

New Prospects Association Limited

New Prospects

Inspection report

38 South Parade
Whitley Bay
Tyne And Wear
NE26 2RQ

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21 December 2018
08 January 2019

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Ratings

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

Summary of findings

Overall summary

New Prospects provides care and support to 213 people up to 24 hours per day, so that they can live in their own home as independently as possible. People's care and housing are provided under separate contractual agreements. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) does not regulate premises used for supported living; this inspection looked at people's personal care and their wider social support.

The 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/or autism using the service can live as ordinary life as any citizen.

At our last inspection we rated the service outstanding. At this inspection we found the evidence continued to support the rating of outstanding and there was no evidence or information from our inspection and ongoing monitoring that demonstrated serious risks or concerns. This inspection report is written in a shorter format because our overall rating of the service has not changed since our last inspection.

At this inspection we found the service remained outstanding.

Everyone spoke extremely highly of the staff and gave us multiple examples of outstanding care. People and relatives told us staff maintained their dignity and treated them with utmost respect. The whole staff team were incredibly enthusiastic and passionate about the services they provided. Staff demonstrated that they were extremely committed to making a positive difference to people's lives.

People were cared for exceptionally well in the comfort of their own homes. Staff knew the people they supported remarkably well and we observed staff acting with kindness and patience.

People were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible; the policies and systems in the service supported this practice.

The service was entirely flexible and provisions were changed and adapted to meet people's current needs and choices. There was excellent communication with external professionals to ensure services achieved positive outcomes for people.

Support plans were extremely person-centred and accurately detailed each person's history, their current care needs and the social support they required. Risk assessments were in place to identify and mitigate risks to people's health and safety. Wherever possible, positive risk taking was promoted to encourage people to become more independent. Lessons learnt from incidents were an essential part of the continuous improvement and development of further precautionary measures.

Staff promoted activities which inspired people to participate in pastimes that were motivating and

meaningful to them. Individual activity plans were in place which empowered people to get involved in social events that they were interested in. Staff ensured people had the chance to pursue education and work. We heard about people who had achieved dreams and ambitions. Group activities were arranged to maintain people's links with their local community and provided further opportunity for social interaction with family and friends.

There had been very few complaints made about New Prospects. This demonstrated that overall people and relatives were pleased with the services provided. The management team presented multiple opportunities for people, relatives and staff to talk to them about the service. Everyone was actively encouraged to contribute to decisions made about the services.

There was an extremely experienced and well established registered manager in post who ensured regular checks on the quality and safety of the service were meticulously carried out. The whole management team were avid supporters of collaborative working and they often organised and led partnership events with other organisations to ensure any decisions made benefitted the people who used local services.

The recruitment process continued to be safe. Staff training was up to date and bespoke training had been created and provided. The management team supported staff and enthused them to become highly skilled and knowledgeable. Staff welcomed the opportunities given to them to progress their careers and had achieved qualifications in health and social care. There were plenty of staff employed to manage the services safely, reliably and effectively.

Further information is in the detailed findings below.

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 remains safe.

Good 

Is the service effective?

The service remains effective.

Good 

Is the service caring?

The service has improved to outstanding.

Outstanding 

Is the service responsive?

The service remains extremely responsive.

Outstanding 

Is the service well-led?

The service remains exceptionally well-led.

Outstanding 

New Prospects

Detailed findings

Background to this 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.

A site visit took place at the New Prospects office on 19 December 2018 and was announced. We gave short notice of the inspection because we needed to make sure that staff were available to assist us to access records. One adult social care inspector conducted the inspection. After the site visit, on 21 December 2018 an expert-by-experience contacted people and relatives by telephone with advanced permission to gather their feedback on the service. An expert-by-experience is a person who has personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses this type of care service.

On 8 January 2019, an adult social care inspector visited three supported living settings to meet and speak with people who lived there and their support staff.

Prior to the inspection we reviewed all the information we held about New Prospects, including any statutory notifications that the provider had sent us. Notifications are made to us by providers in line with their obligations under the Care Quality Commission (Registration) Regulations 2009. These are records of incidents that have occurred within the service or other matters that the provider is legally required to inform us of.

We asked the provider to complete a Provider Information Return (PIR) prior to the inspection. The PIR is a form that asks the provider to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make. All this information informed our planning of the inspection.

As part of the inspection we spoke with 10 people using the service and six relatives to gather their views. We spent time with seven people and talked with them about their daily life. In addition, we spoke with five members of care staff, a service manager, the registered manager and the chief executive. We contacted external health and social care professionals/teams who were involved in supporting people who use the service. We received two responses. We reviewed a range of care records and information kept regarding the

management of the service. This included looking at three people's care records in depth, five staff files and records related to quality assurance.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

People told us they felt safe living at home with support from the staff. Comments included, "I feel really safe here, all the time" and, "I'm safe here, I like it." Relatives added comments such as, "definitely safe" and "perfectly safe."

Robust safeguarding procedures remained in place and staff were knowledgeable about what action they would take if they suspected people were at risk of harm. Staff were aware of relevant company policies and told us they would have no hesitation to report any concerns. Incidents of a safeguarding nature were thoroughly investigated, recorded, reported and monitored. The registered manager tracked trends to ensure any patterns were analysed and actioned. Lessons learned were shared with staff to improve the service.

Thorough risk assessments were in place to reduce the risks people faced in their daily lives, such as mobility, falls, behaviours, epilepsy and diabetes. Preventative measures were in place and instructions for staff helped keep people safe. Staff were aware of potential risks in people's homes and took positive steps to avoid harm. For example, testing smoke alarms and checking equipment.

Accidents and incidents continued to be monitored and analysed. Records were made of actions taken to correct working practice or prevent further accidents. Where necessary people's risk assessments and support plans were updated following an accident or incident.

Medicines continued to be safely managed. People told us they received their medicines as prescribed and when they expected them. A good system was in place for the administration of medicines. Medicine administration records were completed. Staff had their competency regularly assessed to ensure they remained capable of this task.

There was a policy in place to protect people from the risks of infection and cross contamination. We observed staff following best practice guidelines, such as wearing personal protective equipment. Staff were issued with disposable aprons and gloves to reduce the possibility of cross contamination.

A safe and effective staff recruitment process had continued. The provider continued to ensure staff were of good character and suitable to work with vulnerable people. They proactively recruited staff with a mix of skills, knowledge and experience to meet people's needs. People who used the service were encouraged and supported to participate in the recruitment process by playing an active role in interviewing prospective employees. We considered the service employed enough staff to operate safely and efficiently. People, relatives and staff confirmed this.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

People continued to receive effective care from staff who had the appropriate skills and knowledge. People told us the staff were well trained and relatives confirmed this. One relative said, "Staff are well trained and very experienced." Staff training was up to date and it included key topics as well as specific topics to meet individual people's needs. Three staff told us they had been given basic British Sign Language training to help them communicate better with a person.

New staff completed a robust induction programme and a probationary period. They shadowed experienced staff and had their competencies regularly assessed through spot checks of their working practices and regular supervision sessions. We saw evidence of health and social care qualifications, training certificates and assessments of learning in the staff files.

All staff attended supervision sessions and had an annual appraisal to ensure they remained competent for their role. Any staff issues or needs were addressed and training and development was identified to support their career progression. Staff told us they were well supported by the management team and had good opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge.

People's needs were assessed before they started to use the service to ensure staff could support them effectively. Staff reported any changes, issues or concerns to their manager regarding people's needs. They supported people to sustain their general health and wellbeing and ensured their needs were continually met. Communication with external professionals was excellent and staff encouraged people to strive for and achieve positive outcomes. There are examples of this described in the caring and responsive sections of this report.

We checked whether the service was working within the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, whether any restrictions on people's liberty had been authorised and whether any conditions on such authorisations were being met. Staff demonstrated a sound understanding of their duty to promote and uphold people's human rights. Staff were aware of the need to ensure people were involved in any decision making. People told us staff always asked for their consent before carrying out any tasks in their home.

Staff ensured people had enough to eat and drink. They monitored people's nutrition and hydration needs and gave them the necessary support to manage a balanced diet. Some people told us that where required staff prepared a meal for them or made something for them to have later. More independent people told us the staff supported them to make their own meals. One person said, "I've lost 5 stone on slimming world, thanks to (staff member) who encouraged me to go." Another person told us, "(Staff member) makes awesome slimming world meals."

Is the service caring?

Our findings

Without exception, we received extremely positive comments about the staff. Comments from people included, "(Staff member) is a legend"; "(Staff member) is a genius at making plans with me" and, "(Staff member) is really great."

Equally, relatives were immensely satisfied with the service their family members received from New Prospects. They told us, "They've been absolutely fabulous"; "The staff are very easy to talk to, like part of the family"; "If anything happens to us, we know she's safe and she's happy" and, "The frontline care is good, they are not going through the motions, they do their very best for my son."

Through discussions with the chief executive and the registered manager we found they truly demonstrated the provider's values, which included, 'treating people as individuals and recognising their individual needs, 'valuing all' and, 'working with a positive outlook and attitude'. One of their main focuses was to ensure the people they supported were visible and active in their local community. They told us they looked for their corporate values in the staff they recruited and instilled these in staff through training, supervision, team meetings and community engagement. We found staff demonstrated these values through their passion to empower people to live ordinary lives, be part of their community and strive to reach their full potential.

People told us they were empowered to be as independent as they wanted to be. One person said, "I'm trying independent travel." Another told us, "As long as I feel safe where I'm going and I say when I'll be back, the staff are quite happy to let me go." Staff described examples to us which showed they had encouraged independence and respected people's wishes to do things themselves. One person who was usually always accompanied by staff told us that they were enjoying short periods of time at home alone. They said, "I love 'chilled out Tuesday', I can do my own thing and if anyone comes to the door or window I can just ring the staff." Another person was trialling an assistive technology system which reminded them to take their medicine. This had been successful so far and there was a view to replace staff input with the new system and give the person more independence. A third person had successfully set up their own bank account and was managing it well, having previously been under a court of protection order which hadn't worked out well. They told us, "I'm looking for a job and then I can get my wages paid into my own bank account." They went on to tell us that they asked a staff member to check over their bank statements once a month to ensure it all added up properly.

The excellent connections between people and staff gave people confidence to express their views and tailor a bespoke service to meet their own individual needs and wishes. We saw people's care provision had frequently evolved to reflect any changes requested.

Staff had developed remarkably positive and caring relationships with people and their relatives. Staff demonstrated a sound knowledge of people's likes, preferences and routines. They knew people extremely well which showed they had invested their time in getting to know people. Staff were highly motivated and they told us about feeling inspired to deliver a high quality, caring service. All staff believed the service was excellent. They told us they had no concerns about people's safety as there was a good team of reliable staff

who were very caring. People and relatives confirmed this. Relatives told us they would "highly recommend" this service to others.

Equality and diversity policies were in place to ensure that people were treated with dignity and respect regardless of the sex, age, disability or beliefs. Support plans were created with people's input to ensure their needs were met in a way which reflected their identity and individuality. Equality and diversity training encouraged staff to promote individualism and ensure people's preferences, wishes and choices were respected. We saw this had impacted on people's lives through multiple examples of positive outcomes which have been achieved because people had been involved in planning a bespoke and flexible service. One person had been supported by staff to explore their sexuality further and they had decided to join a group for likeminded people. Through this group and support from staff, the person had attended events and become more open and happy about their feelings.

Staff could foresee and recognise when people were in distress or discomfort and they offered sensitive and respectful support to protect people's dignity. People told us they felt respected and their dignity was maintained. Through conversations with staff they all demonstrated that they maintained people's dignity and respected their privacy, for example, by respecting personal space or belongings or involving people in decisions about their care.

The chief executive and registered manager championed national initiatives such as 'The Dignity Challenge'. They ensured dignity was embedded into all aspects of the service and that staff, some of whom were 'Dignity Champions' worked together to create a respectful, trusting and caring service which made a difference to people's lives.

Staff communicated extremely well with the people and helped them to express their views, especially people with communication difficulties. Staff looked for different ways to communicate with people, such as learning sign language and using assistive technology and other IT methods to ensure their views and wishes were understood. Staff had encouraged some people to trial a new assistive technology system through the local authority which had opened up their channels of communication with their family and friends.

The service had received numerous compliments and 'Thank you' cards. We were shown multiple examples which showed staff had reflected the provider's values. Staff named in compliments were sent a letter of thanks from the chief executive to acknowledge their contribution to the positive outcomes people had experienced.

The provider encouraged the use of external advocates. An advocate is a person who represents people who need support to exercise their rights and ensure their rights are upheld. As staff had a sound understanding of their local community they could offer advice and support about other services in the local areas to help people explore any additional help that may benefit them.

People's personal information and sensitive data was stored securely to maintain confidentiality. Records containing people's private details were kept locked away and computers were password protected. Staff demonstrated they were aware of the legal requirements to keep information about people safe and secure.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

A person-centred culture was now well embedded throughout the whole service, particularly in planning social activities, education and work opportunities. The management team were extremely enthusiastic about making the people they supported visible in the community and they strived to give people further opportunities for education and work which would help them progress in life. New Prospects recently hosted free courses such as first aid for people to attend and they created voluntary job opportunities for people. One person had started to come to New Prospects weekly to carry out health and safety checks around the offices. We saw them completing a checklist with help from their support worker. The registered manager told us, "It gives him a purpose, he is engaged, he likes health and safety. It gets him out of the house. He never used to go out."

Nearly everyone we spoke with had a voluntary job. They all spoke with pride about the work they did at places such as a charity shop, a cat sanctuary and the New Prospects office. One person was now actively seeking paid employment. They had been encouraged and empowered so much by staff that their confidence had grown significantly. This led them to visit the job centre and attend employability courses. The person told us they hoped to get a job in retail or care.

The events and activities which people were involved in, continued to be extensive. A social support plan was tailored to each person's individual needs and wishes, which completely enriched their lives. Most relatives told us prior to input from New Prospects their family members rarely left the house. One relative added, "Now I have to make an appointment to see her!" Staff arranged and encouraged group activities where they instilled a sense of belonging to a 'New Prospects' community. Everyone we spoke with or read about attended various clubs and events arranged by New Prospects staff. People told us of the friends they had made and the fun they had at annual events such as a Christmas party, an awards ceremony and weekly events like a choir club and a social club.

One of the provider's values was to recognise people's 'gifts and talents'. One person was sharing their knitting skills at sessions held at the New Prospects day centre. This has inspired other people to share their gifts and they were now considering sessions on other topics. The chief executive told us, "This has got staff to think about other people's gifts and how they can encourage people to come forward and share their gifts."

Staff were determined to look for creative ways to achieve people's goals with individual activities too. Activities, short breaks and holidays were carefully researched and planned by staff to ensure they would be suitable for people. Two people who New Prospects supported individually, met at a local club and were now in a relationship. They recently went on holiday with another couple who they met at the club. This was an excellent example of positive risk taking. The holiday was very successful as it had been meticulously planned. The four people had used each other's strengths to plan the trip safely and put safety measures in place with help from staff.

Staff repeatedly went above and beyond their role to make dreams come true for people. One person told

us about meeting the singer Joe McElderry who was their favourite X-factor star. Another person told us about going on holiday to the town where they lived as a child. With staff support they researched and found places they used to visit and where they lived. We were told of multiple other brilliant opportunities people had been given. People's lives were certainly enhanced and full of accomplishment.

New Prospects were currently promoting a local initiative which encouraged local businesses to sign up to be a 'Safe Place'. Staff and people did checks on places such as shops and cafés and shared safeguarding information with them so they could help people who became lost or confused. In response to a need for locations after 5pm, New Prospects were actively seeking out new places to sign up to the initiative. The chief executive told us, "The people we support have lives at night too, we needed more places to sign up that were open after 5pm."

The strong person-centred theme was well established in assessments, support planning and reviews. Staff involved people, relatives and external professionals in creating and developing support plans. Staff ensured as much information as possible was gathered about people to respond quickly to their needs. Each person had a keyworker who had responsibility for ensuring paperwork was kept up to date and that regular reviews took place. One relative told us, "(Person) has four permanent staff, same routine all the time, they all react the same way and now seizures have reduced." Another relative said, "They are responsive to any concerns that arise."

Staff had maintained their close working relationships with external professionals and had grown their networks. This ensured they kept abreast of local and national best practice guidance related to people with a learning disability or autism or both. Staff took a proactive approach and had maintained positive links with other services to help them respond quickly to people's needs. A relative told us, "They are so caring and responsive."

People and relatives told us minor issues had been dealt with promptly. No-one we spoke with had complaints about the service. The complaints policy was available to people and relatives which included information about how to complain, what would happen and who else may be involved. New 'Complaint cards' were now kept in each person's home which they could post to the office for a manager to contact them. The chief executive told us, "The point is a prompt response, how its dealt with and how quickly we do it."

The Accessible Information Standard is a framework put in place from August 2016 making it a legal requirement for all providers to ensure people or their relatives with a disability or sensory loss can access and understand any information they are given. We saw all information was accessible and made widely available in various formats.

There was currently no need for end of life care. However, the provider had the necessary arrangements in place to be able to offer this type of service (if or when it was required) as training was widely available, the staff team were consistent and they were proactive in liaising with external professionals.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

This service had gone from strength to strength. Despite growing significantly in size, all the outstanding elements which we found at the last inspection had continued and developed.

People and relatives were overwhelmingly positive about the service. Comments included, "I would wholeheartedly recommend them"; "They go above and beyond" and, "They are not prepared to rest on their laurels." Relatives told us they were impressed that the service had continued to improve despite funding cuts.

An external professional could not speak more highly of the service, they told us, "They (staff and managers) bend over backwards to please people and resolve any issues." They told us of an excellent positive outcome for one person whose life has been transformed since New Prospects took over their care.

There continued to be exceptional leadership from the extremely experienced chief executive and registered manager. A solid staff structure was in place, which included a special projects manager, service managers and 340 support staff. The registered manager said, "The service has grown, we've restructured, looked at staff skill set and moved people around into different roles. We now have an internal training manager." Throughout this inspection, the management team and staff consistently displayed their pride, passion and commitment to people and they wholeheartedly promoted a strong person-centred culture whereby people were put at the heart of everything.

The management team had grown their networks with other services, partnership agencies and local businesses. They took a proactive and practical approach to involving themselves in local and national projects and initiatives. The service had acted as a role model for similar services by sharing their research, ideas and examples of outstanding practice to help other services improve. A relative told us about a care forum. They said the chief executive was part of it and they were really passionate about people with learning difficulties. They added, "(Chief executive) is a true carer, really wants the best, her heart is in the right place."

The management team were continually on the lookout for new and innovative ideas and practices to adopt within the service. For example, the new training manager had introduced a virtual reality headset to use with staff in dementia training. There was an application on an IT device which could simulate some of the effects of dementia, like disorientation. This application could be used for other training topics too.

As well as involving people in staff interviews, the management team had asked people to volunteer to be video recorded sharing their experiences of what it was like to receive support. A video called, "My Good Life" was now being shown to new staff at induction to raise awareness and empathy. Staff had also videoed themselves making people's favourite meals. These were accessed through an assistive technology system by people who could watch the video and follow the simplified steps, to make the meal themselves.

Staff were highly motivated and they told us they were very proud to work at New Prospects. Lots of staff

told us, "I love my job." Morale was very high amongst staff and they told us they were lucky to work for such a good company. Many staff had received a long service award (10 years plus). We heard the provider had put on a Christmas party to say thank you and to show their appreciation. The chief executive told us, "Next year we plan to book a bigger venue, we had 200 attend this year and next year it will be bigger and better." There was also an annual awards ceremony which recognised the staff's dedication and achievements.

There was consistent strong engagement with people, relatives, staff and external professionals. Action plans were developed which showed the management team and staff were persistently striving for excellence through consultation, research and reflective practice. The registered manager told us that involving people, relatives and staff in the development of the service was incredibly important for continuous progression. Various meetings were well established and we saw from the minutes that everyone was encouraged to take an active role in the development of the service. Relatives told us, "(Person) has definitely got a voice"; "If I ever had any issues, I've always been able to ring (chief executive); "The manager responds to issues" and, "The manager keeps in touch."

The quality assurance process was very effective. It reduced the risk of harm to people and inspired outstanding practice. The provider had governance firmly embedded into the service with a strong quality assurance structure with included staff and a group of people who used the service, called the A-Team conducting checks. The quality assurance processes demonstrated that people's views were the basis of the quality monitoring system. The service was fully audited on a regular basis and closely monitored. The management team analysed performance through reflective practice, spot checks, routine reviews of support plans and satisfaction surveys. The process was in conjunction with monitoring the success of recruitment, training, staff supervision and record keeping. Records showed staff were learning from incidents and they reflected best practice guidance was implemented and clearly promoted.

There was a clear and accurate account of the care and support people received. We could see the vast progress being made with people. Through exceptional support from staff, people had consistently achieved outstanding outcomes. Managers and staff had continually strived for and achieved excellence in their roles which provided people with an outstanding quality of life.