assessments and checks on any potential environmental and equipment hazards. Appropriate action was taken, and plans implemented, to address any identified risk.

Staffing and recruitment

- There were enough staff, with the right skills and experience, to care for people safely.
- The provider's recruitment policies and procedures were safe, and all appropriate pre-employment checks were carried out. This helped to ensure that staff working at the service were suitable to do so.
- People we spoke with told us their calls were always covered. People also told us that they were regularly supported by the same staff team which helped create consistency and continuity of care. One relative told us, "The same staff attend every day which is so important to [person]."

Using medicines safely

- Medicines were managed safely. Robust systems were in place to ensure medicines were administered correctly and at the right times.
- The provider had appropriate policies and procedures in place, which ensured staff followed best practice guidance around medicines.

- People told us they were happy with how staff supported them with their medicines. One person told us, "I always get my medicine and my creams, and the care workers always note it down."
- Staff had received training in medicines, and the management team regularly checked the ongoing competence of staff to ensure the safe administration of medicines.

#### Preventing and controlling infection

- The provider managed the control and prevention of infection well.
- The provider had clear infection control policies in place which were up to date and in line with national guidance.
- Staff had easy access to ample supplies of PPE and were trained in its use. People and relatives told us staff always wore PPE properly, and disposed of it safely.

#### Learning lessons when things go wrong

- The provider had a robust system in place to ensure that any accidents, incidents and near misses were reported and recorded appropriately.
- If something went wrong, the provider carried out a full analysis and review so that lessons could be learnt. These lessons were reliably passed on to staff to reduce the risk of any future reoccurrence.
- There was an open and honest culture within the service. The management team were welcoming and transparent throughout the entire inspection process. Staff told us they could freely and easily speak with the management team about any concern or issue.



# Is the service effective?

## Our findings

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

This is the first inspection for this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. This meant people's outcomes were consistently good, and people's feedback confirmed this.

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

- People's needs were thoroughly assessed, and support plans were created around people's individual needs and preferences.
- Support plans were regularly reviewed to ensure they remained up to date. If any changes were needed, these were implemented immediately to ensure people continuously received effective support.
- Support was delivered in line with evidence-based good standards. The provider kept up to date with best practice guidance. The provider used technology to enhance the quality of care and people's experience of the service.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- Staff had the right training, skills and experience to support people safely and effectively.
- The provider offered a robust induction to new members of staff and a good training programme. Staff received mandatory training alongside training which was specific to the needs of the people they supported.
- Staff spoke positively about the induction and the ongoing training. One staff member told us, "The induction was excellent, and we have good training in all areas. We are also supported to access further training if needed."
- People and relatives told us that staff were knowledgeable and experienced.

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

- Where needed, staff supported people to eat and drink enough to maintain a nutritious and balanced diet.
- People had eating and drinking care plans in place which detailed people's likes and dislikes, and the level of support people needed with their diet. People's support plans highlighted if there were any nutritional risks for a person and gave clear and robust guidance to staff around managing those risks.
- Staff were knowledgeable about the importance of food and fluids. One relative told us, "Carers will always offer to cook something for [person], even though they don't have to. They go above and beyond."

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

- The management team and staff worked well with other agencies to ensure people accessed relevant healthcare services and received effective care.
- The provider had clear systems and processes for referring people to other agencies where appropriate. People told us they were supported to access their GP or the hospital when needed.

- Systems were in place which enabled emergency healthcare workers, such as paramedics, to quickly and easily access vital medical information about a person, using the provider's electronic records, to help support effective and timely care.
- Any recommendations or treatment plans made by professionals were appropriately and accurately integrated into the person's support plan and followed by staff.

Ensuring consent to care and treatment in line with law and guidance

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) provides a legal framework for making particular decisions on behalf of people who may lack the mental capacity to do so for themselves. The 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.

- The provider understood and adhered to the principles of the MCA.
- Staff made sure that people were involved in decisions about their care. People's support plans contained good information about helping staff to communicate effectively with people, so people could understand and make their own choices.
- Staff always obtained people's consent before carrying out any task. One person told us "[Support workers] ask for my agreement every day", and one relative told us, "[Support workers] talk [person] through the care and ask for their permission."
- No-one was under an order of the Court of Protection at the time of our inspection.

# Is the service caring?

## Our findings

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

This is the first inspection for this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. This meant people were supported and treated with dignity and respect; and involved as partners in their care.

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

- People were treated with kindness and respect.
- People were consistently positive about the kindness and compassion showed by staff. Comments from people included, "[Support workers] always make sure I am comfortable and okay before they go" and "They are very caring and chat to me while they do their work. It cheers me up."
- Staff spoke very positively about the people they supported. One staff member told us the personal highlight of their role was, "meeting all the wonderful people I support."

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

- Staff supported people to express their views and used different communication methods to help this. Staff took the time to ensure people were involved in making decisions about their own care. One relative told us, "They listen, and I cannot believe the difference they have made in my [relative's] life. They very quickly got to know [relative] and understand their speech and provide the extra time they need."
- Staff considered people's wishes, feelings and preferences to be paramount. One relative told us, "[Support workers] are very considerate about dignity overall and comply with [relative's] wishes."

Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- People were treated with dignity and respect at all times. Staff understood the importance of treating people with respect and maintaining their dignity, and told us how they achieved this on a daily basis. One staff member told us, "When I deliver personal care, I always make sure the doors and curtains are closed."
- Staff supported people to maintain independence wherever they could. One staff member told us, "I try and enable the individual to do things for themselves."

# Is the service responsive?

## Our findings

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

This is the first inspection for this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. This meant people's needs were met through good organisation and delivery.

Planning personalised care to ensure people have choice and control and to meet their needs and preferences; supporting people to develop and maintain relationships to avoid social isolation; support to follow interests and to take part in activities that are socially and culturally relevant to them

- People were fully involved in the development of their support plans. Where appropriate, families and professionals were also consulted and engaged with the process.
- Support plans were person-centred and included information about people's likes, dislikes, histories, hobbies and interests and routines.
- People and their nominated relatives could access and view their support plans at any time, either electronically or by looking at a paper version. Additionally, people and their relatives could log on to the provider's system and access daily notes and other key information. This helped to give people and their loved ones full control over their support, and created an open and transparent culture within the service.
- The provider met people's preferences around the gender of support worker they would like. Relatives told us, "My relative was given a choice and said they would prefer female carers. They always get female carers" and "We asked for middle aged female carers and that is what we get, so we have had no problems."

### Meeting people's communication needs

Since 2016 all organisations that provide publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The Accessible Information Standard tells organisations what they have to do to help ensure people with a disability or sensory loss, and in some circumstances, their carers, get information in a way they can understand it. It also says that people should get the support they need in relation to communication.

- The provider was meeting the Accessible Information Standard.
- People had detailed communication support plans in place, which considered the impact of hearing, sight and cognition on people's communication needs.
- The management team had created picture cards to help support good communication where appropriate.
- Staff were knowledgeable about meeting people's individual communication needs and told us they had the time to do so.

### Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- The provider had not received any complaints at the time of our inspection. However, the provider had a robust complaints procedure in place to follow if needed. The complaints procedure was easily accessible to all, and people told us they knew how to raise a complaint if needed.
- When people or relatives had raised minor concerns, they told us these were dealt with swiftly and

appropriately. One relative told us, "We have phoned the agency regarding different bits and pieces and they have been good at resolving any issues." One person told us, "I had a minor issue but [the registered manager] helped me deal with it."

#### End of life care and support

- The provider was not supporting anyone who was receiving end of life care at the time of our inspection. However, the provider had policies in place and staff had received appropriate training in this area, to support them to provide compassionate and high quality care.

# 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.

This is the first inspection for this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. 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 service was well-led and the management led by example. Staff, professionals, people and relatives all confirmed this. One staff member told us, "The best thing is the management. [The directors] are always there for us, they listen to us and they ask us. They are not frightened to come out themselves and they sort any problems whatsoever."
- The management team were open and honest, had strong values, and were committed to providing a good service. One relative told us, "The registered manager is excellent. It is not just a job to them [the directors], they really do care."
- Staff were proud to work for the company and felt happy and supported in their roles. All people and relatives we spoke with said they would recommend the company to others.

Managers and staff being clear about their roles, and understanding quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements; how the provider understands and acts on the duty of candour, which is their legal responsibility to be open and honest with people when something goes wrong; continuous learning and improving care

- The provider had clear and effective management systems in place which identified and managed risks to the quality of the service. Comprehensive quality assurance audits were undertaken on a frequent and regular basis.
- Audits effectively highlighted issues and areas which required improvement. Action plans were implemented and completed. Audits were reviewed to ensure that actions were implemented, and improvements made.
- The management team understood their regulatory requirements and legal obligations. They understood the duty of candour and they submitted relevant notifications to CQC in a timely manner.

Engaging and involving people using the service, the public and staff, fully considering their equality characteristics; working in partnership with others

- The provider worked well with others and built strong and effective working relationships.
- The provider sought feedback from staff, people and relatives on a regular basis. The management team used different methods to gather feedback such as through surveys, meetings and regular reviews. One relative told us, "I have received surveys to complete. I also feel I can chat with them whenever. They are always amenable and willing to help. I am grateful for them."
- People and relatives told us communication was very good. People told us they were always kept up to

date and could contact the office whenever they needed to. People and relatives described the leaders and staff as "approachable", "reliable", "consistent", "caring" and "attentive".

- The provider engaged with external agencies and professionals effectively and appropriately. One professional told us, "They seem well organised and structured, they are friendly and helpful, and they always seek advice if they are unsure of anything."