

Unique Homecare Services Ltd

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Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Good ●

Is the service safe?

Good ●

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

Summary of findings

Overall summary

About the service

Unique Homecare Services Ltd is a domiciliary care agency, based in Garstang, Lancashire. It provides personal care to people in their own homes in Garstang and the surrounding area.

Not everyone who used the service received personal care. The Care Quality Commission (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 this inspection 50 people were receiving personal care.

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

Some aspects of staff recruitment were not completely effective at ensuring staff members were always suitable to work with vulnerable people. Some safety checks had not been made. We have made a recommendation about this that can be seen in the 'safe' section of this report.

People received compassionate care from committed and caring staff. People achieved good outcomes as a result of the care they received. Their support and care needs were met.

Staff supported people in person-centred ways to identify their goals and wishes. Although care planning documentation required some improvement to ensure it was completely relevant to people, staff had access to other information that was centred around the person they were supporting.

People and their relatives told us they felt safe as a result of the care they received from staff. Risks had been managed in a positive way to support people to maintain independence and control. Staff had a good understanding of people's needs and wishes.

The registered manager, office staff and care staff were kind, caring and respectful. People praised how kind and caring they were. People praised the approachability of the registered manager, staff at the office and care staff and could not fault the service.

The provider had invested in the use of a digital care planning system. This was supplemented by hand-held devices staff used to obtain up to date information about people. Relatives said staff were particularly proactive and raised concerns about their loved ones quickly so that issues could be addressed in a timely way. Senior staff appropriately supervised staff and checks were in place to ensure the care and support provided was safe and met the needs of people.

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. They and their relatives, had been consulted about care and support needs. These needs were assessed before they started using the service.

The registered manager and staff supported people to have access to healthcare professionals and specialist support and the service worked with external specialists. Professional's views on the service were positive.

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 good (published 30 December 2017).

Why we inspected

This inspection was prompted by a review of the information we held about this service.

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 well-led?

Good ●

The service was well-led.

Details are in our well-led findings below.

Unique Homecare Services 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 Care Act 2014.

Inspection team

The inspection was completed by 1 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.

Registered Manager

This provider is required to have a registered manager to oversee the delivery of regulated activities at this location. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Registered managers and providers are legally responsible for how the service is run, for the quality and safety of the care provided and compliance with regulations.

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 the service is small, and people are often out, and we wanted to be sure there would be people at home to speak with us.

Inspection activity started on 2 October 2023 and ended on 3 October 2023. We visited the office location on

2 October 2023. The following day we continued to review evidence and spoke with people who used the service and their relatives on the telephone.

What we did before the 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 spoke with 2 people and the relatives of 5 people. We spoke with the director who was also the registered manager and 5 members of the care staff team. We reviewed a range of records, these included 4 people's care records and medicine records. We looked at 4 staff files in relation to recruitment. A variety of records relating to the management of the service were looked at. These included; quality and audit checks, training records, policies and procedures and written feedback from people and their relatives.

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 remained the same. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Staffing and recruitment

- The provider did not always follow safe recruitment procedures. Checks with previous employers in health and social care had not always been completed in some of the recruitment files we considered.
- Checks such as those into identity, right to work and criminal records had been made.

We recommend the provider reviews its recruitment processes to ensure they are compliant with legislation and best practice.

- During the inspection, the registered manager undertook an immediate review of staff files and thereafter, kept CQC informed of developments. These checks supported that no one had been unsafely employed.
- There were enough staff to support people. People received their visits on time and for the right length of time. Staff told us they had enough time to complete visits and provide the appropriate support to people. A relative said, "Staff always attend my relative on time and they are never short staffed."

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- The providers policies and procedures helped protect people from the risk of abuse and avoidable harm. Staff had received training in relation to identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns. Staff we spoke with were skilled at identifying the signs of abuse and what action should be taken if they had concerns.
- People's relatives told us their loved ones felt safe as a result of the care they received. One said, "My relative is safe. We live a distance away and are kept informed of everything we need to be told about. We all trust the staff and management to do the right thing."

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management; Learning lessons when things go wrong

- The provider's risk assessment and risk management procedures helped to protect people from risks in their daily lives. We noted some care records did not always identify the risks a person needed support with. However, the day-to-day records available to staff on their 'hand-held' devices provided good guidance on how to support people safely. Staff told us this information was added to and corrected as required and helped them to support people effectively.
- Risk assessments had been reviewed and updated regularly and people's needs were thoroughly assessed before they started using the service. People and their relatives said they had been involved in developing their care plans and risk assessments.
- The provider had a system in place to analyse incidents and accidents. This helped ensure they were able to learn lessons when things went wrong and avoid reoccurrence.

Using medicines safely

- The providers medicines management policies and procedures helped ensure people were supported to manage their medicines safely. The provider had invested in a digital recording system. This helped the registered manager and senior staff assess what actions staff had taken at a person's home shortly after administration and take appropriate action if there were any issues.
- Medicine records we reviewed were complete and included protocols to guide staff in the administration of 'when required' medicines, such as pain relief or when a person may experience anxiety.
- Staff who had responsibility for administering medicines had received the appropriate training. The registered manager and senior staff regularly checked their competencies.

Preventing and controlling infection

- We were assured the providers policies and procedures helped keep people and staff safe from the risks associated with infections.
- We were assured that the provider was using personal protective equipment effectively and safely.

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 remained the same. This meant the service was consistently managed and well-led. Leaders and the culture they created promoted high-quality, person-centred care.

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

- The provider ensured care quality and staff competence had been checked and audited at regular intervals. This helped ensure people received consistent high-quality care.
- When issues had been identified, the provider had ensured these had been addressed through an action plan and lessons learned had been considered and discussed with staff. However, checks had failed to identify shortcomings in the recruitment processes and care planning documentation seen in the 'safe' section of this report. This was addressed at inspection and the registered manager implemented additional checks to deal with these omissions.
- Staff told us the registered manager was very clear about the quality of care they expected and led by example. We noted senior staff working alongside junior staff sharing best practice and experience. One relative said, "Before we see a new member of staff on their own, a senior helps and guides them. We find this reassuring."
- Staff had been provided with information applications accessible on their hand-held devices. This provided up-to-date care and support requirements and guides and had been developed by the registered manager and staff. We noted it was a quick and easy way of staff being alerted of essential processes for people in their care. A number of staff members said this was a valuable and reliable source of information.
- Spot checks of staff members' practice had been completed by the registered manager and senior staff.

Promoting a positive culture that is person-centred, open, inclusive and empowering, which achieves good outcomes for people

- The provider was committed to achieving good outcomes for the people they supported. Staff praised the values and aims of the registered manager and were proud to work for the service. Comments from staff included, "I am happy in my work and I think all the staff think the same. We are a good cohesive team and are led really well by [registered manager]."
- A health care professional praised the leadership and quality of the service and said, "The office staff are accessible, helpful and, on my observation, provide a good example to staff."

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 understood their obligations under the duty of candour. They were open and transparent in their dealings with people and kept them up to date with any incidents.
- Notifications had been made to external agencies when required including CQC and the local authority.

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

- Staff said they felt the registered manager consulted with them and involved them in regular meetings and consultations. Staff said they felt valued and appreciated.
- People and their relatives told us they had been consulted with and their views sought. Records showed regular consultations with people who used the service and their relatives.
- The provider worked in partnership with other agencies including health and social care services and supported people to access community-based services and activities.