

Freedom Care (Herts) Limited

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Inspection report

Unit M9, The Maltings Business Centre
Roydon Road, Stanstead Abbots
Ware
SG12 8HG

Tel: 01992939045
Website: www.freedomcareherts.co.uk

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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

Freedom Care (Herts) Limited is a domiciliary care service providing personal care to people living in their own houses or flats. It provides a service to older people, younger adults, people living with a physical disability and people living with dementia. At the time of this inspection 29 people were receiving support with 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 felt safe and were protected from avoidable harm because staff knew how to identify and report any concerns relating to the risk of abuse. Risks to people's health, safety and well-being were assessed and plans developed to remove or reduce the risk.

The registered manager operated robust recruitment procedures; appropriate checks were undertaken to help ensure staff were suitable to work at the service. Staff received training and supervision necessary to their role. People's medicines were managed safely. Staff had their competency assessed to help ensure they were sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable to safely administer medicines.

Before care delivery started, assessments were undertaken to help make sure people's needs could be met by Freedom Care (Herts) Limited. Management and staff knew people well and were able to promptly identify when people's needs changed, and they sought professional advice appropriately.

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 had received training in infection control practices and personal protective equipment was provided for them. The management team took appropriate action following any incidents and learning from these were shared with the staff team to help improve practice.

People received consistent care from a small team of staff. People knew about their care plans and could decide what care and support they needed.

People and relatives praised the kind and caring nature of the staff and management. People and their relatives said they would be confident to raise any concerns with the management team. Everyone we spoke with during this inspection was satisfied with the care and support they received and said they would recommend Freedom Care (Herts) to people looking to have care provided in their own homes.

The management team was passionate about providing good and safe care and understood their responsibilities under the Duty of Candour. People, their relatives and staff members spoke highly of the management team and told us that they were always available and supportive.

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

Rating at last inspection

This service was registered with us on 18 April 2019 and this is the first inspection.

Why we inspected

This was a planned inspection based on the date of registration with CQC.

Follow up

We will continue to monitor information we receive about the service until we return to visit as per our reinspection 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?

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.

Freedom Care (Herts) Limited

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

The inspection

We carried out this performance review and assessment under Section 46 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (the Act). We checked whether the provider was meeting the legal requirements of the regulations associated with the Act and looked at the quality of the service to provide a rating.

Unlike our standard approach to assessing performance, we did not physically visit the office of the location. This is a new approach we have introduced to reviewing and assessing performance of some care at home providers. Instead of visiting the office location we use technology such as electronic file sharing and video or phone calls to engage with people using the service and staff.

Inspection team

This inspection was undertaken by one inspector.

Service and service type

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

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

We did not give the provider notice of this inspection.

What we did before the inspection

We reviewed information we had received about the service since registration. 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. We took this

into account when we inspected the service and made the judgements in this report.

During the inspection

Inspection activity started on 06 January 2022 and ended on 13 January 2022. We received feedback from two people who used the service and five relatives about their experience of the care provided. We received feedback from three care workers, and we had a video call with the registered manager on 13 January 2022. We reviewed a range of records relating to the management of the service, including two care plans and risk assessments, staff training records, evidence of monitoring staff practice and medication competencies.

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 for 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

- The provider had effective systems to help protect people from the risk of harm or abuse. Staff received training and were confident about how they would report any concerns both internally to the service management and externally to local safeguarding authorities.
- The registered manager understood their responsibilities to safeguard vulnerable people from abuse. The registered manager gave an example of a concern they had appropriately referred to the local authority for further investigation.
- People and their relatives told us staff provided safe care for people. One relative said, "I am very confident that [person] is safe, it gives me such peace of mind."

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- Risks to people's health, safety and well-being were assessed and measures developed to remove or reduce the risks. Risk assessments enabled people to stay as independent as possible within the confines of their health needs. Identified risks such as slips, and falls were assessed and information shared with staff about how to manage the risks in the best interests of the person.
- The registered manager helped ensure people received support in the event of an emergency. The management team provided a 24 hour on-call service and provided emergency cover if needed for staff sickness or other such events.
- A relative said, "The agency was really good at sticking to commitments made. For example, it was important that care workers arrived with [person] by 7am before they started to get out of bed themselves. Care workers were never late to [person], this reduced the incidence of falls."

Staffing and recruitment

- People's relatives told us they thought there were enough staff available to meet people's care needs consistently. There had not been any missed care calls and all feedback indicated staff provided people's care within agreed timeframes. One relative said, "It's great that there has been consistency with the care workers who visit, so [person] has been able to get to know them, and we appreciate the little reports we get through the 'Birdie' app (secure app for reviewing care records or similar) after each visit, sometimes with photos."
- A staff member told us, "Generally I do find I have the time to care for people safely and it is a bit of a juggling act. But if I am concerned I don't hesitate to speak to the care manager or field supervisor to voice a concern. Also, the management are always open to questions, make themselves available and approachable."
- The registered manager conducted robust recruitment procedures and undertook the checks required to ensure staff were suitable to work at the service. Criminal record checks and satisfactory references had

been obtained for all staff before they were able to work with people independently. A staff member told us, "When I started I was given extensive training through online and shadowing before beginning to work with people."

- Freedom Care (Herts) Limited is a small service; the registered manager was very careful not to over commit to taking new care packages until the right staff were available to support. The registered manager told us, "We wouldn't want anyone to go without care, I wouldn't take on a package if I couldn't manage it effectively and safely."

Using medicines safely

- Staff received training to support them to administer people's medicines safely. Staff competencies to safely administer medication were assessed every six to eight weeks.
- Staff supported some people with administering their medicines and just prompted others to take theirs as needed.

Preventing and controlling infection

- Staff were provided with training and personal protective equipment such as gloves, sleeves and aprons to help promote effective infection control. Staff practice in this area was monitored by the registered manager and assessed at each supervision.
- For people identified as clinically extremely vulnerable this was recorded in their care folder.
- People and their relatives told us staff promoted good hygiene practices. One relative said, "I am impressed they are really on top of it, all staff know what they are doing."
- Staff praised Freedom Care (Herts) Limited for ensuring the safety of both staff and people using the service during COVID-19 pandemic. One staff member told us, "I feel like the safety of people and all of us has been handled well during the pandemic and I have had plenty of PPE as and when I need it." Another staff member told us, "We are encouraged to go to the office and collect our PPE, which there is always an abundance of."

Learning lessons when things go wrong

- The registered manager took appropriate actions in response to any concerns and learning was shared with staff. Examples of actions taken shared with us demonstrated the registered manager understood the need to learn from experience and used the learning to further educate the staff team.

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 assessed before they started to use the service. Assessments included people's support needs and their individual preferences. These assessments formed the basis of people's detailed care plans and risk assessments.
- People's relatives praised the staff team for the effective care and support they delivered. One relative said, "[Person] would not be able to stay in their own home if it were not for the wonderful care and support from Freedom Care. Staff know and understand what [person] needs and they do it. Simple as that."

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- Staff received training in areas including safeguarding, moving and handling, advanced dementia, fire safety and the Mental Capacity Act. Staff had a good understanding of these topics. Staff received a robust supervision and competency observations to help ensure they had the knowledge to perform their job roles.
- One staff member told us, "I have had training and get support when I need it. I have had supervision observation and then I receive a report of what was observed." Another staff member said, "We frequently have training meetings and updates. This gives us as carers an opportunity to meet up and share experiences and ask questions. We also have face to face meetings for training."
- Inductions for new staff were thorough and staff knowledge was checked by the management team during shadow shifts prior to the staff member working with people unsupervised.

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

- People and their relatives said where people needed assistance to eat staff supported them in a safe and effective manner.
- People's dietary needs and requirements were identified in their care plans and staff had a good understanding how to support people with these.

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

- Staff and the management team worked with many external professionals for the benefit of people who used the service. These included GPs, occupational therapists, district nurses, speech and language therapists, physios, hospital discharge teams and adult social services. Care staff reported any concerns they had about people's health and wellbeing to the registered manager, who in turn ensured relatives were contacted if appropriate, and external professionals were contacted as needed.
- Information was shared with other agencies if people needed to access other services such as hospitals.

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. 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.

- People told us staff always asked for consent when supporting them. People had been asked for their consent to be supported in line with their care plans and risk assessments.
- Staff received training in the Mental Capacity Act and had a good understanding of how to put this in to practice.

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 and relatives praised the care and support staff delivered. A relative told us, "Words cannot express gratitude for the care that was provided to my [family member] at the time of their greatest need. All the care workers that assisted my [family member] were highly responsive to their needs and that of the family. The professionalism, kindness, and compassion were of the highest level. I highly recommend anyone needing care to contact Freedom Care."
- People and their relatives praised the kindness and emotional support provided for people. One person said, "Lovely, kind and professional care workers, I feel reassured that they give the best care possible."
- Staff were proud of their role and the impact it had for people. A staff member said, "I try to do whatever I can for people depending on their needs, you can make a difference. Cooking their favourite meal to giving them their shower can make people's day and listening and making them laugh can make a difference."
- Another staff member told us how they had supported a person with a healthcare emergency late into the evening. The staff member said, "I felt that it was important that [person] was with someone that they knew and would feel reassured lessening their anxiety." The staff member said the management ensured their rota for the next day was changed so they could rest.
- Staff had a good understanding of the people they supported. Staff took time to get to know people's likes and dislikes, their pasts and interests and incorporated these into their care. A staff member told us, "I like to feel I make a difference every day from the smallest task to the most challenging, to be able to do something for someone they can't do for themselves is very rewarding. When someone with dementia remembers my name it means the world to me as I know how hard it is for them. Just to see them smile when you arrive you know you're doing your job well."

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

- People's detailed care plans showed they were consulted about changes to their care and these were documented. Regular reviews of people's support involving people, their relatives and other professionals took place.
- People and their relatives told us they were always involved in any decisions about their care.

Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- People and their relatives said staff promoted people's privacy, dignity and independence. One relative said, "Freedom Care have done a lovely job of looking after my [relative] during a challenging period for their health. Sensitive to their needs, caring and helpfully flexible the service has been personal and supportive of maintaining my [relative's] independence as much as possible."

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

- People received care to meet their individual needs, likes, dislikes and preferences. People's care was adapted to meet their changing needs. A relative said, "One thing that impressed me, was they really understood [relative's] evolving care needs and just dealt with it all seamlessly."
- The registered manager gave examples of where the care and support provided for people had been instrumental in them regaining mobility and their independence once more.
- Relatives told us they were provided with assurance that people were being cared for properly. "One relative told us, "Every visit I was informed via the app how [person] was feeling, looking, what they had eaten and their mood. This provided us with assurance and comfort of the care provided."
- Care plans were detailed with regards to people's preferences, likes and dislikes.

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.

- The registered manager told us they had not had the need to make information available in different formats yet but said they would do so should the need arise. They gave an example where they could access translation services from the internet.

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 told us support was provided to follow interests and activities if people requested it. At the time of this inspection care workers supported people to go shopping and other personal appointments.
- Staff recognised most people using the service were not seeing members of their families for long periods during the COVID-19 restrictions. People told us staff had been very caring and shown a lot of kindness during this time. For example, staff used their Smartphones to video call peoples' families on request.

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- People and their relatives were confident to raise concerns if the need arose. A relative said, "I did raise a complaint a long time ago, this was resolved quickly and as a family we are very happy with the service Freedom Care provides."

End of life care and support

- The staff team supported people at the end of their life according to their wishes and preferences. People were supported to stay in their own home if they chose to do so and extra support was provided as needed from specialist services such as Hospice nurses. Staff knew how to support people at the end of their life. A staff member described how the registered manager had supported them and given recognition of their good practice.
- A relative told us how the management team and staff were very sensitive with [person] and their relative especially in their last days. They told us a member of the management team had contacted them to check on their wellbeing after their relative had died. The relative found that to be exceptional.

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 registered manager had a good understanding of their legal and ethical responsibilities towards the people they supported and had a passion for delivering person-centred care. The registered manager's ethos of the service was to, "Provide person centred care, enhance people's wellbeing and exceed people's expectations by offering them independence, empowerment, dignity and choice in everything that we do."
- A relative said, "Unhesitatingly, I would recommend Freedom Care, they are small, they are personal." Staff told us they were proud to work for Freedom Care (Herts) Limited and felt valued. One staff member said, "I would recommend Freedom Care to anyone who is looking for a company that cares about people. Freedom Care are responsive giving consistently good care with reliability."

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

- The management team and staff understood their roles and respected the impact their roles had for people. The registered manager worked alongside the staff team routinely and assessed the service provision as part of their daily work.
- The registered manager used an electronic monitoring system to monitor the quality of the service provided and to inform their quality assurance. The system considered feedback from people who used the service and their relatives, staff feedback, reviews of any accidents or incidents, complaints or compliments and a general overview of all care records and recruitment records.
- The registered manager had a clear understanding about the duty of Candour and told us they encouraged staff to be open and honest in their feedback.

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

- People and their relatives gave positive feedback about the service and how it operated. All people and relatives we spoke with said they would recommend Freedom Care (Herts) Limited to anyone looking for care in their own home. One relative said, "I think they are fantastic; they are just first class."
- Staff were also positive about the service. A staff member told us, "I would recommend other care workers to come and work for Freedom Care because they are professional, supportive and thoughtful, we work well as a team."
- Regular feedback was collected from people and their relatives. The registered manager told us the latest

survey had identified a trend of care staff running late and people not always being told if the time of their care visit had been changed. The registered manager advised, "We have taken this on board in the office and try our very best in informing clients should their desired call times change in any way." They went on to explain this had only happened when care staff had contacted the office to say they were not able to work, with little notice. An impact of COVID-19 is an increased last-minute absence, the service has managed this well with no care visits missed despite significant challenges.

Continuous learning and improving care

- The service is a member of a local care provider's association. They engaged with this organisation for recruitment matters and the regular news bulletins and updates on the sector.

Working in partnership with others

- The service engages with many external professionals including OTs, GP, a district nurse as well as social workers and discharge teams to help ensure people discharged from hospital have a safe discharge home.
- The registered manager described how the service had worked very closely with external health agencies to support a person who needed to go into a care home for their safety and wellbeing but was reluctant to do so.