

Inspection Report

30 July 2024



Iona House Supported Living Service

Type of service: Domiciliary Care Agency
Address: 19b Derry Road, Strabane, BT82 8DT
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Assurance, Challenge and Improvement in Health and Social Care

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1.0 Service information

Organisation/Registered Provider: Apex Housing Association	Registered Manager: Mrs Amanda Ferris
Responsible Individual: Ms Sheena McCallion	Date registered: Acting
Person in charge at the time of inspection: Mrs Amanda Ferris	
Brief description of the accommodation/how the service operates: Iona House is a domiciliary care agency, supported living type which provides 24 hour care and support to service users over 18 years of age with mild to moderate learning disability. Accommodation is provided in 12 single ensuite rooms in three bungalows, with shared living, dining, kitchen and bathroom facilities.	

2.0 Inspection summary

An unannounced inspection took place on 30 July 2024 between 10.18 a.m. and 3.10 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 were also reviewed.

No areas for improvement were identified.

Good practice was identified in relation to service user involvement, staff training and the monitoring of staffs' registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC). There were good governance and management arrangements in place.

We would like to thank the manager, service users and staff for their support and co-operation throughout the inspection process.

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 previous areas for improvement identified, 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.

Having reviewed the model "We Matter" Adult Learning Disability Model for NI 2020, the Vision states, 'We want individuals with a learning disability to be respected and empowered to lead a full and healthy life in their community'.

RQIA shares this vision and want to review the support individuals are offered to make choices and decisions in their life that enable them to develop and to live a safe, active and valued life. RQIA will review how service users who have a learning disability are respected and empowered to lead a full and healthy life in the community and are supported to make choices and decisions that enables them to develop and live safe, active and valued lives.

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

4.0 What did people tell us about the service?

During the inspection we spoke with a number of service users and staff members.

The information provided indicated that they had no concerns in relation to the agency.

Comments received included:

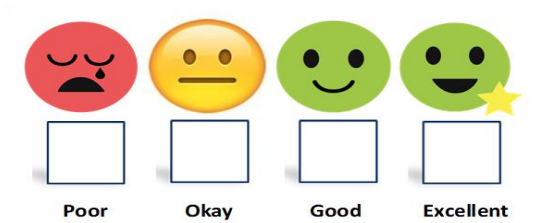
Service users' comments:

- "Great place. I like staff and they are good to me."
- "I like living here. I get to choose what I do here. I am going to the gym today."
- "Dinner is lovely."

Staff comments:

- “The manager is really supportive and very approachable.”
- “Good training provided by Apex. I have completed DoLS and Dysphagia recently.”
- “Care and support is of a good standard and service users are offered choice in everything they do here.”
- “Excellent team and place to work.”
- “Great outings, activities and holidays provided. Service users choose where they want to go and what they want to do.”

During the inspection we provided a number of easy read questionnaires for those supported to obtain their comments on the quality of the service:



- Do you feel your care is safe?
- Is the care and support you get effective?
- Do you feel staff treat you with compassion?
- How do you feel your care is managed?

Returned questionnaires indicated that the respondents were very satisfied with the care and support provided. Written comments included:

- “The staff are good to me. I go out with my family. Staff took me on holidays.”
- “I like going to church, on holidays and on bus runs.”
- “I like helping out in my home. I go to gym and shopping. I enjoy holidays.”

A number of staff responded to the electronic survey. The respondents indicated that they were ‘very satisfied’ that care provided was safe, effective and compassionate and that the service was well led. Written comments included:

- “Iona House is a fantastic place to work. The manager is approachable, professional and caring. The service is well led by the manager and this filters to other staff. We are motivated and happy at our work. The clients are so well looked after, everything is person centred and they live their best life at Iona.”
- “Iona House is a wonderful place to work and tenants are all treated with care and compassion and are involved in how their care and support is delivered. They have recently been on a holiday to Centre Parcs and a country music weekend in Donegal which was enjoyed by all and personal outcomes met. The service is well led by a manager who involves staff and tenants in what is happening within the scheme. She is very approachable, respects opinions of others, is fair and a great mentor.”

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 7 April 2023 by a care inspector. A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was issued. This was approved by the care inspector and was validated during this inspection.

Areas for improvement from the last inspection on 7 April 2023		
Action required to ensure compliance with The Domiciliary Care Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007		Validation of compliance
Area for improvement 1 Ref: Regulation 15 (2) (a)(b)(c) Stated: First time	The registered person shall ensure that the agency is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the care and welfare of service users in respect of managing the moving and handling and dysphagia needs of service users including an accurate and comprehensive care plan.	Met
	Action taken as confirmed during the inspection: The returned quality improvement plan and discussion with the manager confirmed that this area for improvement had been addressed. Review of a sample of care records evidenced that this area for improvement had been addressed.	
Action required to ensure compliance with The Domiciliary Care Agencies Minimum Standards (revised) 2021		Validation of compliance
Area for improvement 1 Ref: Standard 12.6 Stated: First time	The registered person shall ensure that a robust system is implemented to include the monitoring of staffs' professional registrations for any staff member supplied by a recruitment agency.	Met
	Action taken as confirmed during the inspection: The returned quality improvement plan and discussion with the manager confirmed that this area for improvement had been addressed. Review of the staffs' professional registrations record evidenced this record included the monitoring of staff members supplied by a recruitment agency.	

Area for improvement 2 Ref: Standard 15.10 Stated: First time	The registered person shall ensure that records are kept of all complaints and these include details of all communications with complainants, the investigative process, the outcome and action (if any) that is to be taken.	Met
	Action taken as confirmed during the inspection: The returned quality improvement plan and discussion with the manager confirmed that this area for improvement had been addressed. Review of the complaints record evidenced that this area for improvement had been addressed.	

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). 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. They could also describe their role in relation to reporting poor practice.

The agency retained records of any referrals made to the relevant Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in relation to adult safeguarding. A review of records confirmed that these had been managed appropriately.

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 that RQIA must be informed of any safeguarding incident that is reported to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

Staff had been provided with moving and handling 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 liquid medicine to be administered orally 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 who spoke with the inspector demonstrated their understanding that service users who lack capacity to make decisions about aspects of their care and treatment have rights as outlined in the MCA.

Staff had completed DoLS training appropriate to their job roles. There were arrangements in place to ensure that service users who required high levels of supervision or monitoring and restriction had had their capacity considered and, where appropriate, assessed. Where a service user was experiencing a deprivation of liberty, the care records contained details of assessments completed and agreed outcomes developed in conjunction with the HSC Trust representative.

There was a system in place for notifying RQIA if the agency was managing individual service users' monies in accordance with the guidance.

5.2.2 What are the arrangements for promoting service user involvement?

From reviewing service users' care records and through discussions with service users, it was positive to note that service users had been supported to have 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 service users and /or their relatives participate, where appropriate, in the review of the care provided on an annual basis, or when changes occur.

It was also positive to note that the agency had facilitated regular service users' meetings. This supported service users to discuss the provisions of their care and support. Some matters discussed included activities, menu planning, advocacy arrangements and complaints and compliments procedures.

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

Discussions with staff and review of service users' care records reflected the multi-disciplinary input and the collaborative working undertaken to ensure service users' health and social care needs were met within the agency. Staff implemented the specific recommendations of the SALT to ensure the care received in the setting was safe and effective.

Staff demonstrated a good knowledge of service users' wishes, preferences and assessed needs. These were recorded within care plans along with associated SALT dietary requirements. Staff were familiar with how food and fluids should be modified.

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; this included administrative staff.

Checks were made to ensure that staff were appropriately registered NISCC; there was a system in place for professional registrations, including staff provided by a recruitment agency, to be monitored by the manager and a record of checks retained. A spot check completed during the inspection indicated that staff were registered appropriately. Staff spoken with confirmed that they were aware of their responsibilities to keep their registrations up to date.

The manager stated that there were no volunteers supporting 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 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.

A review of the records relating to staff that were provided from recruitment agencies also identified that they had been recruited, inducted and trained in line with the regulations.

The agency has maintained a record for each member of staff of all training, including induction and professional development activities undertaken; this included staff that were supplied by recruitment agencies. The training information was retained electronically in a well organised manner.

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.

The Annual Quality Report was reviewed and was satisfactory.

The manager advised that 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. It was identified that no complaints had been received since the last inspection.

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. Discussion with staff confirmed that they knew how to receive and respond to complaints sensitively and were aware of their responsibility to report all complaints to the manager or the person in charge.

Our discussion with staff revealed they had a clear view about their role and responsibility to meet service user's individual needs and promote their rights, choices, independence and future outcomes. They identified staff training, policies and procedures, staff support mechanisms and the management team supported them to provide safe, effective and compassionate care in this setting.

The manager had submitted an application to RQIA for registration as manager; this will be reviewed in due course.

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 Mrs Amanda Ferris, Manager, as part of the inspection process and can be found in the main body of the report.



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