

Inspection Report

Name of Service: Age NI Shared Lives

Provider: Age NI

Date of Inspection: 27 March 2025

Information on legislation and standards underpinning inspections can be found on our website <https://www.rqia.org.uk/>

1.0 Service information

Organisation/Registered Provider:	Age NI
Responsible Individual/Responsible Person:	Linda Robinson
Registered Manager:	Alison Milford
Service Profile – Age NI's Shared Lives service is an Adult Placement Agency which seeks to provide personalised, safe care and support to people over 65 years who are in need of support, promoting the independence and wellbeing of older people and enable them to remain living in their own communities for longer. At present, Age NI Shared Lives service offers day support and plans to develop opportunities for short breaks and adult long term placements.	

2.0 Inspection summary

An announced inspection was undertaken on 27 March 2025 between 9.55 a.m. and 3.15 p.m. by a care Inspector.

The last care inspection of the adult placement agency was undertaken on 4 December 2023 by a care inspector. No areas for improvement were identified.

This inspection was undertaken to evidence how the adult placement agency was performing in relation to the regulations and standards, and to determine if the adult placement agency was delivering safe, effective and compassionate care and if the service is well led.

The inspection evidenced that safe, effective and compassionate care was delivered to service users and that the agency was well led. No areas for improvement were identified. Details and examples of the inspection findings can be found in the main body of the report.

3.0 The inspection

3.1 How we Inspect

RQIA's inspections form part of our ongoing assessment of the quality of services. Our reports reflect how the agency was performing against the regulations and standards, at the time of our inspection, highlighting both good practice and any areas for improvement. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure compliance with legislation, standards and best practice, and to address any deficits identified during our inspections.

To prepare for this inspection we reviewed information held by RQIA about this agency. This included registration information and any other written or verbal information received from service users, relatives, Adult Placement Carers, staff or the commissioning trust.

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

3.2 What people told us about the service and their quality of life

Throughout the inspection the RQIA inspector will seek to speak with service users, their relatives, Adult Placement Carers and staff for their opinions on the quality of the care and support, and their experiences of using this service.

We spoke to service users and staff to seek their views of using and working within Age NI Shared Lives service.

Service users described the positive impact of the support offered by the Shared Lives carers, particularly to opportunity to attend social functions, visit the cinema, craft exhibitions, and especially to have company and interact with others. One service user said the carer 'is a good friend to me' and another said the service 'has made a good difference to me...I look forward to getting out'.

Service users and their relatives who responded to the questionnaires indicated that they were very satisfied with all aspects of the service. A service user commented 'I get help in my house if needed' and a relative reported her father's surprise at the service being available: 'I can't understand how I have been able to get this help – it's marvellous!'

Adult Placement Carers who responded to the questionnaire also indicated a high level of satisfaction. A carer commented 'I think it is an excellent service and I am very happy to be part of it'. Another carer reported 'I'm very happy with the standard of services provided. Each stage of the placement process was handled thoroughly with care and consideration for all involved'. A further carer commented 'I feel equipped to be able to support the older person effectively and I also feel very supported by Alison at Age NI. Assessment and training was very thorough and helpful'.

The inspector met with a social worker who has responsibility for assessing the needs of potential service users and carers and is involved in the process of matching and monitoring placements. This member of staff spoke positively about the induction process, quality of training and the support provided through the provision of regular, professional supervision and the availability of the manager.

3.3 Inspection findings

3.3.1 Staffing and Carer arrangements

Safety in Adult Placement Agencies begins at the point of staff and carer recruitment and continues through to induction with regular training, continued monitoring and support for carers and supervision for agency staff.

A review of records evidenced that there were robust arrangements in place for the recruitment of staff and carers; for carers, this included full employment histories, obtaining criminal record checks (AccessNI) for all household members over 10 years, suitable references and proof or declaration of medical fitness.

All applications to become an Adult Placement Carer were fully scrutinised by a Panel before being approved. There was also a system to match the needs of individual service users with suitable carers.

The agency had maintained a record for each member of staff of all training undertaken. Staff were also provided with supervision by the manager.

There were arrangements in place for each placement to be regularly monitored by agency staff to ensure service users received safe and effective care and that carers were sufficiently supported by the agency. Advice was provided to the manager regarding the inclusion of a prompt within the template of the monitoring meetings for any children in the carer's household approaching 10 years of age to have an AccessNI check completed in a timely manner.

3.4.2 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 policy and procedures reflected information contained within the Department of Health's (DOH) regional policy 'Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership' July 2015 and clearly outlined the procedure for staff in reporting concerns.

The organisation has an identified Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC). The manager was knowledgeable in matters relating to adult safeguarding, the role of the ASC and the process for reporting adult safeguarding concerns. The agency has a system for retaining a record of any referrals made to the HSC Trusts in relation to adult safeguarding.

Staff were required to complete adult safeguarding training and regular updates thereafter. Staff indicated they had a clear understanding of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting any actual or suspected incidences of abuse. They could describe their role in relation to reporting poor practice and their understanding of the agency's policy and procedure with regard to whistleblowing.

Carers were required to complete adult safeguarding training during their induction programme and updates thereafter in line with legislation and draft standards.

There were systems in place to ensure that notifiable events were investigated and reported to RQIA or other relevant bodies appropriately.

Whilst no service users experienced difficulties with swallowing, or required their food and fluids to be modified, training was given to carers in food safety and Dysphagia awareness. Carers were also provided with training in health and safety, fire safety, emergency first aid, infection prevention and control, dementia awareness, moving and handling and any other training which may be needed specific to individual service users.

The Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (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, being helped to do so when needed, and any decisions made on their behalf are in their best interests and as least restrictive as possible.

Staff had completed appropriate Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) training appropriate to their roles and carers were provided with training in Equality, Human Rights, MCA and DoLS.

3.3.3 Arrangements for promoting service user involvement

RQIA was assured that service users were central in directing their care plans as far as possible. This was confirmed by service users and staff. The service users' care plans contained details about their likes and dislikes, the level of support they required and how this should be delivered; reviews of care were signed by service users, their family or representative. Care plans and associated risk assessments were noted to be written in a professional and respectful manner which promoted the dignity and confidentiality of the service user and all other relevant parties.

There was evidence of regular contact with service users and their representatives.

3.3.4 Quality of Management Systems

There have been no changes to the managerial arrangements within the agency since the previous inspection. Staff described the manager as 'very supportive' and told us how the manager will regularly meet with the team to discuss any issues. It was positive to note that staff felt very involved with the service and could avail of a range of other training events and workshops to benefit their practice.

There were monitoring arrangements in place in compliance with regulations and draft standards. Records reviewed showed that monitoring visits of service user placements were undertaken on a regular basis. Reports relating to the agency's monitoring visits were reviewed and found to be robust.

The provider had ensured that the quality assurance systems in place were effective in achieving positive outcomes for service users. There was a system of internal audits and an annual satisfaction survey where feedback from service users, their relatives, carers and other stakeholders was sought. The feedback was incorporated into an annual Monitoring Quality in Adult Placement Agencies report.

The manager was aware of the type of incidents which are required to be notified to RQIA. No incidents had occurred that required investigation under the Serious Adverse Incidents (SAI) procedure.

There was a process for recording complaints in accordance with the agency's policy and procedures.

4.0 Quality Improvement Plan/Areas for Improvement

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



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