

Sierra Homecare Ltd

Sierra Homecare

Inspection report

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service	Good ●
Is the service safe?	Good ●
Is the service effective?	Good ●
Is the service caring?	Good ●
Is the service responsive?	Good ●
Is the service well-led?	Good ●

Summary of findings

Overall summary

About the service

Sierra Homecare is a domiciliary care service providing personal care for 19 people at the time of the inspection. Not everyone who used the service received personal care. CQC only inspects where people receive personal care. This is help with tasks related to personal hygiene and eating. Where they do, we also consider any wider social care provided.

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

People were safe and protected from avoidable harm because staff knew how to identify and report any concerns relating to the risk of abuse. Risks to people's health, safety and well-being were assessed and measures were put in place to remove or reduce the risks. People were supported by staff who had been safely recruited.

People's medicines were managed safely. Staff had received appropriate training and had their competency assessed to help ensure they were sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable in this area. Staff had received training in infection control practices and personal protective equipment such as gloves and aprons was provided for them. The management team took appropriate actions following any incidents and learning was shared with staff.

People and relatives praised the kind and caring nature of the staff and management team and were very satisfied with the care and support they received. People said they felt valued and respected by staff and relatives spoke of the peace of mind they enjoyed knowing their family members were so well looked after for by staff who really cared. Staff told us they also felt cared for and were proud of the care and support they delivered.

People received consistent care from a small team of staff. People knew about their care plans and could decide what care and support they needed. People's records were held securely in a locked cabinet within a locked office to help promote confidentiality.

Before care delivery started the provider completed assessments to make sure people's needs could be met by Sierra Homecare. Care plans were developed from these assessments for each person's identified needs. Staff received training and support to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.

Staff and the management team knew people well, were able to promptly identify when people's needs changed, and they sought professional advice appropriately. 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.

People received care and support as they wished. People and their relatives said they had not had any concerns but would be confident to raise any issues with the management team. The management team

was committed to providing a high standard of care to the people they supported as well as the staff team and understood their responsibilities under the Duty of Candour. People, their relatives and staff members spoke highly of the management team and told us they were always available and supportive.

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

Rating at last inspection

This service was registered with us on 04 July 2018 and this is the first inspection.

Why we inspected

This inspection was carried out to check 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 Care Act 2014.

Follow up

We will continue to monitor information we receive about the service until we return to visit as per our re-inspection programme. If we receive any concerning information we may inspect sooner.

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 effective?

Good 

The service was effective.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Is the service caring?

Good 

The service was caring.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Is the service responsive?

Good 

The service was responsive.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Is the service well-led?

Good 

The service was well-led.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Sierra Homecare

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 Care Act 2014.

Inspection team

The inspection was undertaken by one inspector.

Service and service type

This service is a domiciliary care agency. It provides personal care to people living in their own houses and flats.

The service had a manager registered with the Care Quality Commission. This means they and the provider are legally responsible for how the service is run and for the quality and safety of the care provided.

Notice of inspection

We gave the service 48 hours' notice of the inspection. This was because it is a small service and we needed to be sure the provider or registered manager would be in the office to support the inspection.

Inspection activity started on 02 September 2021 and ended on 14 September 2021. We visited the office location on 14 September 2021.

What we did before the inspection

We reviewed information we had received about the service since initial registration. 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. This information helps support our inspections. We used all of this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

We reviewed a range of records including two people's care records, staff recruitment records and governance systems. We spent time with the registered manager exploring their understanding of their responsibilities regarding operating a safe and effective care service. We received feedback from three people who used the service and nine relatives about their experience of the care provided. We received feedback from 10 staff about their experience of working for Sierra Homecare and an external professional about their experience of engaging with the service.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

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

This is the first inspection for this newly registered service. This key question has been rated Good. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- The provider had effective systems to help protect people from the risk of harm or abuse. Staff received training and were confident about how they would report any concerns both internally to the service management and externally to local safeguarding authorities.
- The registered manager understood their responsibilities to safeguard vulnerable people from abuse. They told us, "Safeguarding and the reporting process are part of our induction programme, on the agenda for every supervision session, on the agenda for every management team meeting and in team meetings." The registered manager gave examples of concerns they had appropriately referred to the local authority safeguarding team for further investigation.
- People and their relatives told us staff provided safe care for people. One relative said, "The staff are safety conscious and deliver their services with an appropriate level of care, in a reassuringly competent manner."

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- Risks to people's health, safety and well-being were assessed and measures developed to remove or reduce the risks. Risk assessments enabled people to stay as independent as possible within the confines of their health needs. Identified risks such as slips and falls were assessed and information shared with staff about how to manage the risks in the best interests of the person.
- The registered manager helped ensure people received support in the event of an emergency. The management team had responded personally to out of hours emergencies including visiting a person at 2am to help them up after a fall and meeting people who had been discharged from hospital.

Staffing and recruitment

- People's relatives told us they thought there were enough staff available to meet people's care needs consistently. There had not been any missed care calls and all feedback indicated staff provided people's care within agreed timeframes. One relative said, "Since we started using the services of Sierra Homecare, they have invariably been punctual to the times agreed and on the weekly roster provided to us in advance." Another relative told us, "They were always punctual and stayed for their full time - never clock - watching."
- The registered manager conducted robust recruitment procedures and undertook the checks required to ensure staff were suitable to work at the service. Criminal record checks and satisfactory references had been obtained for all staff before they were able to work with people independently.
- Sierra Homecare is a small service; the registered manager was very careful not to over commit to taking new care packages until the right staff were available to support. The registered manager told us, "We have turned down business if we have not felt we had sufficient numbers of suitable staff to provide a safe service."
- Newly recruited staff were introduced to people who used the service by the management team. The

registered manager told us, "At the start of service with any new clients we ensure we introduce a number of care staff with the right skills, to them so in the event of staff shortages we have options." A relative told us, "Sierra Homecare have never ever sent anybody to do a visit who [person] didn't know or hadn't met. Always when somebody new joined the company they doubled-up with the regular carer until they knew how to look after [person]. This made [person] feel safe which in turn, gave me peace of mind."

Using medicines safely

- Staff received training to support them to administer people's medicines safely. Staff competencies to safely administer medication were assessed every 6-8 weeks.
- Staff supported some people with administering their medicines and just prompted others to take theirs as needed.
- A relative told us, "If there is a change to medication it can be difficult, but the care worker rings me or calls in at the pharmacy for clarification. I couldn't ask for more in that department."

Preventing and controlling infection

- Staff were provided with training and personal protective equipment such as gloves and aprons to help promote effective infection control. Staff practice in this area was monitored by the registered manager and assessed at each supervision.
- For people identified as clinically extremely vulnerable this was recorded in their care folder and staff were aware full PPE must always be worn. Staff who had not been double vaccinated did not provide support to those who were clinically extremely vulnerable.
- People and their relatives told us staff promoted good hygiene practices. One relative said, "They (staff) were brilliant with managing every aspect of Covid-19 They wore full PPP - masks, aprons and gloves, sanitising etc and safely disposing of it all."
- Staff praised Sierra Homecare for ensuring the safety of both staff and people using the service during COVID-19 pandemic. One staff member told us, "They [Registered manager] have ensured all staff are well trained and confident 'Donning and Doffing' (taking PPE on and off safely) and constantly provided with plenty of PPE to maintain a safe service for people and staff."

Learning lessons when things go wrong

- The registered manager took appropriate actions in response to any concerns and learning was shared with staff. No serious accidents or incidents had occurred since the service began but we were re-assured the registered manager would take quick and effective action.
- The registered manager gave an example of a medication error to demonstrate learning from events. To further ensure the safety of medicine administration the registered manager included a standard agenda item in supervision to confirm staff remained confident in their ability to safely support people with medication or if they needed further support or training.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

Effective – this means we looked for evidence that people's care, treatment and support achieved good outcomes and promoted a good quality of life, based on best available evidence.

This is the first inspection for this newly registered service. This key question has been rated Good. This meant people's outcomes were consistently good, and people's feedback confirmed this.

Assessing people's needs and choices; delivering care in line with standards, guidance and the law; Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- People's needs were assessed before they started to use the service. Assessments included people's support needs and their individual preferences. These assessments formed the basis of people's detailed care plans and risk assessments.
- People's relatives praised the staff team for the effective care and support they delivered. One relative said, "All of the staff know how to use all the equipment [person] has, especially when out and about, walkers, frames wheelchairs etc. They (staff) also keep [person's] flat clean and tidy and deal with the food, keeping [person] safe from out of date foodstuffs, leaving cookers on etc."

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- Staff received training in areas including safeguarding, moving and handling, advanced dementia, fire safety and the Mental Capacity Act. Staff had a good understanding of these topics. Staff received a robust supervision and competency observations to help ensure they had the knowledge to perform their job roles.
- Staff had robust support from the management team. One staff member said, "Sierra Homecare provide ongoing online training to ensure we carry out our role safely and correctly. We also have regular supervisions where I feel I can openly discuss any concerns and give any feed-back or compliments from people we support. I also know I can approach [management] at any time for support if needed." Another staff member said, "I have supervision with [registered manager] every month to go through any concerns, training, PPE, or further courses I might want to do. But the support is there all the time, we can call or text [registered manager] at any time."
- Inductions for new staff were thorough and staff knowledge was checked by the management team during shadow shifts prior to the staff member working with people unsupervised. A staff member said,, "When I started at Sierra Homecare I was initially shadowing, teaming up with another carer, and I wasn't expected to visit any clients on my own until I felt I was confident to do the visit on my own. I never felt 'thrown in at the deep end' and due to the management being so approachable I was able to ask any questions or raise any concerns easily."
- People and their relatives praised the staff team for their skills and knowledge. One relative said, "Everybody was well trained and meticulous in the care they gave and recorded every detail. They were very well supervised by [Registered manager]. Nothing was ever too much trouble."

Supporting people to eat and drink enough to maintain a balanced diet

- People and their relatives said where people needed assistance to eat staff, supported them in a safe and effective manner.
- People's dietary needs and requirements were identified in their care plans and staff had a good

understanding how to support people with these.

Staff working with other agencies to provide consistent, effective, timely care; Supporting people to live healthier lives, access healthcare services and support

- Staff and the management team worked well with external professionals for the benefit of people who used the service. These included GPs, occupational therapists, district nurses and speech and language therapists. Care staff reported any concerns they had about people's health and wellbeing to the registered manager, who in turn ensured relatives were contacted if appropriate, and external professionals were contacted if needed. The registered manager told us, "I really believe in the importance of nurturing good relationships with other healthcare professionals. I feel we should all be working together to achieve the best outcomes for our clients."
- Information was shared with other agencies if people needed to access other services such as hospitals.
- A relative told us the registered manager and staff supported people with prompt care and support when discharged from hospital. A relative told us, "[Registered manager] has put care into place within 24 hours of [person] being discharged, sooner on a couple of occasions. Staff have met [person] off the ambulance on occasions, which was over and above anything I thought possible."
- An external professional told us, "As community matron I have directly contacted Sierra Homecare to discuss people's needs. I can only comment that all the carers I have met have been very professional in their manner and have good insight into care of service users living with dementia."

Ensuring consent to care and treatment in line with law and guidance

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 Act 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 MCA. When people receive care and treatment in their own homes an application must be made to the Court of Protection for them to authorise people to be deprived of their liberty. We checked whether the service was working within the principles of the MCA.

- People told us staff always asked for consent when supporting them. People had been asked for their consent to be supported in line with their care plans and risk assessments.
- Staff received training in the Mental Capacity Act and had a good understanding of how to put this in to practice.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

Caring – this means we looked for evidence that the service involved people and treated them with compassion, kindness, dignity and respect.

This is the first inspection for this newly registered service. This key question has been rated Good. This meant people were supported and treated with dignity and respect; and involved as partners in their care.

Ensuring people are well treated and supported; respecting equality and diversity

- People and relatives praised the care and support staff delivered. Relatives said staff supported them as much as the person they were commissioned to provide care for. A relative told us, "We have an excellent rapport with all the staff Sierra Homecare provide. We consider them to be friends popping in to look after [person], rather than people just doing a job. They all have a good sense of humour and [person] enjoys their company." A further relative commented, "The team of staff are all delightful. [Person] and I like them all immensely and have a very comfortable relationship with everybody."
- People and their relatives praised the kindness and emotional support provided for people. One relative said, "The 'can do' approach of [management team] has been so reassuring and to see [person] so comfortable and happy to have the team here means so much." One relative spoke of the help and support provided, "That reassurance of being able to help is priceless in terms of my peace of mind. Being prepared to 'go the extra mile' is also appreciated. [Person] is treated with the utmost respect at all times and we are both extremely happy with the help we are receiving from everyone at Sierra Homecare."
- Staff were proud of their role and the impact it had for people. A staff member described how they provided extra support by doing some shopping for people and running errands for them. They said, "I've gotten the paper for some of our people on Saturdays, so they have the telly pages for the week. I feel it impacts their lives because by doing these things they don't have to worry or stress out on how they'll get things brought for them or get out to get them, when they have to shield to keep safe, during these times."
- The registered manager told us, "One of the main things we have focused on is to provide more emotional support to people. Many of them were unable to see their families and were frightened by the news reports (due to the COVID-19 pandemic)." The registered manager told us caring was an integral part of their recruitment.
- A staff member told us, "[Management Team] have a thorough interview process and will only employ the most competent and caring support workers." Another staff member said, "The Sierra Homecare Team provide an excellent service going 'above and beyond' in their care and commitment. The 'personal touches' provided (to both staff and people who use the service) such as cards and flowers at birthdays and Christmas and Christmas dinner for anyone on their own are what set us aside."
- Staff had a very good understanding of the people they supported. Staff took time to get to know people's likes and dislikes, their pasts and interests and incorporated these into their care. A staff member told us, "We don't just go in and make sure people are washed and rush off, we take the time to get to know each person and make sure they really feel comfortable with us."

Supporting people to express their views and be involved in making decisions about their care

- People's detailed care plans showed they were consulted about changes to their care and these were

documented. Regular reviews of people's support involving people, their relatives and other professionals took place.

- People and their relatives told us they were always involved in any decisions about their care.

Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- The registered provider acted to promote people's wellbeing. A relative told us, "[Registered manager] always sends me a rota on a Sunday evening so when I visit or telephone [person] I can tell them who is going in the mornings to get them up, and what time to expect them, who'll be going lunchtime etc." They went on to say, "If [person's] mood is low or they are anxious, this is a good way to reassure them. Every little thing like this helps."
- People and their relatives said staff promoted people's privacy, dignity and independence. One relative said, "They (staff) were all exceptionally kind, caring and courteous to [person]. The respect and affection we all had for each other was totally mutual."

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

Responsive – this means we looked for evidence that the service met people's needs.

This is the first inspection for this newly registered service. This key question has been rated Good. This meant people's needs were met through good organisation and delivery.

Planning personalised care to ensure people have choice and control and to meet their needs and preferences

- People received care to meet their individual needs, likes, dislikes and preferences. People's care was adapted to meet their changing needs. For example, where people began to regain some of their independence the element of support from Sierra Homecare was reduced.
- Regular reviews of the care were undertaken with the person and their relatives where appropriate. One relative told us, "[Registered manager] is spot on with reviews and keeping us up to date with legislation. If and when [person's] care needs change, I only have to let [Registered manager] know and changes are made smoothly without fuss."
- People and their relatives told us their health and other important appointments were supported. One relative told us, "When [person] has hospital appointments confirmed, I pass the details to [registered manager] and they are on the rota. [Registered manager] sorts who can take [person]. Even appointments made at the last minute have been covered."
- Care plans were detailed with regards to people's preferences, likes and dislikes.

Meeting people's communication needs

Since 2016 onwards all organisations that provide publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). The standard was introduced to make sure people are given information in a way they can understand. The standard applies to all people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss and in some circumstances to their carers.

- The registered manager told us they had not had the need to make information available in different formats yet but said they would do so should the need arise. They gave an example where they could access translation services from the internet.

Supporting people to develop and maintain relationships to avoid social isolation; support to follow interests and to take part in activities that are socially and culturally relevant to them

- The registered manager told us support was provided to follow interests and activities if people requested it. A relative told us, "Staff all do an awful lot for [person], some spend time cooking with them, others do art and crafts, some take her out to lunch. All of them are able to judge [person's] mood and act accordingly."
- Staff supported people with a variety of activities to engage them and keep them in touch with their interests. These activities included baking, crafting, swimming and gardening. Staff accompanied people to garden centres to purchase plants, clothes shopping, helped people to write letters, helped people to arrange family birthday presents and enthusing a group of people to knit for a charity blanket.
- Staff recognised most people using the service were not seeing members of their families for long periods during the COVID-19 restrictions. People told us staff had been very caring and shown a lot of kindness

during this time. The registered manager said, "Most of our staff picked up odd bits of shopping to support people who were unable to pop out to the shops for a paper." An example given was where a staff member took a cake for the person and had a cup of tea whilst watching a TV show with them to keep them company.

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- People and their relatives were confident to raise concerns if the need arose. A relative said, "I have never needed to complain and can't imagine me ever having to, as it's all dealt with. Nothing has been allowed to become a problem as the whole team knows what they are doing and if anyone doesn't, they ask. I'm always at the end of a phone too." Another relative said, "I can't say how well they manage complaints because I've never had cause to raise any. However, [management team] are very approachable and have always shown a willingness to "go the extra mile". They are not merely professional; they are also enthusiasts for what they do."
- The registered manager had not received any formal complaints since Sierra Homecare opened for business. They told us, "Our staff understand everyone has a right to express dissatisfaction with any aspect of our service and they are required to support any client who wishes to complain. This is included at induction and during every supervision."

End of life care and support

- The staff team supported people at the end of their life according to their wishes and preferences. People were supported to stay in their own home if they chose to do so and extra support was provided as needed from specialist services such as Hospice nurses.
- Staff knew how to support people at the end of their life. The registered manager told us, "We are aware of people's wishes concerning where they would like to end their life, i.e. at home. We roster staff who have the competencies to support clients at end of life and endeavour to roster those staff who are preferred."

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.

This is the first inspection for this newly registered service. This key question has been rated Good. This meant the service was consistently managed and well-led. Leaders and the culture they created promoted high-quality, person-centred care.

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

- The registered manager had a good understanding of their legal and ethical responsibilities towards the people they supported and had a passion for delivering person-centred care. The registered manager's ethos of the service was to treat others with kindness, care, patience and dignity.
- Sierra Homecare delivered good outcomes for people. A relative said, "I can't praise Sierra Homecare enough, I'd highly recommend them to anyone. I've been looking after members of my family and my extended family all of my life. I've seen and experienced all types of care, good and bad, indifferent and diabolical, it was an immense relief to me and our family, once Sierra Homecare began taking care of [person]. We have a peace of mind we never thought was possible. Long may it last."
- Staff told us they were proud to work for Sierra Homecare and felt valued. One staff member said, "I would highly recommend Sierra Homecare to any client needing support and to any support worker looking for work. I believe [management team] have produced a top-class care company." Another staff member told us, "I would recommend Sierra Homecare to other staff as they are a very caring, well-led company that values and appreciates it's staff."

Managers and staff being clear about their roles, and understanding quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements; 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 management team and staff understood their roles and respected the impact their roles had for people. The registered manager worked alongside the staff team routinely and assessed the service provision as part of their daily work.
- The registered manager used an electronic monitoring system to monitor the quality of the service provided and to inform their quality assurance. The system considered feedback from people who used the service and their relatives, staff feedback, reviews of any accidents or incidents, complaints or compliments and a general overview of all care records and recruitment records.
- The registered manager had a clear understanding about the duty of Candour and told us they encouraged staff to be open and honest in their feedback.

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

- People and their relatives gave positive feedback about the service and how it operated. One relative said, "I cannot speak highly enough of every aspect of Sierra Homecare. We felt we were extremely lucky to have

them recommended to us by another very satisfied customer." A person using the service told us, "I think Sierra are brilliant and do an excellent job of providing my care. I would definitely recommend them to others."

- Staff were also positive about the service. A staff member told us, "I am very confident in my job, but this is due to the support and training given to me. I know if I ever had an issue it would be dealt with fairly and would always be given the time to talk and discuss about it."
- Regular feedback was collected from people and their relatives informally. We saw letters of praise and compliment from people who used the service and their relatives. The service was still small, and the management team were in day to day contact with people which meant they received people's feedback face to face. A relative told us, "The overall management is excellent and exceptionally caring. I have already recommended Sierra Homecare to several friends."

Continuous learning and improving care

- Learning was taken from incidents to improve people's experience of care. For example, A clinically extremely vulnerable person with a significant health condition person using the service had a health condition had not suffered with winter chest infections this last year as a result of people wearing face masks. The person discussed this with the registered manager, it was agreed staff will continue to wear face masks even when no longer required to do so, as this has resulted in a positive outcome for the person's health and wellbeing.
- The registered manager was a member of a local care provider's association. They had arranged training for themselves and the staff team and attended some local business network meetings to help keep themselves up to date with changes in the care sector and legislation.

Working in partnership with others

- The registered manager often worked with other professionals to achieve good outcomes for people. For example, community nurses, occupational therapists, wheelchair services, GPs and dentists. An external professional told us, "Sierra homecare have gained a good relationship with other healthcare professionals like myself, and any concerns are discussed directly with community matron as required. This works both ways and I feel the team are very approachable."