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Conifers Care Home

Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Good ●

Is the service safe?

Good ●

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

Summary of findings

Overall summary

About the service

Conifers Care Home is a residential care home providing personal care to 12 people aged 65 and over at the time of the inspection. The service can support up to 15 people in one adapted building.

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

Medicines were stored, managed and administered as prescribed. People were safe and protected from abuse and avoidable harm. The registered manager identified risks, and this was documented to support staff and ensure people's safety. Staff followed robust infection prevention and control procedures related to COVID-19 and other infections. Visitors were welcomed into the home and asked to follow infection prevention measures to keep people and staff safe. Staff were recruited safely, and staffing levels were flexible to support people's needs. The registered manager had systems to learn from incidents to further improve the safety of the service.

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.

The management team had auditing systems to maintain ongoing oversight of the service and make improvements where necessary. Quality assurance processes ensured people and their relatives were able to give their views of the service and improvements made when they were identified.

For more details, please see the full report which is on the CQC website at www.cqc.org.uk

Rating at last inspection and update:

The last rating for this service was requires improvement (published 05 May 2021).

The provider completed an action plan after the last inspection to show what they would do and by when to improve. At this inspection we found improvements had been made and the provider was no longer in breach of regulations.

Why we inspected

This inspection was prompted by a review of the information we held about this service.

We looked at infection prevention and control measures under the Safe key question. We look at this in all care home inspections even if no concerns or risks have been identified. This is to provide assurance that the service can respond to COVID-19 and other infection outbreaks effectively.

For those key questions not inspected, we used the ratings awarded at the last inspection to calculate the overall rating.

The overall rating for the service has changed from requires improvement to good based on the findings of this inspection.

We found no evidence during this inspection that people were at risk of harm from this concern. Please see the safe and well-led sections of this full report.

We carried out an unannounced inspection of this service on 17 January and 24 February 2021. Breaches of legal requirements were found. The provider completed an action plan after the last inspection to show what they would do and by when to improve safe care and treatment and good governance.

We undertook this focused inspection to check they had followed their action plan and to confirm they now met legal requirements. This report only covers our findings in relation to the Key Questions Safe and Well-led which contain those requirements.

You can read the report from our last comprehensive inspection, by selecting the 'all reports' link for Conifers Care Home on our website at www.cqc.org.uk.

Follow up

We will continue to monitor information we receive about the service, which will help inform when we next inspect.

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

Good ●

The service was safe.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service was well-led.

Details are in our well-led findings below.

Conifers Care Home

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 Health and Social Care Act 2008.

Inspection team

One inspector carried out the inspection.

Service and service type

Conifers Care Home is a 'care home'. People in care homes receive accommodation and nursing and/or personal care as a single package under one contractual agreement dependent on their registration with us. Conifers Care Home is a care home without nursing care. CQC regulates both the premises and the care provided, and both were looked at during this inspection.

Registered Manager

This service is required to have a registered manager. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. 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.

At the time of our inspection there was a registered manager in post.

Notice of inspection

This inspection was unannounced.

What we did before the inspection

The provider was not asked to complete a provider information return prior to this inspection. This is information we require providers to send us to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make. We took this into account when we inspected the service and made the judgements in this report.

We reviewed information we had received about the service since the last inspection. We sought feedback from the local authority, Healthwatch and professionals who work with the service. Healthwatch is an independent consumer champion that gathers and represents the views of the public about health and social care services in England. We used all this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

We spoke with two people who used the service and four relatives shared their views of the service. We spoke with five members of staff, the provider, two deputy managers, two carers and one health professional.

We had a walk around the home to make sure it was homely, suitable and safe. We observed the care and support people received. This helped us understand the experience of people who could not talk with us.

We reviewed five medicine administration records, medicines stocks and storage and observed medicines administration. We reviewed four people's care records and looked at two staff files in relation to recruitment. We looked at a variety of records relating to the management of the service, including policies and procedures.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

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

At our last inspection we rated this key question requires improvement. At this inspection the rating has changed to good. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Using medicines safely

At our last inspection the provider had failed to ensure medicines safety was effectively managed. This was a breach of regulation 12(1) of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014.

Enough improvement had been made at this inspection and the provider was no longer in breach of regulation 12.

- People received their medicines safely. Controlled drugs were stored safely and the stock we looked at matched the stock levels recorded. Controlled drugs are drugs that are subject to high levels of regulation as a result of government decisions about those drugs that are especially addictive and harmful.
- Medicines were managed safely and stored securely at the correct temperatures.
- There were systems in place to audit medication practices and clear records were kept showing when medicines had been administered or refused.
- Where people were prescribed medicines they only needed to take occasionally, guidance was in place for staff to follow. This helped to ensure those medicines were administered in a consistent way.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- The registered manager had systems to record, report and analyse any allegations of abuse. Staff had received training to recognise abuse and knew what action to take to keep people safe, including reporting any allegations to external agencies.
- Feedback from people, relatives and staff was that Conifers Care Home was a safe place to live. One person told us, "Safe? Absolutely and I have lived all over, and I know when it is not safe." One staff member said, "People that live here are definitely safe." One relative commented, "Without a shadow of a doubt, people are safe. [Family member] is happy getting the care that they need."

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- The management team had assessed and recorded risk to keep people safe. They had reviewed care plans to ensure assessments were visible and clearly linked to assessed risk which included mental health, mobility and any health conditions.
- Each person had a personal emergency evacuation plan [PEEP]. A PEEP is a plan for a person who may need assistance, for instance, to evacuate a building or reach a place of safety in the event of an emergency.
- People carried call bells to alert staff if they required support. One person had a bell in a bag on their walker. A second person wore their buzzer round their neck. They told us, "It's like a safety necklace. I press it when I want staff."

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 MCA 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 Mental Capacity Act (MCA). In care homes, and some hospitals, this is usually through MCA application procedures called the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

- We found the service was working within the principles of the MCA and if needed, appropriate legal authorisations were in place to deprive a person of their liberty. Any conditions related to DoLS authorisations were being met.

Staffing and recruitment

- Systems were in place to ensure staff were recruited safely and records confirmed a range of checks including references, disclosure and barring checks (DBS) had been requested and obtained prior to new staff commencing work in the service. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks provide information including details about convictions and cautions held on the Police National Computer. The information helps employers make safer recruitment decisions.

- The registered manager ensured appropriate staffing levels were in place to meet the assessed needs of people in a person-centred and timely way.

Preventing and controlling infection

- We were assured that the provider was preventing visitors from catching and spreading infections.

- We were assured that the provider was meeting shielding and social distancing rules.

- We were assured that the provider was admitting people safely to the service.

- We were assured that the provider was using PPE effectively and safely.

- We were assured that the provider was accessing testing for people using the service and staff.

- We were assured that the provider was promoting safety through the layout and hygiene practices of the premises.

- We were assured that the provider was making sure infection outbreaks can be effectively prevented or managed.

- We were assured that the provider's infection prevention and control policy was up to date.

The registered manager supported visits for people in accordance with infection prevention guidance. We spoke with two visitors who praised the safeguards in place when visiting their relative.

- Conifers Care Home had been awarded a five-star rating following their last inspection by the 'Food Standards Agency'. This graded the service as 'very good' in relation to meeting food safety standards about cleanliness, food preparation and associated recordkeeping.

Learning lessons when things go wrong

- Accidents and incidents were recorded and reviewed by the management team to identify any learning which may help to prevent a reoccurrence.

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 our last inspection we rated this key question requires improvement. At this inspection the rating has changed to good. This meant the service was consistently managed and well-led. Leaders and the culture they created promoted high-quality, person-centred care.

Continuous learning and improving care

At our last inspection we recommended the provider reviews their quality assurance systems, including the frequency and effectiveness of audits, to ensure the safety and quality of people's care are monitored efficiently and consistently. The provider had made improvements.

- The registered manager and deputy managers had kept up to date on policies, procedures and best practice guidance and had been responsive in implementing changes to drive improvements and keep people and staff safe.

Promoting a positive culture that is person-centred, open, inclusive and empowering, which achieves good outcomes for people

- People and relatives reported a positive culture that was enabling, supportive and helped to ensure they [people] felt valued. One person said, "Staff are very good and show an interest in what they are doing." One relative told us, "The provider should be praised for what she has got here, it is marvellous. If [family member] is upset, staff are upset. They have kept [family member] going." A second relative emailed, "[Family member] has thrived in the family friendly environment in which Conifers operates. They have told me several times how much he enjoys it at Conifers and actually said, "I feel like I've won the lottery, being here" !" A third relative said, "They treat people as individuals and my [relative] now has a social circle of friends."
- Staff spoke positively about Conifers Care Home. One staff member told us, "It's a good place to work, everyone is focused on the residents. The registered manager is a good listener, all the managers are." A second staff member said, "I love it here, great teamwork and [registered manager] is lovely."

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 aware of their responsibilities under the duty of candour, that is, their duty to be honest and open about any accident or incident that had caused or placed a person at risk of harm.

Managers and staff being clear about their roles, and understanding quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements

- The management team were clear about their role and responsibilities. Each member of the management

team had delegated tasks, overseen by the registered manager. They ensured they were appropriately trained and kept abreast of developments in the health and social care sector. The management team spent time together each week to review the care delivered and to support each other.

- Effective and continuous governance was well embedded into the running of the service with a strong framework of accountability. The management team understood the regulatory requirements of their roles and had notified CQC when required of events and incidents that had occurred at the service.

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

- Questionnaires were used to gain people's views. Feedback included, 'I am happy with the staff and everything they do. It's nice to know our views and opinions are taken into consideration.'
- There were daily handover meetings for staff when shifts changed. This allowed staff to be updated on relevant information related to people's care and support requirements. One staff member told us, "We have daily staff meetings and team meetings are good. It's a good small group." A second staff member said, "Team meetings are good, we share opinions and ideas."
- Relatives praised the communication between themselves and staff. One relative told us, "They keep us updated all the time, they have all our contact numbers." A second relative said, "They totally keep me in the loop with what's going on." A third relative emailed, 'I am sure that most families had concerns as to the level of care that loved ones received, particularly during the period when visits to care homes were prohibited, but I had every faith in the team at Conifers, who always kept me up to date, in phone calls, emails and sending me photos of [family member].'

Working in partnership with others

- The management team and staff worked effectively with health and social care professionals to meet people's needs.