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Professional Carers

Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service	Outstanding 
Is the service safe?	Good 
Is the service effective?	Good 
Is the service caring?	Outstanding 
Is the service responsive?	Good 
Is the service well-led?	Outstanding 

Summary of findings

Overall summary

About the service

Professional Carers is a domiciliary care service that provides support and personal care to older people in their own homes. Not everyone who used the service received personal care. CQC only inspects where people receive personal care. This is help with tasks related to personal hygiene and eating. Where they do we also consider any wider social care provided. At the time of our inspection 184 people were receiving support with personal care.

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

Everyone involved in the running of the service, from the managers and provider to the care staff, exuded passion for delivering care that was person centred and gave people a meaningful life. All 'Professional Carers' staff went above and beyond to provide people with positive outcomes and experiences; people were consistently placed at the heart of the service.

People and family members described the service as 'exceptional' and told us staff were "excellent" and "outstanding". Strong, positive relationships had been developed between staff and people and it was evident that staff went out of their way to ensure people lived a happier life. People had been supported and encouraged to access various community groups to develop friendships, maintain independence and improve life skills; one person told us staff had "changed their life for the better".

It was clear that staff knew people extremely well; people and family members were consistently positive about the caring, compassionate and respectful attitudes of all staff. People were supported through difficult times and staff were constantly looking at ways to help them experience happiness and deal with situations such as relationship breakdowns and loss of people close to them.

It was evident the passion within the care staff had been cascaded down from the management team and provider. Professional Carers is a family run service with a management team who shared the constant desire and drive to improve people's lives and promote an extremely person-centred culture. Their excellent working relationship and shared vision and values had resulted in many positive outcomes for people.

The service was constantly looking at ways to grow and improve the quality of care and had been recognised by external professionals for their willingness to 'step up' and support with new initiatives and pilot schemes. The collaborative work involved had resulted in people receiving more streamlined assessments that were based on their individual needs, preferences and best practice guidance. Due to the excellent working relationships between staff and health and social care professionals, people received a package of care that was right for them.

The service placed great emphasis on 'community ethos'. They regularly organised charity and social events and attended community groups that encouraged people, family and members of the public to engage with the service. These events and community groups had helped to reduce social isolation and raise awareness

of important health issues.

People told us they felt safe with staff who supported them and family members were confident their loved ones were safe. Staff knew how to recognise abuse and were confident reporting safeguarding concerns. Sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and skilled staff were deployed to meet people's needs and people told us staff were always on time.

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.

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 31 January 2017).

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?

This service was safe.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Good ●

Is the service effective?

This service was effective.

Details are in our effective findings below.

Good ●

Is the service caring?

This service was exceptionally caring.

Details are in our caring findings below.

Outstanding ☆

Is the service responsive?

This service was responsive.

Details are in our responsive findings below.

Good ●

Is the service well-led?

This service was exceptionally well-led

Details are in our well-led findings below.

Outstanding ☆

Professional Carers

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 and one 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.

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.

The inspection activity started on 4 September 2019 and ended on 10 September 2019. We visited the office location on 4 and 6 September 2019.

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 of this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

We spoke with 15 people who used the service and 10 family members about their experience of the care provided. We spoke with six members of staff including the registered manager, director of operations and provider.

We reviewed a range of records. This included six people's care records and multiple medication records. We looked at four 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.

After the inspection

We continued to seek clarification from the provider to validate evidence found. We spoke with two professionals who regularly worked with the service.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

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

At the last inspection this key question was rated as good. At this inspection this key question has remained good. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- People told us they felt safe with staff who supported them. One person told us they "Felt safe and reassured that they had a good relationship with staff who supported them," another told us they "Felt safe and reassured that the carers were there to help".
- Family members told us they were confident their loved ones were safe. One family member told us they felt reassured that their relative was in safe hands. Another told us staff had built a nice relationship with their relative which made them feel safe and told us office staff were good at contacting them if they had any concerns.
- Staff received training and had access to relevant information and guidance about protecting people from harm. Staff understood what was meant by abuse and were confident reporting safeguarding concerns.
- Any safeguarding concerns were recorded appropriately within 'care planner' and reviewed to ensure the relevant professionals were notified.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management;

- Individual risks to people and the environment had been assessed and were managed appropriately. Care records provided clear information around identified risks in order for staff to keep people safe.
- Collaborative working with hospital staff helped to ensure people had access to correct equipment and support when discharged back to home.
- People were given wallet sized cards that provided emergency contact details for the service when out in the community. This helped to ensure people always had access to support.
- The service recognised the risks associated with adverse weather conditions and helped to raise awareness through the 'stay well this winter' campaign.

Using medicines safely

- Medicines were managed safely by suitably trained staff. Records relating to the administration of medicines had been completed accurately by staff.
- Medicines were managed safely by suitably trained staff.
- Those who required support with their medication told us they received it at the right times.

Staffing and recruitment

- Safe recruitment processes continued to be followed.
- Sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and trained staff were deployed to meet people's needs. People told us staff visited at the times agreed within their care plans and had never experienced occasions where staff missed a call.

- People told us they were supported by regular and consistent staff which made them feel safe.

Preventing and controlling infection

- Staff had received training around preventing and controlling infection and had access to relevant guidance and information. They used personal protective equipment (PPE) and good hand washing techniques to minimise the spread of infection.

Learning lessons when things go wrong

- The service kept a record of any significant events including accidents that occurred within people's homes. Incidents were reviewed regularly by the registered manager to look at patterns and trends. Action was taken to prevent incidents occurring in the future.
- Staff had the ability to instantly record incidents using their hand-held electronic device; live alerts were sent to the office staff to review immediately and ensure appropriate action was taken.

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 remained 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; Staff working with other agencies to provide consistent, effective, timely care

- Effective collaborative working with other health and social care professionals meant that detailed assessments of people's needs were completed prior to people receiving support.
- The service had implemented a 'trusted assessor' role which involves a further detailed assessment involving themselves and health and social care professionals after six weeks of people using the service. This helped to ensure people received effective care and support.
- A 'home to assess team' had been created to work alongside the trusted assessors and health and social care professionals to assess people's needs within their home to determine the most appropriate support and service provision.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- Staff were competent, knowledgeable and skilled and carried out their role effectively. Newly recruited staff had completed a comprehensive induction and shadowing period.
- The on-site training facility meant staff continued to receive regular in-depth training throughout their employment in order to maintain up-to-date skills and knowledge.
- Staff felt supported in their role and received regular one-to-one supervision. They told us the on-going support enabled them to discuss their work concerns or learning and development when needed.

Supporting people to live healthier lives, access healthcare services and support

- Where people received additional support from health and social care professionals this was written in their care records.
- The registered manager and staff were aware of the process they should follow if a person required support from any healthcare professionals.
- People were supported by staff to access health appointments or contact medical professionals where needed.

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

- Care records documented when people needed support with preparing food and drink.
- People told us staff helped with their meals where required and always made sure they had access to drinks and snacks before leaving.
- Care records identified risks associated with poor food and drink intake.

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 (CoP) for them to authorise people to be deprived of their liberty. At the time of our inspection no one using the service was subject to any authorisations under CoP.

- People told us they were offered choice and control over the care they received.
- Records to evidence consent for care had mostly been signed by the right person; some assessment and care plan agreement forms had been signed by family members. We saw no evidence of impact on people and this had been addressed by the end of the 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.

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

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

- There was a strong, visible person-centred culture and staff were highly motivated to provide kind and compassionate care. Staff had developed strong, caring and respectful relationships with people and those close to them.
- All people and family members we spoke with described the care and support given by staff and the service as a whole as 'excellent' and 'outstanding'. Comments included, "[Staff name] is outstanding and dedicated to the care she provides," "Staff are extremely caring and compassionate to all the family," "Every carer is brilliant" and "The support [staff] give me is excellent."
- Staff showed the same level of passion for excellent care as the management team and provider and worked hard to implement this. One person receiving support had experienced a life changing event which resulted in them experiencing low mood and difficulties managing various important aspects of their daily life. Care staff supported this person outside of their contracted hours to manage and organise these. This has meant they are now able to concentrate on 'healing' and not worry about other aspects of their life.
- The service and staff went above and beyond to ensure people were given compassionate care and supported them through difficult times to help give them a better and happier life. One person living with dementia had experienced the loss of a life-long friend who also supported them to get out into the local community. Staff worked hard with family to find a way to help this person deal with their grief and access the community. This person is now much happier and has developed new friends as a result of their support.
- Staff and managers recognised the importance of supporting families as a whole to ensure people had more fulfilled lives. The service had supported a father and daughter to experience a better life and achieve positive outcomes.
- Due to the excellent communication and commitment amongst staff it had been identified that two people who were isolated and had limited family and friends lived locally and had similar interests. Staff worked together and changed their rotas to enable the two people to meet regularly. A strong friendship has since been developed and they meet and talk on a regular basis.

Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- Staff went above and beyond to help people develop and maintain their independence. One person commented that if it hadn't been for staff giving up their own time to help them complete exercises given by the physiotherapy team, they would not have been able to walk into an important family event.
- The service had recognised problems encountered with people having access to the right equipment when discharged from hospital. They took action and invested in items to offer extra support to prevent re-

admission.

- People told us staff always treated them with dignity and respect and provided care and support in a way that made them feel comfortable. They felt staff were patient and listened to them at all times.
- Staff understood the importance of maintaining people's confidentiality and gave examples of how they did this.

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

- People and family members told us they were given the opportunity to share their views about the care they received.
- Regular review meetings were held with people and family members to discuss care and obtain people's views.

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 remained 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's individual care needs had been identified and care plans had been developed and regularly reviewed with the involvement of the person and their family members where appropriate. Plans included information regarding their social history, likes and dislikes and cultural and religious beliefs to allow staff to get to know people before providing support.
- Family members told us their relative's care plans were well written and clearly outlined their care and support needs. They also told us daily records were used as two-way communication between them and the carers which allowed them to be kept up-to-date regarding their relative's care and also inform staff of any changes or concerns.
- The service had recently implemented a new electronic care planning system which meant staff had access relevant and up-to-date information regarding people's call times and tasks to be completed at each call.
- The electronic devices allowed for both office staff and care staff to send immediate messages about changes in people's needs to ensure that records were updated where required.

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 service recorded and shared information relating to people's communication needs. Care records provided guidance for staff to effectively communicate with people who were identified as having communication needs or difficulties.
- The registered manager was aware of the need to ensure that information was made available to people in a way they would understand, such as large print for those with sight impairment, should they require it.

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 supported by staff to access community groups to help with social engagement and encourage people to access the community.
- Regular social events and fundraisers were organised by the management team to offer people the opportunity to engage with members of the community and reduce social isolation.
- The management team ensured family members were actively involved in joint meetings held about people's care; this helped people to maintain relationships with those close to them.

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- People and family members told us they knew who to contact if they had any concerns and were confident any issues would be dealt with.
- Each person's care plan contained information about who to contact should they wish to make a complaint.
- The service maintained a record of complaints to show how complaints had been dealt with; those recorded had been dealt with appropriately.

End of life care and support

- The service was not currently supporting anyone with end of life, however the registered manager told us they work closely with health care professionals and follow guidance provided to ensure people receive the right support.
- Staff received training in end-of-life care provided by external healthcare professionals.

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 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;

- People and family members described the service as 'excellent' and 'outstanding'. They told us the caring approach of all staff and managers was 'exceptional'. Comments included, "They [managers] provide an excellent service, very passionate and caring," "I cannot praise professional carers enough, what they do for [relative] goes above and beyond" and "They [Professional Carers] are amazing, I couldn't be without them."
- The management team and provider showed immense passion for their role and placed people at the heart of their service.
- The passion displayed by the managers was shared by all staff who were proud to work for the service and motivated to deliver care that was person-centred and provided positive outcomes for people. Staff told us "I get so much pleasure out of working for [managers] and looking after people who need it," "People come first. [Managers] encourage us to do the little extras for them" and "I would gladly come in on my days off to help people if they need it."
- The managers and provider recognised the hard work and commitment of all staff by awarding 'employee of the month' picked by people and other staff. An 'employee of the month' board was displayed in the main office to show all positive comments received.
- The implementation of the 'forget-me-not' initiative meant that greater awareness was raised for people living with dementia; support was given not only to people and family but also members of the local community.

Working in partnership with others

- The management team had developed strong working relationships with other agencies and organisations and worked collaboratively to provide good outcomes for people.
- Positive feedback was received from other healthcare agencies regarding the professionalism and person-centred ethos adopted by the service and the outcomes this achieved for people. One professional told us "I have always found them [Professional Carers] extremely professional, always willing to step up and support our service" another commented "The wrap around carers are so good, they are extremely professional, proactive, positive and most of all caring. This is a fantastic service."
- Professional Carers had been the lead service in two pilot schemes created by a local hospital and commissioners designed to make the transition from hospital back home as smooth as possible.
- Working together and taking a holistic approach meant that people received care that was based on good practice, informed preferences and needs based. It has prevented long stays in hospital and avoided duplicate assessments.

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

- Managers were continuously looking at ways to involve and engage people. A recent campaign was run to recruit volunteers enabling people to have an input in how the service was run. One person had developed new skills that they were able to use in other volunteer roles.
- Developing and maintaining independence forms part of the values instilled by the management team. The service works closely with a local community charity that supports people getting back into work.
- Great emphasis was placed on community engagement and bringing people together to promote social inclusion. The service joined a local neighbourhood scheme designed to start conversations that would bring people together.
- The service had implemented '5 Steps to Well-being'; this was designed to bring people together and connect, to keep people active and learn and develop new skills. Open days were organised to help promote positive wellbeing.
- Other events such as fundraisers and celebrations were organised to support their ethos of community engagement and social interaction.

Continuous learning and improving care

- The service had developed its own dedicated training centre located next to their main office; this is accessible to staff at all times and provides all the training facilities required to deliver both computer based and practical training.
- Staff had been given 'champion' roles in various key subjects of care to offer support and guidance to other staff when needed.
- The managers were keen to continuously learn and improve their skills and maintain up-to-date knowledge to ensure better care was provided for people.
- Effective quality assurance systems were in place to monitor key aspects of the service.

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 registered manager was supported by the director of operations and provider; the close family relationship between them resulted in an extremely passionate working environment that was cascaded down to all staff.
- The managers were also supported by a team of 'field supervisors', care co-ordinators and senior care staff who worked extremely closely with care staff and health care professionals to help provide better outcomes for people.
- The managers ensured we were notified of events as required by regulation
- The managers and provider were aware of their legal responsibilities and the importance of investigating incidents/events that occurred as well as complying with duty of candour responsibilities.