

Inspection Report

10 November 2023



Bluebird Care

Type of service: Domiciliary Care Agency
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Assurance, Challenge and Improvement in Health and Social Care

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1.0 Service information

Organisation/Registered Provider: Bluebird Care	Registered Manager: Mr. John Fox
Responsible Individual: Ms. Susan Elizabeth MacLaughlin	Date registered: 1 July 2023
Person in charge at the time of inspection: Manager	
Brief description of the accommodation/how the service operates: Bluebird Care is a domiciliary care agency conventional type which provides care and support to service users with a range of conditions including physical disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health problems and dementia. Care is provided in service users' own homes; service users receive care and support with personal care and daily living skills.	

2.0 Inspection summary

An unannounced inspection took place on 10 November 2023 between 10.40 a.m. and 12.45 p.m. The inspection was conducted by a care inspector.

The inspection examined the agency's governance and management arrangements, reviewing areas such as staff recruitment, professional registrations, staff induction and training and adult safeguarding. The reporting and recording of accidents and incidents, complaints, whistleblowing, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), service user involvement, restrictive practices and Dysphagia management was also reviewed.

Good practice was identified in relation to service user involvement. There were good governance and management arrangements in place.

No areas for improvement were identified.

Name of Agency uses the term 'customers' to describe the people to whom they provide care and support. For the purposes of the inspection report, the term 'service user' is used, in keeping with the relevant regulations.

3.0 How we inspect

RQIA's inspections form part of our ongoing assessment of the quality of services. Our reports reflect how they were performing at the time of our inspection, highlighting both good practice and any areas for improvement.

It is the responsibility of the service provider to ensure compliance with legislation, standards and best practice, and to address any deficits identified during our inspections.

In preparation for this inspection, a range of information about the service was reviewed. This included any registration information and any other written or verbal information received from service users, relatives, staff or the Commissioning Trust.

As a public-sector body, RQIA has a duty to respect, protect and fulfil the rights that people have under the Human Rights Act 1998 when carrying out our functions. In our inspections of domiciliary care agencies, we are committed to ensuring that the rights of people who receive services are protected. This means we will seek assurances from providers that they take all reasonable steps to promote people's rights. Users of domiciliary care services have the right to expect their dignity and privacy to be respected and to have their independence and autonomy promoted. They should also experience the individual choices and freedoms associated with any person living in their own home.

Information was provided to service users, relatives, staff and other stakeholders on how they could provide feedback on the quality of services. This included questionnaires and an electronic survey.

4.0 What did people tell us about the service?

During the inspection we spoke with one service user and one staff member. HSC Trust representatives' comments were also sought.

The information provided indicated that there were no concerns in relation to the agency.

Comments received included:

Service user's comments:

- "The staff are very helpful. I would talk to them if I was worried about anything. I would wish that every company had staff like them."

Staff comments:

- "I enjoy my job. It can be challenging but the manager is very supportive. I have received great training and courses are always available. The care is safe."

HSC Trust representatives' comments:

- "Communication between ourselves and the Bluebird office is always clear and responsive. They highlight any concerns regarding service users in a timely way. If a service user has raised an issue with the care or carer, Bluebird are quick in ensuring it is discussed and fully investigated. They attend care plan reviews, including reviews organised at last minute. Feedback from service users is always positive regarding the care they receive and their interactions with the office staff."
- "I cannot fault Bluebird Care as a care company. In so many circumstances, they have gone above and beyond to provide a high quality service to our service users. Staff are very approachable and accommodating."

- “Any issues are dealt with promptly and fully investigated and Bluebird are great at letting us know when they feel there has been a change with a service user – this has prevented hospital admissions in the past. The feedback from carers and service users has always been good. In instances where they are unable to attend a review, they would send through a report.”
- “I have no issues with the care provided by Bluebird. There are only ever positive comments. When I ring Bluebird’s office, I am always able to speak with a member of staff and if the person I am looking for isn’t available, they always phone back promptly. The team are very pleasant to deal with. One service user’s relative told me recently how great Bluebird staff are.”

Returned questionnaires indicated that the respondents were very satisfied with the care and support provided.

No responses were received to the staff survey.

5.0 The inspection

5.1 What has this service done to meet any areas for improvement identified at or since the last inspection?

The last care inspection of the agency was undertaken on 23 January 2023 by a care inspector. No areas for improvement were identified.

5.2 Inspection findings

5.2.1 What are the systems in place for identifying and addressing risks?

The agency’s provision for the welfare, care and protection of service users was reviewed. The organisation’s adult safeguarding policy and procedures were reflective of the Department of Health’s (DoH) regional policy and clearly outlined the procedure for staff in reporting concerns.

The organisation had an identified Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC). As the ASC is not present in the agency on a full time basis, advice was given to the manager to also complete the relevant ASC training course. The agency’s annual Adult Safeguarding Position report was reviewed and found to be satisfactory.

Discussions with the manager established that they were knowledgeable in matters relating to adult safeguarding, the role of the ASC and the process for reporting and managing adult safeguarding concerns.

Staff were required to complete adult safeguarding training during induction and every two years thereafter. Staff who spoke with the inspector had a clear understanding of their responsibility in identifying and reporting any actual or suspected incidences of abuse and the process for reporting concerns in normal business hours and out of hours.

The agency retained records of any referrals made to the HSC Trust in relation to adult safeguarding. No referrals had been made since the last inspection.

Service users said they had no concerns regarding their safety; they described how they could speak to staff if they had any concerns about safety or the care being provided.

The manager was aware what incidents should be reported to RQIA.

Staff were provided with training appropriate to the requirements of their role. Where service users required the use of specialised equipment to assist them with moving, this was included within the agency's mandatory training programme.

A review of care records identified that moving and handling risk assessments and care plans were up to date.

Care reviews had been undertaken in keeping with the agency's policies and procedures. There was also evidence of regular contact with service users and their representatives, in line with the commissioning trust's requirements.

All staff had been provided with training in relation to medicines management. The manager advised that no service users required their medicine to be administered with a syringe. The manager was aware that should this be required, a competency assessment would be undertaken before staff undertook this task.

The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) provides a legal framework for making decisions on behalf of service users who may lack the mental capacity to do so for themselves. The MCA requires that, as far as possible, service users make their own decisions and are helped to do so when needed. When service users lack mental capacity to take particular decisions, any made on their behalf must be in their best interests and as least restrictive as possible.

Staff had completed appropriate Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) training appropriate to their job roles. The manager reported that none of the service users were subject to DoLS.

5.2.2 What are the arrangements for promoting service user involvement?

From reviewing service users' care records, it was good to note that service users had an input into devising their own plan of care. The service users' care plans contained details about their likes and dislikes and the level of support they may require. Care and support plans are kept under regular review and services users and/or their relatives participate, where appropriate, in the review of the care provided on an annual basis, or when changes occur.

5.2.3 What are the systems in place for identifying service users' Dysphagia needs in partnership with the Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)?

A number of service users were assessed by SALT with recommendations provided and some required their food and fluids to be of a specific consistency. A review of a sample of individual training records confirmed that staff had completed training in Dysphagia and in relation to how to respond to choking incidents.

The specific recommendations of the SALT together with dietary requirements were recorded in service users' care plans.

5.2.4 What systems are in place for staff recruitment and are they robust?

A review of the agency's staff recruitment records confirmed that all pre-employment checks, including criminal record checks (AccessNI), were completed and verified before staff members commenced employment and had direct engagement with service users. Checks were made to ensure that staff were appropriately registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) or the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) or any other relevant regulatory body; there was a system in place for professional registrations to be monitored by the manager.

There were no volunteers working in the agency.

5.2.5 What are the arrangements for staff induction and are they in accordance with NISCC Induction Standards for social care staff?

There was evidence that all newly appointed staff had completed a structured orientation and induction, having regard to NISCC's Induction Standards for new workers in social care, to ensure they were competent to carry out the duties of their job in line with the agency's policies and procedures. There was a robust, structured, three-day induction programme which also included shadowing of a more experienced staff member. Written records were retained by the agency of the person's capability and competency in relation to their job role.

The agency has maintained a record for each member of staff of all training, including induction and professional development activities undertaken.

5.2.6 What are the arrangements to ensure robust managerial oversight and governance?

There were monitoring arrangements in place in compliance with Regulations and Standards. A review of the reports of the agency's quality monitoring established that there was engagement with service users, service users' relatives, staff and HSC Trust representatives. The reports included details of a review of service user care records; accident/incidents; safeguarding matters; staff recruitment and training, and staffing arrangements. Advice was given to the manager to ensure these are signed monthly by both the registered individual and the registered manager.

The Annual Quality Report was reviewed and was satisfactory.

No incidents had occurred that required investigation under the Serious Adverse Incidents (SAI) procedure.

The agency's registration certificate was up to date and displayed appropriately along with current certificates of public and employers' liability insurance.

There was a system in place to ensure that complaints were managed in accordance with the agency's policy and procedure. Where complaints were received since the last inspection, these were appropriately managed and were reviewed as part of the agency's quality monitoring process. It was positive to note the agency had received a number of compliments from various sources since the last inspection.

The Statement of Purpose required updating with RQIA's contact details. This was submitted by the manager after the inspection.

Where staff are unable to gain access to a service users home, there is a policy in place that clearly directs staff from the agency as to what actions they should take to manage and report such situations in a timely manner.

6.0 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)/Areas for Improvement

This inspection resulted in no areas for improvement being identified. Findings of the inspection were discussed with Mr. John Fox, Registered Manager as part of the inspection process and can be found in the main body of the report.



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