

Inspection Report

4 June 2024



Foyle Mental Health & Stepdown Service

Type of service: Domiciliary Care Agency

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Assurance, Challenge and Improvement in Health and Social Care

1.0 Service information

Organisation/Registered Provider: Praxis Care	Registered Manager: Ms. Ciara Duffy
Responsible Individual: Mrs. Alyson Dunn	Date registered: Acting since 14 July 2022
Person in charge at the time of inspection: Miss Miriam McAnea	
Brief description of the accommodation/how the service operates: Foyle Mental Health and Step Down Service is a domiciliary care agency supported living type which provides support to service users with mental ill-health within the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) area. Service users are supported by up to five staff and all live in their own homes within a five-mile radius of the registered office.	

2.0 Inspection summary

An unannounced inspection took place on 4 June 2024 between 1.30 p.m. and 3.30 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.

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.

The inspector would like to thank the person in charge, service users and staff for their help and support in the completion of the inspection.

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 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 process, we spoke with and received feedback from 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 user's comments:

- "I'm very happy with the service. I've been with them for quite a while. The staff know what they are doing. I would talk to them if I was worried."

Staff comments:

- "The little things we do to support our service users make such a difference. I really enjoy my job. We get great support. The managers are just at the end of the phone. There is no such thing as a stupid question. I'm confident if I raised a concern, it would be dealt with. I'm aware of what I need to do to keep up my NISCC registration."

All returned questionnaires indicated that the respondents were very satisfied with the care and support provided. No written comments were included.

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. No written comments were included.

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 10 May 2023 by a care inspector. No areas for improvement were identified.

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 person in charge 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 person in charge reported that had been no disclosures within the agency under its Whistleblowing Procedure.

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

Staff were provided with training appropriate to the requirements of their role. The person in charge reported that none of the service users currently required the use of specialised moving and handling equipment. They were aware of how to source such training should it be required in the future.

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.

The person in charge informed us that currently staff do not support any service users with medication. All staff had been provided with training in relation to medicines management.

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 person in charge reported that none of the service users were subject to DoLS. A resource folder was available for staff to reference.

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 service 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)?

The person in charge informed us none of the service users had swallowing difficulties. All the staff had been trained in how to respond to choking incidents.

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. Staff spoken with confirmed that they were aware of their responsibilities to keep their registrations up to date.

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.

The Annual Quality Report was reviewed and was satisfactory. It was positive to note a range of compliments from service users included in the report –

- “I feel safe opening up to staff and don't feel judged.”
- “Staff's sense of humour brightens my day.”
- “I couldn't ask for better staff.”
- “The staff member who supports me is like gold dust.”

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.

We discussed the acting management arrangements which have been ongoing since 14 July 2022; RQIA will keep this matter under review.

Where staff are unable to gain access to a service user's home, there is an operational procedure 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 Miss Miriam McAnea, person in charge as part of the inspection process and can be found in the main body of the report.



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