

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Ammersall Court

Inspection report

Amersall Road
Scawthorpe
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN5 9GB

Tel: 01302734030

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Outstanding 

Is the service safe?

Good 

Is the service effective?

Outstanding 

Is the service caring?

Outstanding 

Is the service responsive?

Outstanding 

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding 

Summary of findings

Overall summary

About the service

Ammersall Court is a care home registered with CQC to provide accommodation and personal care for up to 18 people. It is situated in Scawthorpe, Doncaster. The service is provided by Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council and provides care for people with physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities. The home comprises four, linked bungalows, each with their own front door. People who use the service can move freely between the bungalows to meet and socialise with friends and neighbours. There were eighteen people using the service at the time of our inspection.

The service has been developed and designed in line with the principles and values that underpin Registering the Right Support and other best practice guidance. This ensures that people who use the service can live as full a life as possible and achieve the best possible outcomes. The principles reflect the need for people with learning disabilities and/or autism to live meaningful lives that include control, choice, and independence.

The outcomes for people using the service reflected the principles and values of Registering the Right Support by promoting choice and control, independence and inclusion. People's support focused on them having as many opportunities as possible for them to gain new skills and become more independent. People using the service receive planned and co-ordinated person-centred support that is appropriate and inclusive for them.

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

People told us they were exceptionally happy with the care and support they received at Ammersall Court. Comments from people, their relatives and other professionals were, without exception, positive.

People's needs, and wishes were fully met by staff that knew them well and were passionate about people's independence. People were respected and valued as individuals; and empowered as partners in their care in an exceptional service. Typical of people's comments were, "This is the best place I've ever lived" and "I love living here."

People received exceptionally personalised care and support specific to their needs and preferences. This had been particularly effective in supporting people to achieve their goals and aspirations and encouraged more freedom for people to take risks. This in turn, had led to people becoming more confident and adventurous and having very rich lives.

People were assisted to learn to be involved in managing their medicines and received their medicines in a safe way. Staff were patiently committed to enabling people to do as much for themselves as possible. Staff were very knowledgeable about how to keep people safe and the service learned from accidents and incidents and used this learning to improve the service. Recruitment continued to be undertaken in a safe way and there were enough staff to meet the needs of each person.

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 were skilled, motivated and knowledgeable. They had received appropriate training and support and were encouraged to develop their individual skills and interests. People received a balanced diet which met their individual needs and took into consideration their preferences.

People were supported by staff who were incredibly kind and caring and who maintained their dignity and privacy and treated them with utmost respect. People were fully involved in the service and had opportunities to give feedback.

The service was exceptionally well-led. The registered manager's dedication to a person led approach to supporting people provided a positive model for all the staff. The registered manager and their staff team were passionate and committed in placing people at the heart of the service.

Feedback about the registered manager was exceptionally positive and staff felt very well supported. Staff were well motivated and very proud of the service, and morale was very high. There had been several improvements made since the last inspection and these built on an already well led and well monitored service, to ensure there was an extremely strong person centred, person led, caring and responsive ethos. People consistently told us how they were treated with exceptional kindness and respect. We saw there was an extremely positive atmosphere and engaging interaction during our visit.

Rating at last inspection

The last rating for this service was good (published December 2016).

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

Why we inspected

This was a planned inspection based on the previous rating.

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?

Good ●

The service was safe.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Is the service effective?

Outstanding ☆

The service was effective.

Details are in our effective findings below.

Is the service caring?

Outstanding ☆

The service was exceptionally caring.

Details are in our caring findings below.

Is the service responsive?

Outstanding ☆

The service was exceptionally responsive.

Details are in our responsive findings below.

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding ☆

The service was exceptionally well-led.

Details are in our well-Led findings below.

Ammersall Court

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.

Inspection team

This inspection was carried out by one inspector.

Service and service type

Ammersall Court is a 'care home'. People in care homes receive accommodation and nursing or personal care as 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 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 used the information the provider sent us in the provider information return. This is information providers are required to send us with key information about their service, what they do well, and improvements they plan to make. This information helps support our inspections. We used all this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

We visited the service on the 31 July 2019 to look at records relating to the service. We spoke with eight people who used the service, two people's relatives and two visiting social workers. We spoke with seven

members of staff including the registered manager.

We reviewed a range of records. This included two 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 complaints, minutes of meetings, people's quality feedback and the staff training policy and records were reviewed.

After the inspection

We continued to receive clarification from the registered manager and professionals to validate evidence found.

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 now improved to good. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse:

- There were effective systems in place to safeguard people from abuse.
- People and their relatives told us they felt safe. One person said, "I feel safe and I am very happy."
- Staff were provided with training to support their knowledge and understanding of how to keep people safe and were able to describe the arrangements for reporting any allegations of abuse relating to people using the service.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management:

- Risks to people's welfare and safety were identified and well managed.
- The management of risk was proportionate, as it did not negatively impact on people's activities and personal freedom. This included freedom for people to take risks in ways that enriched their life experience and skills.
- One relative told us staff had an exceptionally positive attitude to motivating and encouraging people and this had led to several people having more confidence to try new things and had a very positive impact on people's self-esteem.

Staffing and recruitment:

- People were protected against the employment of unsuitable staff because robust recruitment procedures were followed.
- People who used the service routinely took part in staff recruitment interviews, so they had real influence on who was employed to support them. The registered manager told us the provider was an equal opportunities employer and all panel members were made aware of the guidance about equal opportunities when they were involved in recruiting staff.
- There were enough suitable, trained staff and they were very attentive to people's needs.

Using medicines safely:

- People were provided with safe and appropriate support with their medicines, which were stored and managed safely.
- People were supported to manage or be involved in managing their own medicines and risks had been assessed to make sure this was done in a safe way.
- Staff were trained to handle medicines in a safe way and their competence was assessed annually.
- Medicine audits were carried out regularly to make sure people's medicines were managed safely.

Preventing and controlling infection:

- The service was immaculately clean and well maintained when we visited.
- Staff had received training in food hygiene and infection control.
- There was an ample supply of personal protective equipment, and hand washing facilities available.

Learning lessons when things go wrong:

- The service learned from past incidents and accidents to enable them to support people better.
- Accidents and incidents were monitored and analysed for any lessons to be learned. This enabled possible trends to be identified and, where needed action was taken to reduce future risk.
- Records showed there had been a reduced number of accidents and incidents and in concerns raised to safeguarding since the last inspection. The registered manager attributed this to the introduction of annual review of staff competencies, which had reinforced core and mandatory training. This, along with empowering staff to develop leadership skills had meant staff had become more knowledgeable and proactive in their approach.
- There was a culture of learning lessons and staff were encouraged to reflect after incidents, on how things could have been done differently and where improvements could be made. The management team were keen to develop and learn from events and used all opportunities to improve the service for people and for staff.

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.

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has improved to outstanding. This meant people's outcomes were consistently better than expected compared to similar services. People's feedback described it as exceptional and distinctive.

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

- Staff had worked jointly with an independent advocate to promote good nutrition and wellbeing (an advocate is someone who can support people to get their views and wishes heard). They arranged themed sessions, introducing people to different cuisines and the importance of healthy eating. One social worker told us these sessions had led to exceptionally good outcomes for people. They said, "People's feedback about these sessions is very positive indeed, because it is an enjoyable social experience, while educating people and raising their awareness."
- People's independence and choice was central to how staff supported them with their nutrition. People were fully involved with planning and preparing their meals and drinks and staff were very knowledgeable about people's likes and dislikes and dietary requirements.
- Where people's culture included specific dietary needs, people's wishes were not only facilitated, but promoted as an opportunity for others to try new things.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience:

- People and relatives felt staff were exceptionally well able to support them, and often went the extra mile to do so.
- Staff told us the registered manager showed exceptional commitment to staff training and development and consequently, there had been many more, and better training and development opportunities in the last eighteen months. They said they had taken advantage of these and benefitted a great deal. We saw this had led to better outcomes for people who used the service.
- We met two staff who were undertaking qualifications that supported their development in their new, acting management roles. They confirmed they received very helpful allocations of paid time and support to help them with this.
- There was effective induction and ongoing training, including bespoke training centred around people's specific needs and individual needs. All staff undertook nationally recognised vocational qualifications at levels that exceeded good practice guidance.
- The provider, Doncaster Council, provided a wide range of quality face to face training and e-learning courses for all their staff. The e-learning resource was also made available to the college and work placement students who were involved with the service, helping to raise the awareness of good practice for all staff and students involved with the service .

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

- People's needs were assessed in partnership with them. This fed into the support plans and risk

assessments, which gave extremely clear and detailed information about the support each person needed and preferred.

- There was an exceptionally strong focus on maintaining and improving each person's skills and experiences.
- Each person had an assigned keyworker to make sure their plans were reviewed regularly, were current and met the needs of the person.

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

- People's health needs were assessed and planned for, to make sure they received the care they needed.
- Relatives felt confident that their family members' health needs were met. One relative said, "[Staff] are very, very good at making sure [relative] gets the healthcare they need, and at contacting me if [relative] is unwell."

Adapting service, design, decoration to meet people's needs:

- The design and decoration of the service met people's needs. People had been properly involved in the decoration and design of the service and their choices had been catered for. As a result, the environment reflected people's individual preferences and personalities.
- One person said, "This is the nicest place I've ever lived."

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 Act 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. We checked whether the service was working within the principles of the MCA, and whether any conditions on authorisations to deprive a person of their liberty had the appropriate legal authority and were being met.

- Staff had a particularly good understanding of the MCA and when the principles should be applied. People's mental capacity to make decisions was assumed unless there was evidence to suggest otherwise. There was an emphasis on involving people and enabling them to make choices wherever possible. These principles were the starting point for all support decisions for people.
- People's independence was always taken into consideration. For example, people were enabled to administer their own medicines.

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.

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has now improved to outstanding. This meant people were truly respected and valued as individuals; and empowered as partners in their care in an exceptional service.

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

- Staff showed exceptional standards of kindness towards the people they supported. It was clear to see there were strong relationships between people and staff. Staff were observed supporting people in a kind, compassionate and empowering way.
- One social worker praised a person's key worker. They said the relationship between them was one of trust, respect, understanding and togetherness. The key worker thought outside the box and did little things that meant a lot to the person. They added that the other support workers in the service were equally thoughtful and responsive.
- People benefitted from the person-centred culture and ethos within the service. People were very much involved in their care plans, which were very specific to their individual needs.
- An independent advocate had been involved with people on a regular basis. Their feedback was very positive about people having much more confidence to speak out and express their preferences.
- The professionals we spoke with gave very positive feedback about people's involvement in their reviews and about improvements in the review process. One social worker said as result of being given more responsibility and autonomy, staff had developed a much better knowledge and understanding of people and their needs. They commented, "Staff are brilliant and really knowledgeable. They work in partnership and communicate information very well. This makes people's reviews much easier." We saw this had also led to extremely positive outcomes for people in developing their independence.
- Staff made sure people were aware of what information was being kept about them. For instance, one person said, "Staff always tell me when they are writing in my notes and I can always look if I want to."

Ensuring people are well treated and supported; respecting equality and diversity: Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence:

- Staff had an exceptionally person centred approach and people were encouraged to do as much for themselves as they possibly could, being actively involved in every aspect of their support. This ranged from being involved in staff recruitment interviews to choosing their meals.
- People's feedback was overwhelmingly positive. For instance, one person said, "The staff are incredibly caring and supportive. You couldn't get a more committed team of people."
- The provider recognised people's diversity and promoted this in their policies, which highlighted the importance of treating everyone as individuals.
- Staff received training in equality and diversity, spoke to people with warmth and respect, and were supportive and caring towards people.
- Without exception relatives we spoke with gave extremely positive feedback. One relative said, "I can't

fault the staff, they are brilliant. All we have to do is ask and it is done."

- Every staff member we spoke with showed a passion for providing outstanding outcomes for the people they supported and were proud of the difference they made to people's lives.
- People's choice for privacy and dignity was respected and upheld.
- There was a relaxed and inclusive atmosphere at the service. There was an impromptu party going on at the time of the inspection with lots of smiling faces and people laughing and joking.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

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

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has now improved to outstanding. This meant services were tailored to meet the needs of individuals and delivered to ensure flexibility, choice and continuity of care.

Planning personalised care to ensure people have choice and control and to meet their needs and preferences:

- Since our last inspection the staff and registered manager had continued to significantly improve the person-centred culture and ethos within the service.
- Staff showed an excellent understanding of what was Important to people, their preferences and needs, and how best to meet them. This was echoed in the feedback we received from people and family members, who told us they could not praise the skill, dedication and commitment of staff highly enough.
- One person said, "I absolutely love living here. It has always been lovely...the care and support I have received has been fantastic." One relative said, "Staff are very kind. They show this in the very real and helpful ways they have responded to the changes in [family member's] needs
- One social worker told us, "In my opinion, the quality of support is outstanding. The staff who support my service users all regularly go the extra distance and usually more. What makes the service work so well is the workers' connection with service users and the quality of that support. When visiting, you immediately notice that Ammersall has a particularly good feel. From walking through the door, it is homely and is a very good place, in my opinion, to live. You'll also notice a relatively low turnover of staff and this consistency and continuity is recognised and appreciated by service users and their families."

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

- The registered manager encouraged a 'Nothing is impossible' attitude to people's goals and aspirations and people had the freedom to take risks in a way that really enriched their lives. People were working through their 'bucket lists', which were getting longer and more adventurous, as their confidence and independence continued to develop.
- People engaged in a very diverse range of activities, and we were told that several people had benefitted greatly from taking opportunities to engage in positive risk taking. It was clear people had become more confident and were very proud of their achievements. One person was excited to tell us about their planned skydiving excursion and was gently teasing a staff member about their reluctance to join them.
- The service had made exceptionally positive links with local colleges and people benefitted greatly from opportunities that this presented, both in the support to attend courses, and in using the services of the learners for treatments, nail, hair and beauty and arts and craft sessions.
- It was very clear that people were supported to develop and maintain friendships and relationships that were important to them. One person had a telephone with very large numbers to enable them to call their family members when they wanted to. We also met some people's partners, as they were spending time

together on the day of the inspection.

- People had decided to have a farewell party for one person's social worker and were busily engaged with staff in organising it. People were given support to invite their friends and family to the party that afternoon.
- Technology was used to enhance people's independence. People had computers and tablets and interactive devices to play their own music and TVs, ask questions and play games. This enabled people to do things for themselves, without needing to ask for staff support.

End of life care and support:

- The service had experience of providing end of life care to people.
- There was exceptionally positive feedback from one social worker who met with registered manager to discuss the way the service cared for one person at the end of their life. They told us, "Because of the lovely ethos of the staff and their very good practice, there really were no areas that could have been improved."
- Another social worker told us the care provided at the end of one person's life was, "Magnificent."

Meeting people's communication needs:

Since 2016 onwards all organisations that provide publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). The standard was introduced to make sure people are given information in a way they can understand. The standard applies to all people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss and in some circumstances to their carers.

- Staff at Ammersall Court consistently ensured information was available to people in an accessible way. They used plain language and illustrated information with signs and gestures, or pictures where it assisted people, to understand information more easily. Written information, such as how to complain was produced in easy to read formats and illustrated with pictures and photos.
- People had care plans that set out how they should be supported in communication and staff were seen communicating very effectively with people, who had a range of individual communication methods and needs.

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- People and their relatives told us they would talk to the managers or staff, if they had a complaint.
- The registered manager kept a complaints log, which showed they investigated complaints and made sure they were resolved to people's satisfaction.
- The log showed the registered manager used the feedback to improve the service overall. For instance, because of a complaint from a person who used the service the protocol for fire alarm tests was improved, the registered manager had learning discussions with the fire officer and the landlord of the building, and people's emergency evacuation plans were all updated, so people were safer.

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 now improved to 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:

- The registered manager and staff demonstrated exemplary person-centred practice.
- The registered manager was particularly well trained and qualified for their role. They supported the service to continually focus on and improve the outcomes people were achieving. They kept up to date on best practice and shared learning from the provider and other similar services to look for ways they could improve the service for people. The high quality of leadership was reflected in the real pride staff took in their work.
- Changes had been made in the way the service was managed, away from the traditional, 'top down' approach, to be much more person led. This was supported by an independent advocate facilitating people's meetings, the feedback from which, then fed into staff meetings. What people said the previous month was looked at and what had been achieved as a result was reported back. This kept a very effective dialogue between people using the service, and the staff and managers and fostered a very open, learning and person led culture.
- One social worker commented: "The registered manager has made a number of significant changes since they arrived. I think they are an outstandingly creative leader. They have energy, and a vision that is about more shared responsibilities in the team. This has led to much better outcomes for people.
- The registered manager had gathered people's feedback and made sure the values and aims of the service were very strongly influenced by the people who used it. These included promoting people's human value and rights and acting upon people's views on how the service should be run, as well as promoting and respecting each person's individuality, choices and beliefs. The registered manager told us, "These aims and objectives are important to us because it underpins how, as a team, we provide all care and support."

Engaging and involving people using the service, the public and staff, fully considering their equality characteristics:

- The registered manager encouraged feedback and acted on it to continuously improve the service. For example, the registered manager arranged for independent surveys to be undertaken with all the people who used the service and those important to them.
- We spoke with a student who had been on placement and who had been involved with gathering people's feedback. They told us people had very rich lives, because the service was exceptionally good at supporting them to fulfil their goals, aspirations and lifetime ambitions, which led to them growing in confidence, self-esteem and independence.
- One social worker told us of other improvements that had been made as a result of people's feedback.

The garden areas having been upgraded with new furniture and flowers, and online shopping introduced to help people in planning their menus. They added that a colourful new newsletter had been introduced, which celebrated people's achievements and was a very good recent addition.

- We saw that people were treated as equal and as individuals, and with the utmost respect. All the feedback received from people, their relatives was exceptionally positive. People's comments included, "The staff always listen to me" and, "I am always included when any changes that are made."

We saw people were very happy with the service and actively encouraged to live their lives to the full. This has a very positive impact on people

Working in partnership with others

- Staff in the service had developed and promoted positive working relationships with commissioners, other social care staff, advocates and health care professionals.
- The service was helping develop a creative and innovative project with Doncaster College providing placements at the service for students from several vocations not previously matched with social care settings, such as, technologies and arts and crafts. The students involved said it was a positive and creative experience for them. Staff told us this was already improving the lives of people who used the service and promoting their independence and wellbeing
- The service had arranged events for people, their families and friends, at a local community church hall. Tickets were also given to older people in the community to attend these events and have meals free of charge.
- People held meetings at the local library and the local community centre was used for regular art and craft sessions. This encouraged people to play an active part in their community.
- Responses we received from other social care professionals was very positive. One social worker commented, "One of the great things that has happened over last twelve months is the connection with the local and wider community including local schools and colleges and the development of the service, being unconventional. You feel there is a real sense of pride, contentedness, togetherness and ownership [between people who use the service and the staff]. This is joined up thinking, and the results really are quite staggering."

Managers and staff being clear about their roles, and understanding quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements; Continuous learning and improving care:

- There was a distinctive, positive culture within the service, introduced by exceptional leadership and implemented by a staff team who were extremely passionate and motivated about achieving the best outcomes for people. This was clear to see throughout our inspection.
- There was organisational oversight of the service. This included a management site visit to review the quality of the service provided.
- A programme of effective quality assurance and checks was in place. Audits gave clear actions for staff to take and where improvements were identified there was evidence that discussions took place and if necessary further training and support provided. These checks helped to sustain quality and drive improvement.

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 was committed to transparency in the management of the service and to delivering the best service possible. They also recognised the importance of learning when things went wrong and sharing that learning with others.