

Unite Professionals Ltd

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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

United Professionals Ltd is a national case management service which organises and monitors the provision of regulated activities (e.g. personal and nursing care). The service provides support to adults and children who have sustained life changing injuries, including those living with a learning disability. At the time of our inspection the service was providing support to five people.

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

People using the service, benefited from a service that was committed to providing safe and high-quality care and support, and put people at the heart of their own care and support plan.

Unite Professionals Ltd organised and monitored the provision of care and support services which delivered care to people.

Recruitment processes were robust and ensured staff were safe to work with people.

Risks to people were managed and mitigated to lessen the risk of harm to people. A positive mindset was taken to risk management. People were not told they couldn't do something simply because it was too risky, but were supported by staff to manage risks and retain their independence as far as possible.

Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for people, which were guided by people's own goals.

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.

As the service was involved in the provision of care and support to people living with a learning disability, we expect health and social care providers to guarantee autistic people and people with a learning disability the choices, dignity, independence and good access to local communities that most people take for granted. Right support, right care, right culture is the statutory guidance which supports CQC to make assessments and judgements about services providing support to people with a learning disability and/or autistic people.

The service was able to demonstrate how they were meeting the underpinning principles of Right support, right care, right culture. The model of care adopted by the service maximised people's choice, control and independence. Care was person-centred and promoted people's dignity, privacy and human rights at all times. The ethos, values, attitudes and behaviours of management and staff ensured people using the service led confident, inclusive and empowered lives.

The service adopted an open culture which was committed to delivering high-quality person-centred care to people. This was supported by effective governance and collaborative working, in addition to enabling advocacy, so that people had a genuine say in the provision of their care and support.

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 1 December 2020 and this is the first inspection.

Why we inspected

As the service has been registered with CQC for over one year, we carried out this comprehensive inspection to award a rating for the service.

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 effective?

Good 

The service was effective.

Details are in our effective findings below.

Is the service caring?

Good 

The service was caring.

Details are in our caring findings below.

Is the service responsive?

Good 

The service was responsive.

Details are in our responsive findings below.

Is the service well-led?

Good 

The service was well-led.

Details are in our well-led findings below.

Unite Professionals Ltd

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

The inspection was carried out by one inspector.

Service and service type

United Professionals Ltd is a national case management company, that co-ordinates, monitors and reviews the recruitment, training and support of health and care staff who deliver care and support to people within their own family homes in the community.

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. Only case management services who are involved in the ongoing direction and control of personal care to people (regulated activity), are required to be regulated by CQC.

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

We gave the service one days' notice of the inspection. This was because we wanted to ensure the registered manager was available to speak with us.

Inspection activity started on 10 May 2022 and ended on 20 May 2022. We visited the location's office on 10 May 2022.

What we did before the inspection

We reviewed information we had received about the service since its registration. We sought feedback from the local authority and professionals who work with the service.

The provider was not asked to complete a Provider Information Return (PIR) prior to this inspection. A PIR is information providers send us to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make. We used all this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

We attended the office and spoke with nine members of staff, including the registered manager, the safeguarding lead and the nominated individual. (The nominated individual is responsible for supervising the management of the service on behalf of the provider.)

We used technology such as video calls to enable us to engage with staff working in the satellite office in Somerset.

We looked at records in relation to people who used the service, including two care and support plans and systems for monitoring the quality of the service provided.

After the inspection we continued to seek clarification from the provider to validate evidence found. We looked at staff training and governance records. We also spoke with two people who used the service and a relative on the telephone to help us understand their experience of the care and support their loved one received.

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 of this newly registered service. This key question has been rated good. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management; Learning lessons when things go wrong

- The service adopted a positive and proactive approach to risk taking so that people's right to choose was balanced with the person's right to be free from harm. People were not simply told they could not do something because it was too risky. The service was an ambassador for positive risk taking. Staff supported people to make choices in an informed way and understood where people required support to reduce the risk of avoidable harm.
- The service shared information about risks through staff meetings and reviewed risks regularly to ensure the service had a current and accurate picture of safety.
- People were involved in the management of their risks and risk assessments were person centred and reviewed regularly. Any restrictions were minimised, so people felt safe but also had as much freedom as possible. One person told us, "I feel safe, definitely, I trust the staff."
- The service embraced a practice of learning from any incidents, accidents and other relevant events. Records were reviewed to monitor any safety related themes. Findings were discussed with staff to ensure the correct action was taken to help prevent any future recurrence. One member of staff confirmed, "Staff talk about any concerns, the lessons learnt culture is incredibly strong."

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- People were adequately protected from the risk of any harm or abuse. Any incidents or concerns were appropriately reported and shared with relevant safeguarding authorities. Robust systems and processes enabled transparent investigations to take place in the event of any safeguarding concerns.
- Staff were trained in safeguarding matters and knew what action to take to keep people protected. The service had appointed a safeguarding lead who acted as a point of reference and knowledge for other staff members.
- The service took a preventative approach to safeguarding and were aware of relevant risk factors and triggers. This approach ensured that people's human rights were protected as any decisions were taken in people's best interests.

Staffing and recruitment

- Recruitment systems ensured staff were recruited to support people to stay safe. Staff files were organised and contained all required information. The service was involved in helping people to recruit their own personal assistants and ensured that any third-party agencies involved in the delivery of care and support, recruited staff appropriately.
- People received a reliable and consistent service as there were enough staff to meet people's needs. Staff were skilled and competent. One person shared, "Without United Professionals I wouldn't have recruited the right people with the skill set to meet my needs."

Using medicines safely

- Medicines were managed safely. Although the service was not involved in the direct provision of medicines, they ensured that third party care and support staff met good practice standards and were trained and competent to administer medicines.
- The service worked effectively with other agencies to ensure people received their medicines as prescribed. The service took an active role in medicine reviews and risk assessments. Where people wished to manage their own medicines, they were supported to do so safely, and in a way which respected their independence.

Preventing and controlling infection

- The service managed the control and prevention of infection well. Staff followed policies and procedures on infection control which met current and relevant national guidance. Risk assessments for the management of COVID-19 were in place for both people and staff employed in the office.
- The service ensured that care staff employed by third-party agencies were trained and understood their role and responsibility for maintaining high standards of hygiene in people's homes. This included managing risks of COVID-19 by the use of effective infection prevention techniques and the use of appropriate PPE.

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

- Care and support was delivered in line with evidence-based guidance, and relevant legislation, care was monitored to ensure consistency of good practice. The service completed a comprehensive initial assessment of people's needs before their introduction to the service.
- People were directly involved in setting out expected outcomes and goals wherever possible. Outcomes were monitored regularly to measure progress and ensure they were achievable. One person told us, "I am involved with my care and support plan as is my relative. My goals are taken into account along with changes in my needs."
- The service ensured that people's needs were met in the best possible way and made appropriate referrals to external services and professionals to ensure that support led to good outcomes for people and promoted a good quality of life.

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 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 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, whether appropriate legal authorisations were in place when needed to deprive a person of their liberty, and whether any conditions relating to those authorisations were being met.

- The service ensured that people were directly involved in decisions about every aspect of their care and support, so their human and legal rights were upheld. One person told us, "I have a real input in my care, I am always asked, nothing is done without my consent, I am fully involved, I am listened to."
- Assumptions were not made about people's capacity, staff regularly assessed whether people had capacity to make particular decisions.
- Where people were deemed not to have capacity to make decisions, the service worked closely with

relatives, friends and other advocates to ensure that any decision was made was in the person's best possible interests and supported them in the least restrictive way possible.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- Staff had the right skills, knowledge and experience to carry out their roles. Case managers were matched up to people to ensure people received the right support by staff who had the most experience to meet their needs in a holistic way. This meant staff were able to assist people to access care and support from the most appropriate external agencies.
- For care and support staff who were employed by third party agencies, the service checked and monitored staff training records to ensure staff had appropriate qualifications, skills and competence to deliver care to people in line with their needs. Where staff belonged to a professional governing body, for example occupational therapists and nurses, the service ensured staff maintained their professional registration.
- For care staff who were directly employed by the person, the service helped with the recruitment of staff to ensure they aligned with the core values of the person and helped to arrange appropriate training to ensure they had the skills and expertise to meet the needs of the person.

Staff working with other agencies to provide consistent, effective, timely care

- Staff worked in collaboration with the most appropriate services to meet people's needs in the best possible way. The service acted as a portal to help direct people to external agencies who were best placed to deliver care and support in line with people's care needs and wishes.
- One person told us, "All the agencies liaise together and [Registered Manager] is the key to that, to ensure that all members of the multi disciplinary are singing from the same hymn sheet. It's all joined together."

Supporting people to live healthier lives, access healthcare services and support

- The service helped ensure people experienced positive outcomes regarding their care and support. People and their relatives were provided with options and information about their likely outcomes so that people made choices which were right for their care and support requirements.
- Where necessary, staff acted as advocates for people when liaising with other health professionals, enabling people to make genuine choices.

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

- The service helped protect people from the risk of poor nutrition, dehydration, swallowing risks and other medical conditions that affected people's diet and fluid needs.
- Although the service was not directly involved in the provision of food and fluid, they oversaw that staff supporting people with such needs were competent to do so. For example, for people who received nutrition via a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG - a feeding tube which delivers nutrition to the person directly through their stomach), the service ensured staff had the necessary skills to enable this in a safe way.

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

- The service ensured people were treated with the utmost respect and with kindness and compassion. People and their relatives were consistently positive about the caring attitude of both staff at the service and the care and support staff by staff overseen by the service. One person told us, "Staff go above and beyond, they are incredible." A relative commented, "I just don't know where we would be without this service."
- The service did not view people's disability as a barrier but placed a positive value on those differences and ensured staff enabled people to take up opportunities on offer so that people were able to fulfil their potential.

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

- People were supported with sensitivity by their case managers to express their views in all aspects on their care. Staff took the time to get to know people and understand their needs, wishes and choices around their support. Staff utilised accessible means of communication and worked with people's relatives and advocates to help people shape their own care and support.

Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- People's right to privacy and confidentiality was adhered to. People's care and support needs were often provided by a mixture of external providers and agencies. The service utilised technology to minimise any risks to people's confidentiality.
- People were treated with dignity, respect and without discrimination and were afforded as much choice and control as possible in their lives. Despite some people living with injuries which severely impacted on their independence, the service encouraged and respected people's independence at every opportunity. A relative explained, "They [Staff] encourage [Name] to do things for themselves wherever possible and don't take [Name's] independence away from them. It's very important."
- Case managers were given the time to build trusting relationships with people, their relatives and their care and support staff. This helped ensure people received a consistent level of care and support from staff who were familiar to them and knew their needs well.

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

- The service helped ensure people were at the heart of their own care and support plan. People's family and carers were consulted to ensure that people's needs were identified, and people had genuine choice and preference on how their needs were met.
- People's care and support plans were holistic and focused on people's goals and abilities and their preferences in managing their own support needs. People were empowered to make their own choices. One person told us, "I have a say over my care and support plan, we make goals, I meet them, and we set new ones. It's a joint consultation."

Meeting people's communication needs

Since 2016 all organisations that provide publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The Accessible Information Standard tells organisations what they have to do to help ensure people with a disability or sensory loss, and in some circumstances, their carers, get information in a way they can understand it. It also says that people should get the support they need in relation to communication.

- The service presented information in a way that people understood. This included information in languages native to the person, and, in large print or picture format, to ensure people were able to make appropriate choices based on options which had been presented to them in an accessible way.
- Technology such as virtual meetings was utilised, to ensure the service was accessible to people who used it. Adjustments were made to reduce any barriers in communication. For example, interpreters were used for people whose first language was not English.

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 service took care to involve those who were important to the person, take a role in their support to help maintain good relationships, and to help family members adjust to people's reliance on care and support more easily.
- The service facilitated links with people's local communities, including the provision of health care needs but also activities, to help people feel a sense of belonging and avoid any feelings of social isolation.
- Staff supported people to maintain their hobbies and interests and facilitated new opportunities where appropriate. One person told us, "Staff provide me with guidance and encourage me to adapt and try new things."

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- Although the service had not received any complaints, a robust and accessible complaints policy was in place to ensure people knew how to give feedback on their support and that any feedback would be acted on.
- The service adopted a positive approach to complaints and viewed them as learning opportunities to help further drive improvements.
- People and their relatives told us the service was open and accessible and they felt confident that if they did need to complain, it would be treated seriously, and they would be listened to.

End of life care and support

- For people who were receiving end of life care, the service helped ensure people, relatives and care staff were involved in the development of appropriate treatment plans and were sensitive to the needs and wishes of the person, including any religious and cultural needs.
- The service worked in conjunction with health care professionals and providers to ensure people were treated with dignity and that any specialist medicines or equipment was made available.

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 implemented a culture dedicated to person centred care and support underpinned by honesty, compassion, dignity and respect. This ethos was understood and shared amongst staff and other stakeholders so that people using the service received a service that was inclusive and empowering.
- This positive ethos, openness to feedback and direct involvement of people and their relatives in their support, led to positive outcomes for people. The service helped ensure the most appropriate stakeholders were utilised to provide people with care and support that met their needs and goals. A relative told us, "Our case manager is so experienced and knows just what help to get and where. We couldn't do without them."
- The service promoted equality, diversity and inclusion to remove any barriers to people's access to the best possible care and opportunities. Staff promoted these values to help deliver a strategy of delivering the best possible care and support.

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 service welcomed any feedback even if critical and adopted a transparent and open approach. Any concerns were investigated in a sensitive and confidential way, shared with the relevant authorities and lessons were shared and acted on.

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

- The service demonstrated clear effective governance and accountability processes and practices. Staff had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities and were committed and motivated to deliver the best possible service for people. Staff were positive about the manager and shared the same values, ethos and need to provide a quality service. One staff member explained, "We work like a jigsaw, we work together and recognise other people's skills set to deliver a bespoke service."
- Governance systems were well embedded and effective at identifying risks to the safety and quality of the service provided to people. Audits were used to drive improvement within the service.
- The registered manager understood the importance of their role and understood their legal and regulatory requirements. Staff were supported using performance feedback and provided with opportunities for further learning and development to help further enhance the delivery of good care and support.

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

- The service encouraged and facilitated people and their relatives to be heard. Various methods were used to obtain feedback from people about all aspects of their care and support. This also enabled the service to make changes to people's support plans as their needs changed.
- The registered manager engaged with staff to enable staff to have a platform to voice their feedback and views. The manager used this feedback to help shape the service further and foster a culture where staff felt valued and confident to speak up.

Continuous learning and improving care

- The service had robust quality assurance processes in place to capture the views and experience of people using the service. The service placed great emphasis on the perspective of people to help understand quality issues and challenges.
- The service demonstrated a commitment to sustained and improved care at all levels and fostered a best practice learning culture, which helped drive up the quality of the service. Best practice guidance was shared amongst staff to help further in the deliverance of good care. One member of staff told us, "We keep our processes aligned with principles, which is a commitment to driving the best possible outcomes for each client, guided by their goals."

Working in partnership with others

- The service had a reputation of being a good role model for other similar services. It worked in partnership with external organisations to support holistic care provision to ensure people received a seamless experience based on best practice outcomes and people's choice and preference.