

Wigan Link

# Wigan Link

## Inspection report

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Date of inspection visit:

05 February 2019

15 February 2019

18 February 2019

Date of publication:

04 July 2019

### Ratings

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

# Summary of findings

## Overall summary

### About the service:

Wigan Link is a domiciliary care service, providing personal care to people living in their own home including a number of supported living settings. People's care and housing are provided under separate contractual agreements. CQC does not regulate premises used for supported living; this inspection looked at people's personal care and support. At the time of inspection there were approximately 30 people receiving a regulated activity. At the last inspection we rated the service as Outstanding, however, we have not been able to rate the service as Outstanding this time because there is no registered manager in post and an application to register a new registered manager has not been made.

### People's experience of using the service:

The registered provider continued to provide exceptionally person centred care and support which people told us had significantly improved their quality of life. This included supporting people to develop their confidence and skills in ways which meant they were more empowered and in control of their lives and went beyond the expectations of their families and other professionals.

Exceptionally detailed assessments of people's needs had allowed for their care and support to be highly effective. Staff were knowledgeable about the needs and wishes of the person they supported. Staff were highly skilled and competent. Input from families and a broad range of involved professionals further contributed to the effectiveness of the care and support provided.

People were involved in choosing their staff and were consulted about who supported them. The service carefully matched staff to people receiving care and support.

Risk management policies were robust and supported people to manage the risks in their daily lives. Best practice guidance in relation to positive risk taking was an embedded practice and promoted the rights of an individual to make their own decisions with the support they needed. This had increased people's decision making opportunities and expectations.

The service promoted optimum health and wellbeing, some people had achieved very positive outcomes, including; significant weight loss, improved mobility and reduction in the frequency and severity of incidents of distress.

The service was exceptionally caring. Respect for people was a key value and was reflected throughout the service. Without exception, everyone we spoke with praised the caring and kind nature of their staff and the management team. People's communication needs had been identified and strategies developed to support people to be as involved as possible in decisions about their care and support. This had led to exceptional outcomes for some people who had been supported to communicate their feelings and had developed ways of responding which reduced some of the risks of harm.

Wigan Link had a fully embedded person-centred culture which contributed to the very high-quality care and support provided. People's expectations, and their families, were consistently exceeded.

People received exceptionally person-centred care which reflected their needs and preferences. Carefully matched staff contributed to the responsiveness of the support provided. Regular reviews of people's needs and preferences helped maintain focus on what was most important to the person. A diverse range of activities were designed around people's wishes and preferences, staff went to exceptional lengths to improve the quality of people's lives by supporting them to achieve their goals.

The care service has been developed and designed in line with the values that underpin the Registering the Right Support and other best practice guidance. These values include choice, promotion of independence and inclusion. People with learning disabilities and autism using the service can live as ordinary a life as any citizen. The service continued to embed these key principles within the service to empower people to live the life they chose. People we visited were clearly in control of their lives and were living the kind of life they wanted.

A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they are 'registered persons'. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run. At the time of inspection there was no registered manager in post. We discussed this with the nominated individual. They explained the service was being managed by the operations manager who intended to register with CQC.

The service had maintained and improved their own high standards. In part, this had been achieved by being open to continuous learning and development, working in close partnership with stakeholders and sharing knowledge with others.

Rating at last inspection: At the last inspection we rated the service as Outstanding 25 January 2016. At this inspection we have rated the service as Good overall, this is because there was no registered manager in post.

Why we inspected:

This was a planned comprehensive inspection.

Follow up:

The next scheduled inspection will be in keeping with the overall rating. We will continue to monitor information we receive from and about the service. We may inspect sooner if we receive concerning information about the service.

## The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

### Is the service safe?

The service remained Good

Details are in our Safe findings below.

Good 

### Is the service effective?

The service remained Outstanding

Details are in our Effective findings below.

Outstanding 

### Is the service caring?

The service remained Outstanding

Details are in our Caring findings below.

Outstanding 

### Is the service responsive?

The service remained Outstanding

Details are in our Responsive findings below.

Outstanding 

### Is the service well-led?

The service had dropped to Requires Improvement

Details are in our Well-Led findings below.

Requires Improvement 

# Wigan Link

## Detailed findings

### Background to this inspection

#### The Inspection:

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection checked whether the provider is meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008, to look at the overall quality of the service, and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014.

#### Inspection team:

The inspection was completed by one adult social care inspector from the Care Quality Commission. (CQC)

#### Service and Service type:

Wigan Link provides personal care to people living in their own homes. At the time of this inspection there were approximately 30 people receiving a regulated activity.

#### Notice of inspection:

We gave the service 48 hours' notice of the inspection visit because it is small and the manager is often out of the office supporting staff or providing care. We needed to be sure that they would be in.

Inspection site visit activity took place on 5 and 15 February 2019. We visited the office location on these days to see the manager and office staff; and to review care records and policies and procedures. We completed telephone calls with relatives and staff on 18 February 2019.

#### What we did

##### Before the inspection:

Prior to the inspection we reviewed all of the information we held about the service in the form of notifications, previous inspection reports, expected/unexpected deaths and safeguarding incidents. We contacted Wigan quality assurance team before our inspection to establish if they had any information to share with us. This would indicate if there were any particular areas to focus on during the inspection.

##### During the inspection:

During the inspection we spoke with a wide range of people and viewed certain records in order to help

inform our inspection judgements. This included the nominated individual, operations manager, five people who were supported by the service, the relatives of five people and four staff. We visited three people in their own homes and observed two people visiting the office.

Records looked at included care plans, daily records in people's homes, three staff personnel files, five Medication Administration Records (MAR), training records and quality assurance documentation. This helped inform our inspection judgements.

# Is the service safe?

## Our findings

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

People were safe and protected from avoidable harm. Legal requirements were met.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- The provider had a safeguarding policy and procedure to help protect people from the risk of abuse. Staff were knowledgeable about potential indicators of abuse and how to report this. One person told us, "I feel safe in my own home and the carers are very reassuring." Relatives told us; "I know my (family member) is safe, they keep everything secure.", and, "The staff are the best, they look after (family member), I could go away for six months and would not worry."

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- The provider had robust risk assessment and management policies in place which helped protect people from avoidable risks in their daily lives. They challenged which risks people took and continually looked at ways of supporting people's choices in relation to risk. Bespoke risk management plans were very person centred and demonstrated good practice in relation to positive risk taking. Staff told us how they had supported a person to minimise risks, 'We have built trust with the person, they feel respected and can rely on us for the right support. Even if they do not like what we are saying they will take it on board.'

Staffing and recruitment

- The provider followed safe recruitment processes. We reviewed the recruitment files for three members of staff. We found all appropriate records were in place. References and Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) had been obtained prior to staff beginning work. A DBS would inform the employer of any convictions a person had which may prevent them from working with vulnerable adults.

- The provider carefully matched staff to people receiving a service. Staff received training specifically tailored to the persons' needs. This helped to provide consistent person-centred skilled support. This had reduced distress for some which had increased people's safety. A relative told us, '(Wigan Link) are very good at selecting the right people to support people, they really carefully match them and they can tell immediately.'

Using medicines safely

- Medicines were managed safely. The provider had a medicines policy and staff received training which helped ensure they were competent to support people with their medicines. We reviewed the medicines records for five people and found they had been properly completed with no gaps in signatures. The management team carried out spot checks of staff competency to ensure staff followed policies safely.

Preventing and controlling infection

- People were protected against the risk of infection. Staff followed an infection prevention and control policy which identified how to protect people from the risk of infection and cross contamination. The service

provided appropriate protective equipment including gloves and aprons which were stored in each persons' home.

Learning lessons when things go wrong

- The provider recorded all accidents and incidents and continued to review them to ensure learning was continuous and improvements could be made to prevent reoccurrence.

# 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

People's outcomes were consistently better than expected compared to similar services. People's feedback described it as exceptional and distinctive.

Assessing people's needs and choices; delivering care in line with standards, guidance and the law. Staff working with other agencies to provide consistent, effective, timely care

- The service went above and beyond to ensure people were at the centre of their assessment, and we saw many examples of this. A relative told us, "Wigan Link have been able to identify all their needs properly, we had meetings together and strategies and they have gone from strength to strength over the years. (name) is gaining more confidence. When people see them now they can't believe how well they have done." The service endeavoured to build up a picture over time of what was important to the person which ensured care plans reflected their needs and best practice principles. The outcomes achieved had exceeded the expectations of relatives and other professionals.
- To ensure care was the most effective possible, people had been fully involved in the recruitment of their staff with support from families when required. People had been given the opportunity to see how they got on with their staff and changes had been made when required. People told us, "The best thing are these two" (staff). They are more like a friend than anything else." and "Being with my support workers, they are the best. If I need to speak up about a problem, I can. They make me feel safe."
- The service actively sought input from community based professionals including the learning disability and autism service, community learning disability nurses and health care professionals and their advice had been included in care planning and reviews.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- Bespoke training given by community based health professionals and related to the specific needs of the person supported, ensured staff had access to the knowledge and skills which adhered to best practice guidance. These included, training on feeding tubes and physiotherapy exercises. A relative told us, 'The best thing is that they have the right people to support them to grow and expand in their own lives and be comfortable with it. This has led to them going from strength to strength.' Staff told us; 'When I joined they spent a lot of time with me training and induction and shadow shift with (name) and the team. It was different because they took the time out to inform me.'

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

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

- Some people found medical appointments extremely difficult to tolerate. Staff were highly skilled in managing their anxieties and we saw how one person had accepted medical screening and appointments following several months of intensive support. They had tolerated an eye test and now had glasses. This had improved their ability to see and resulted in improved wellbeing and calm. A relative said, "(name) could not tolerate eye tests and now they can which has improved their communication."

- Some people had been supported to manage their nutrition, attend a slimming club and follow the diet. They had achieved significant weight loss which had improved their self esteem, confidence and overall health and wellbeing.
- Staff supported people to eat and drink a balanced diet which reflected their tastes and preferences. People completed menu plans and adjusted them whenever they changed their mind.
- One person told us their staff had received training from a physiotherapist to assist them to maintain daily exercises. This had improved their mobility, reduced the number of falls they had and increased their self confidence.

#### 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 with appropriate legal authority.

Where people are deprived of their liberty in their own homes applications must be made directly to the Court of Protection.

We checked whether the service was working within the principles of the MCA, and found that they were.

- The service went above and beyond to support people to understand the decision they needed to make. They used a combination of descriptions, photograph's, virtual tours of places the person may need to visit, and a variety of individually developed communication systems. This ensured people had been as informed as possible when making decisions. Any decisions which had been made on a person's behalf followed best interest principles. Staff were skilled in achieving consent and understanding non-verbal communication which might indicate a person's preference.

## 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

People were truly respected and valued as individuals; and empowered as partners in their care in an exceptional service

Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- Dignity and respect for people was an embedded value in the service. We saw during home visits people were confident and independent hosts, staff took a step back. People were in control of the inspectors' visit. There was a genuine sense we were visiting people's homes where they were at ease and proud to discuss their experiences.
- Staff supported people to be independent and to take on more tasks for themselves. Comments included; "If it weren't for the support I would be in a right mess. Now I am in control of things, my home is in order and I feel so much better.", a relative told us, "They are proud of themselves and walk around holding themselves straight. Really engaging in things."

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

- Equal respect for everyone was evident throughout the service. Without exception, people told us the service was extremely kind and caring and the support provided by the staff and the management team continued to go above and beyond their expectations. Comments included; "They really care, nothing is too much trouble for them, they really go above and beyond to help (person).", and, "The best thing for me about Wigan Link is my staff, they really look after me and are more like my friends." Staff told us, "The best thing about working here is the people, they really are like family to us.", and "The management really care about us and make sure we are happy, working here is the best thing I have ever done."
- People's cultural background, religious choices and protected characteristics under the Equality Act were described and respected. The support a person needed to maintain their identity was detailed. People's lifestyle choices were respected and celebrated. We saw how people had been empowered by being respected, had grown in confidence and felt able to live the life they chose.

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

- Staff were committed to empowering people by going above and beyond to support people to express themselves through using innovative methods. This had very positive outcomes. Relatives told us, "Their (name) ability to negotiate and cooperate has been developed by the staff." and "(name) confidence has grown a million per cent, I didn't think (name) would ever have been so confident and push themselves forward to talk to people." and "we have noticed so much difference in (name), so much more outgoing, bubbly, confident. Before (name) couldn't hold a conversation."
- One person's relative told us, "When (name) arrived they were very withdrawn and unable to make eye contact with people. They wanted to be independent, Wigan Link began with a few hours a week to develop skills and knowledge and confidence. Now they are living with a friend, have interviewed their staff and have been supported to adapt to the change."

# Is the service responsive?

## Our findings

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

Services were tailored to meet the needs of individuals and delivered to ensure flexibility, choice and continuity of care.

Planning personalised care to meet people's needs, preferences, interests and give them choice and control

- The service was committed to providing exceptionally person-centred care to support people to live the lives they chose. One person who had been at risk of exploitation said, "The most significant outcome for me is, I am no longer in debt, have friends who won't take advantage of me and my flat is in order. I feel better as a result of this support." Other people told us, "They have helped me feel confident and have turned things around by supporting me, I credit this to the team who help me.", and "I love it, I feel more grown up, I make my own rules the staff help me decide."
- When a group chose to go clubbing staffing was arranged to ensure they could stay in the club as late as they wanted. This highly responsive approach to supporting people's social needs increased their choice, control and confidence.
- An exceptional outcome had been achieved for one person who had experienced severe anxiety and distress which placed themselves and others at risk of harm. It was clear establishing effective communication had reduced the person's anxiety and provided them with more beneficial ways of expressing themselves. One relative said, "They (name) are becoming more articulate and able to express themselves, they are a different human being."
- The outcomes people achieved went beyond what families had thought possible, a relative told us, "They are taking (name) places and they are going shopping and choosing clothes but before they couldn't do this, they found it too distressing." another relative noted, "Our relationship is so much better they are proud of themselves and they walk around holding themselves straight. Really engaging in things. (Name) is now sitting at the table and socialising. (Name) has a routine, this is something that had always been too challenging for (name), I could not have imagined my child could live such a full life."

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns

- One person told us, 'If I was unhappy I would be able to say. I have raised my concerns about a person and they responded straight away. I felt all the stress had gone and I felt happier and safer.'
- One person told us a member of staff had been moved from their home when they had expressed concerns.
- Without exception everyone we spoke with were aware of how to complain or raise any concerns. A relative told us, 'They are so approachable, nothing is too much trouble, I could raise any concern at any time and would feel comfortable.'
- A member of the management team telephoned each tenancy every day to check how people were and if they wanted anything. This proactive approach encouraged people to discuss their concerns.
- The Accessible Information Standard (AIS) was introduced by the government in 2016 to make sure that people with a disability or sensory loss are given information in a way they can understand. The provider were meeting this standard, sometimes in innovative ways.

- Technology including iPads had been used to display pictures of where the person might be going to support them to understand what to expect. Virtual tours of buildings had been accessed to increase familiarisation. Another person was found to prefer picture references and then have the story written down and staff to read this to them. These highly person-centred approaches to communication and information had helped people to be as informed as possible and enabled people to engage and express themselves.
- Very positive outcomes had been achieved for some people, especially those who had experienced significant distress which may have resulted in harm to themselves or others. Being able to understand and engage with their daily life had increased feelings of calm and wellbeing and significantly improved their quality of life.
- In response to feedback from a survey requesting audio versions the service had recorded notes from meetings and other information for the person to listen to.

#### End of life care and support

- At the time of inspection no one was identified as having end of life needs. The provider had a policy to support people as far as possible when they were at the end of their life. Some people had been supported to consider their wishes.

## 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

- A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they are 'registered persons'. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run. At the time of inspection there was no registered manager in post and we had not received an application to register a new one. This has limited the rating for this domain to Requires Improvement and the service as Good overall.

Planning and promoting person-centred, high-quality care and support with openness; and how the provider understands and acts on their duty of candour responsibility

- Wigan Link had a person-centred culture which was fully embedded throughout the team and contributed to the high-quality care and support provided. People's expectations, and their families, were consistently exceeded. A relative told us, "The best thing for me as a parent is that I am totally and utterly relaxed knowing my child has the life they deserve." Staff who worked for Wigan Link told us, "I feel valued by the management, I have been supported well. It is all about the people here." and, "It can be very rewarding and varied, the values, everything. It changed my life to work for this organisation. Improved confidence.", and, "Management are really positive and give us feedback. We speak with the office every morning, they are proactive. They acknowledge what we do. This is my dream job, why have I not found it sooner?"

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

- Robust quality control, auditing and competency checks ensured the quality of care and support had been maintained to the highest standard. Staff told us they were aware of the standards expected of them and were committed to achieving and exceeding these.
- A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they are 'registered persons'. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run. At the time of inspection there was no registered manager in post. We discussed this with the nominated individual. They explained the service was being managed by the operations manager who intended to register with CQC.

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

- The service made consistent effort to engage with people. Without exception people praised the accessibility of the management team and the family atmosphere they engendered. People were supported to engage through regular meetings, surveys, reviews and regular updates. Some people who receive care and support are on the Wigan Link management boards, some people are also working in the office.
- People's cultural, religious and lifestyle choices had been included in their care plans. People had been

supported to maintain their faith, celebrate their culture and had access to events and activities appropriate to their preferred lifestyle. Staff were aware of the Equality Act and the protected characteristics identified in the Act.

#### Continuous learning and improving care

- The service continued to be committed to learning and improving care. One of the ways they achieved this was by establishing excellent communication within the organisation to investigate any learning opportunities through reflective practices.

#### Working in partnership with others

- The service worked in close partnership with families and professionals involved in people's lives.
- Members of the management team and people who received a service were involved in the partnership board for learning disabilities and focussed on getting people's voices heard.