

Inspection report

Alpha Homecare (Scotland) Limited Support Service Care at Home

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Inspected by: Elizabeth Dawson
(Care Commission officer)

Type of inspection: Announced

Inspection completed on: 2 February 2010

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Service provided by:
Alpha Homecare (Scotland) Limited

Service provider number:
SP2004006427

Care service number:
CS2004083956

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Easy read summary of this inspection report

We grade all the Quality Statements for a service at each inspection. Each grade describes how well we think the service is doing based on what we inspected.

We can choose from six grades:

 **6**  **5**  **4**  **3**  **2**  **1**
excellent very good good adequate weak unsatisfactory

We gave the service these grades

Quality of Care and Support  **6** Excellent

Quality of Staffing  **5** Very Good

Quality of Management and Leadership N/A

This inspection report and grades are our assessment of the quality of how the service is performing in the areas we examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection due to other regulatory activity; for example, if we have to take enforcement action to improve the service, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

What the service does well

The service demonstrated that it was committed to service user and carer involvement and continuous quality improvement.

What the service could do better

The service should continue to use a range of methods to involve service users, carers and staff in developing the service. The

service should progress the areas identified for further improvement following feedback from service users, carers and other professional agencies.

What the service has done since the last inspection

The service had met the two recommendations made in the last inspection report. The participation strategy had been updated as a result of feedback received from open days. The service had also introduced a new electronic recording and communications system which has helped to monitor the quality of the service users receive.

Conclusion

Alpha Homecare provides an excellent and reliable care at home service. It is responsive to service user and carers feedback and committed to empowering service users to participate in assessing the quality of the service.

Who did this inspection

Lead Care Commission Officer

Elizabeth Dawson

Other Care Commission Officers

Lay Assessor

Please read all of this report so that you can understand the full findings of this inspection.

About the Care Commission

We were set up in April 2002 to regulate and improve care services in Scotland.

Regulation involves:

- registering new services
- inspecting services
- investigating complaints
- taking enforcement action, when necessary, to improve care services.

We regulate around 15,000 services each year. Many are childminders, children's daycare services such as nurseries, and care home services. We regulate many other kinds of services, ranging from nurse agencies to independent healthcare such as hospices and private hospitals.

We regulate services for the very young right through to those for the very old. Our work can, therefore, affect the lives of most people in Scotland.

All our work is about improving the quality of care services.

We produce thousands of inspection reports every year; all are published on our website: www.carecommission.com. Reports include any complaints we investigate and improvements that we ask services to make.

The "Care services" area of our website also:

- allows you to search for information, such as reports, about the services we regulate
- has information for the people and organisations who provide care services
- has guidance on looking for and using care services in Scotland.

You can also get in touch with us if you would like more detailed information.

About the National Care Standards

The National Care Standards (NCS) set out the standards that people who use care services in Scotland should expect. The aim is to make sure that you receive the same high quality of service no matter where you live.

Different types of service have different National Care Standards. When we inspect a care service we take into account the National Care Standards that the service should provide.

The Scottish Government publishes copies of the National Care Standards online at: www.scotland.gov.uk

You can get printed copies free from:

Blackwells Bookshop
53-62 South Bridge Edinburgh
EH1 1YS
Telephone: 0131 662 8283
Email: Edinburgh@blackwells.co.uk

What is inspection?

Our inspectors, known as Care Commission Officers (CCOs), check care services regularly to make sure that they are meeting the needs of the people in their care.

One of the ways we check on services is to carry out inspections. We may turn up without telling the service's staff in advance. This is so we can see how good the care is on a normal day. We inspect some types of services more often than others.

When we inspect a service, typically we:

- talk to people who use the service, their carers and families, staff and managers
- talk to individuals and groups
- have a good look around and check what quality of care is being provided
- look at the activities happening on the day
- examine things like records and files, if we need to
- find out if people get choices, such as food, choosing a key worker and controlling their own spending money.

We also use lay assessors during some inspections. These are volunteers who have used care services or have helped to care for someone who has used care services.

We write out an inspection report after gathering the information. The report describes how things are and whether anything needs to change.

Our work must reflect the following laws and guidelines:

- the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
- regulations made under this Act
- the National Care Standards, which set out standards of care that people should be able to expect to receive from a care service.

This means that when we register or inspect a service we make sure it meets the requirements of the 2001 Act. We also take into account the National Care Standards that apply to it.

If we find a service is not meeting these standards, the 2001 Act gives us powers that require the service to improve.

Recommendations, requirements and complaints

If we are concerned about some aspect of a service, or think it could do more to improve its service, we may make a requirement or recommendation.

- A recommendation is a statement that sets out actions the care service provider should take to improve or develop the quality of the service but where failure to do so will not directly result in enforcement.
- A requirement is a statement which sets out what is required of a care service to comply with the Act and Regulations or Orders made under the Act, or a condition of registration. Where there are breaches of the Regulations, Orders or conditions, a requirement must be made. Requirements are legally enforceable at the discretion of the Care Commission.

Complaints: We have a complaints procedure for dealing with any complaint about a registered care service (or about us). Anyone can raise a concern with us - people using the service, their family and friends, carers and staff.

We investigate all complaints. Depending on how complex it is, a complaint may be:

- upheld - where we agree there is a problem to be resolved
- not upheld - where we don't find a problem
- partially upheld - where we agree with some elements of the complaint but not all of them.

How we decided what to inspect

Why we have different levels of inspection

We target our inspections. This means we spend less time with services we are satisfied are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care. We call these low-intensity inspections. Services where there is more concern receive more intense inspections. We call these medium or high intensity inspections.

How we decide the level of inspection

When planning an inspection, our inspectors, or Care Commission Officers (CCOs) carefully assess how intensively each service needs to be inspected. They do this by considering issues such as:

- complaints
- changes to how the service provides care
- any notifications the service has given us, such as the absence of a manager
- what action the service has taken in response to requirements we have made.

The CCO will also consider how the service responded to situations and issues: for example how it deals with complaints, or notifies us about incidents such as the death of someone using the service.

Our inspections take account of:

- areas of care that we are particularly interested in (these are called Inspection Focus Areas)
- the National Care Standards that the service should be providing
- recommendations and requirements that we made in earlier inspections
- any complaints and other regulatory activity, such as enforcement actions we have taken to improve the service.

What is grading?

We grade each service under Quality Themes which for most services are:

- **Quality of Care and support:** how the service meets the needs of each individual in its care
- **Quality of environment:** the environment within the service (for example, is the service clean, is it set out well, is it easy to access by people who use wheelchairs?);
- **Quality of staffing:** the quality of the care staff, including their qualifications and training
- **Quality of management and leadership:** how the service is managed and how it develops to meet the needs of the people it cares for
- **Quality of information:** this is how the service looks after information and manages record keeping safely.

Each of the Quality Themes has a number of Quality Statements in it, which we grade.

We grade each heading as follows:

6	5	4	3	2	1
excellent	very good	good	adequate	weak	unsatisfactory

We do not give one overall grade.

How grading works.

Services assess themselves using guidance that we given them. Our inspectors take this into account when they inspect and grade the service. We have the final say on grading.

The Quality Themes for this service type are explained in section 2 The Inspection.

About the service we inspected

Alpha Homecare Scotland Ltd was registered with the Care Commission to provide a care at home service on 19 November 2004. The statement of Purpose and Function states that it aims to provide the best quality care to meet the needs of all their service users by investing in staff and working in partnership with service users, their families and social services. Their client group includes older people suffering from dementia, people with physical disabilities, terminally ill and people who require post-operative care.

At the time of the inspection the service was being provided to 50 people.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

Quality of Care and Support	6 - Excellent
Quality of Staffing	5 - Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership	N/A

This inspection report and grades are our assessment of the quality of how the service is performing in the areas we examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection due to other regulatory activity; for example, if we have to take enforcement action to improve the service, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

You can use the "Care services" area of our website (www.carecommission.com) to find the most up-to-date grades for this service.

How we inspected this service

What level of inspection did we make this service

In this service we carried out a low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care.

What activities did we undertake during the inspection

We wrote this report after an announced inspection. This inspection was carried out by Elizabeth Dawson, Care Commission Officer, (CCO) and took place on 2 February 2010. Feedback was given to the manager, and client manager at the end of the inspection.

As requested by us, the service sent us an annual return.

In this inspection we gathered evidence from various sources including:

- evidence from the service's most recent self assessment
- computer held records
- newsletters
- complaints and comments records
- participation strategy
- staff surveys
- postal client review report
- client review survey
- selection and recruitment materials
- selection of relevant part of policies and procedures
- planning for extreme weather conditions
- staff records
- care commission care standard questionnaires
- selection of electronic records

discussion with various people including:

- the manager and client manager
- one service user
- two carers

Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)

Each year we identify an area, or areas, we want to focus on during our inspections. We still inspect all the normal areas of a care service; these are extra checks we make for a specific reason.

For 2009/10 we will focus on:

- Meaningful activity for all adult services
- How care services assess the health of people with learning disabilities
- Involving parents for children's services
- Medication for looked after children for residential accommodation for children
- How care services make sure they have safe recruitment procedures for staff for all services except childminders.

You can find out more about these from our website www.carecommission.com.

Fire safety issues

The Care Commission no longer reports on matters of fire safety as part of its regulatory function. Where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant Fire and Rescue service to their existence in order that it may act as it considers appropriate. Care service providers can find more information about their legal responsibilities in this area at: www.infoscotland.com/firelaw

Actions Taken on Recommendations Outstanding

We made two recommendations at the last inspection. We found that these had been met in accordance with the service's action plan dated 9 February 2009.

Recommendation 1:

The participation strategy should be updated to reflect the range of good practices in place and those planned. This should include how service users and their carers direct/influence how their care is delivered, how people assess the quality of the staffing and contribute to the management of the service.

NCS Care at Home, Standard 11 Expressing your views

Action taken on recommendation 1:

The service provider had revised and updated the service's participation strategy as recommended and included information on how feedback would be addressed and results published.

This recommendation has been met.

Recommendation 2:

The manager should develop a formalised system to collate the findings of the various evaluations and quality assurance processes.

NCS Care at Home, Standard 4 Management and Staffing, Standard 11 Expressing your views

Action taken on recommendation 2:

The service provider had formalised the quality assurance systems and had drawn up an action plan following the collation and analysis of feedback.

This recommendation has been met.

The annual return

We use annual returns (ARs) to:

- make sure we have up-to-date, accurate information about care services; and
- decide how we will inspect services.

By law every registered care service must send us an annual return and provide us with the information we have requested. The relevant law is the Regulation of Care Act (Scotland) 2001, Section 25(1). These forms must be returned to us between 6 January and 28 February 2009.

Annual Return Received

Yes - Electronic

Comments on Self Assessment

The self assessment documentation was completed to a very good standard and gave relevant information for each of the Quality Themes and Statements. Within the self assessment a variety of sources of evidence were presented to support the quality of the service. The service identified its strengths together with some areas for development.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

We issued 16 care standard questionnaires of which four were returned. We also spoke with one service user who indicated that they wished to be contacted. All of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were happy with the quality of care and support they received. Service users confirmed that the service was reliable and the service would contact them should they be delayed for any reason.

Comments included:

"Staff all very good at their job. However she is able to recognise them and benefits greatly from their chats during the visit."

"I am perfectly happy with the care I get. The girls are all pleasant and do all they can to help me."

Taking carers' views into account

We issued 16 care standard questionnaires of which six were returned. Comments included:

"The management and care staff have been wonderful and very supportive. Unfortunately they are unable to complete many of the tasks on the care plan i.e. personal care and showering as my relative insists that I will do it. My relative has severe dementia and is unable to make reasonable decisions as regards this but as she says "no" the staff's hands are tied, although they should be more than happy to help".

"Put don't know for Q2 and 8 as they have only been caring for my father for 2 weeks so it is early days to know about their service checks, but I believe they are doing an excellent job so far".

"We, client and family could ask for no better service."

"Due to memory problems my mother-in-law is unable to remember carers' names".

Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.

Service Strengths

We assessed the service's performance against this Quality Statement at the last inspection which we found to be very good, Grade 5. The service demonstrated that it was committed to service users and carers involvement and had revised its participation strategy as a result of feedback.

We revisited a sample of the evidence cited in the service's self assessment, noted improvement and concluded that the service performed to an excellent standard and achieved Grade 6.

The service used a variety of ways to obtain service users views which included:

- involvement in the development and review of personal plans
- postal client reviews
- monthly telephone calls to monitor service
- forum events known as "Knowing you better"
- opportunity to make comments and suggestions in both formal or informal ways
- notifying service users of the Care Commission's inspection
- electronic recording and communication systems

The new electronic recording and monitoring system is a significant improvement in monitoring the care and support service users receive. This system is also used to plan the delivery of care to ensure continuity and consistency of staff.

The service was able to demonstrate that it took account of service users' views and acted upon them to improve the quality of the service. For example the introduction of new uniforms, development of personal plans and care diaries.

The service had a robust system in place to respond to comments and complaints. Evidence was found confirming that areas of dissatisfaction had been promptly addressed by the service.

Service users have contracts which set out all aspects of the service, including the

process of ceasing the contract and the associated terms. The contract also details the level of support to be provided.

The service had progressed the areas identified for further improvement in the last inspection report and demonstrated that it was committed to continuous improvement of the service.

Areas for Improvement

Alpha Homecare should continue to maintain its commitment to service user participation and empower service users to assess the quality of the service. The service should build on its strengths and progress areas identified for improvement in their self assessment and action plan.

Grade awarded for this statement

6 - Excellent

Number of Requirements

0

Number of Recommendations

0

Statement 2

We enable service users to make individual choices and ensure that every service user can be supported to achieve their potential.

Service Strengths

We assessed the service's performance against this Quality Statement and found it to be excellent, Grade 6. We concluded this following a review of the evidence cited in the provider's self assessment.

A member of the management team makes the initial visit to service users and assesses their needs. They develop a personal plan in conjunction with the service user and where possible their carer. Regular spot checks are made to ensure that the service user is satisfied with the quality of care and support.

Regular communication with service users and care staff enables senior staff to identify when service users needs change. This is communicated with social services to ensure they get the level of care and support they need.

The service also promotes rehabilitation and independence for service users following surgery and discharge from hospital. The service had updated its personal plan documentation which outlined service users' preferences and likes and dislikes.

Personal plans were written in a person centred way, outlining what is important for the service user and focused on their abilities rather than disabilities.

The service carefully plans times of support in a geographic basis to make best use of the available time allocated to each service user. This ensures continuity and consistency of care. The service was able to demonstrate that there is very good communication between staff, sharing of information and regular staff meetings and supervision to ensure the best outcomes for service users.

Service users, who wish, are provided with a staff schedule which includes the times of visits and names of carers.

Care staff support service users in menu planning. A chef provided training to staff in food preparation providing ideas on how best to use their time when preparing fresh food.

Areas for Improvement

The service should continue to build on its excellent practice and strengths in promoting choice, independence and enabling service users to reach their full potential.

Grade awarded for this statement

6 - Excellent

Number of Requirements

0

Number of Recommendations

0

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.

Service Strengths

We assessed the service's performance against this Quality Statement on previous inspections which we found to be very good, Grade 5. The service has maintained this level of performance and remains as Grade 5 - very good.

As stated in Quality Statement 1.1 the service demonstrated a commitment to service user and carer engagement.

The service demonstrated various methods of service user participation in relation to assessing and improving the quality of staffing.

These included:

- service user reviews
- spot checks
- monthly telephone calls where service users/carers can comment on any aspect of the service, including staff issues
- postal questionnaires
- annual reviews where service users/carers were invited to comment on the behaviour/attitudes/skills of staff
- 'open door policy where service users/carers can contact the managers at any time to discuss the care they receive
- Complaints procedure where people may wish to make formal complaints
- service user involvement in the training of staff - both formal sessions for example stroke awareness
- seeking views of service users about staff performance during the probationary period
- focus groups at open days where staff take service users ideas forward

The service was able to demonstrate that it provided training for staff in accordance with service user's needs. For example:

- stoma care
- Parkinson's

- diabetes
- falls prevention
- Adult Support and Protection
- palliative care

Areas for Improvement

The service provider had approached service users to determine if anyone would like to get involved in the recruitment of staff. However no-one expressed an interest. The service recognised that this is an area where service users may lack confidence. However the service collates information from service users at open days which identifies the qualities that service users believe staff should have. The service should continue to explore other methods where service users can influence the recruitment and selection of staff.

Grade awarded for this statement

5 - Very Good

Number of Requirements

0

Number of Recommendations

0

Statement 2

We are confident that our staff have been recruited, and inducted, in a safe and robust manner to protect service users and staff.

Service Strengths

We assessed the service's performance in relation to our Inspection Focus Area for this year; Safer Recruitment. We found that the service performed to a very good standard and achieved Grade 5.

We concluded this following an audit of the staff files and reviewing relevant sections of the recruitment and selection, staff training, induction and personal development policies and procedures.

The service was able to demonstrate that it had robust selection and recruitment procedures in place.

Prospective employees were subject to Enhanced Disclosure checks, taking up two references and completion of health questionnaires.

An effective system was in place for the the recording and re-checking of Disclosure checks and cross referencing with other professional bodies.

The service has a comprehensive induction programme in place and new staff are shadowed by an experienced member of staff until the service provider is satisfied that they are competent in meeting the service users' needs.

Areas for Improvement

The service should build on its strengths and introduce the SSSC Continuous Learning Framework into all element of the organisation over time as planned. The service should also pursue the areas identified for improvement in their self assessment, such as the professional development of staff.

Grade awarded for this statement

5 - Very Good

Number of Requirements

0

Number of Recommendations

0

Other Information

Complaints

There has been no enforcement action against this service since the last inspection.

Enforcements

There have been no complaints made to the Care Commission since the last inspection.

Additional Information

The service was awarded The Care at Home Provider of the Year for 2009 by the Scottish Care at Home organisation.

Action Plan

Failure to submit an appropriate action plan within the required timescale, including any agreed extension, where requirements and recommendations have been made, will result in the Care Commission re-grading the Quality Statement within the Management and Leadership Theme as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme for Management and Leadership being re-graded as Unsatisfactory (1).

Summary of Grades

Quality of Care and Support - 6 - Excellent	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 2	6 - Excellent
Quality of Staffing - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 2	5 - Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership - Not Assessed	

Inspection and Grading History

Date	Type	Gradings
28 Jan 2009	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very Good Staffing 5 - Very Good Management and Leadership 5 - Very Good

Terms we use in our report and what they mean

Action Plan - When we inspect a service, or investigate a complaint and the inspection report highlights an area for improvement; either through recommendations or requirements, the action plan sets out the actions the service will take in response.

Best practice statements/guidelines - This describes practices that have been shown to work best and to be achievable in specific areas of care. They are intended to guide practice and promote a consistent and cohesive approach to care.

Care Service - A service that provides care and is registered with us.

Complaints - We have a complaints procedure for dealing with any complaint about a registered care service or about us. Anyone can raise a concern with us - people using the service, their family and friends, carers and staff.

We investigate all complaints which can have more than one outcome. Depending on how complex the complaint is, the outcomes can be:

- upheld - where we agree there is a problem to be resolved
- not upheld - where we don't find a problem
- partially upheld - where we agree with some elements of the complaint but not all of them.

Enforcement - To protect people who use care services, the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 gives the Care Commission powers to enforce the law. This means we can vary or impose new conditions of registration, which may restrict how a service operates. We can also serve an improvement notice on a service provider to make them improve their service within a set timescale. If they do not make these improvements we could issue a cancellation notice and cancel their registration.

Disclosure Scotland- Disclosure Scotland provides an accurate and responsive disclosure service to enhance security, public safety and protect the vulnerable in society. There are three types or levels of disclosure (i.e. criminal record check) available from Disclosure Scotland; basic, standard and enhanced. An enhanced check is required for people whose work regularly involves caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children or adults at risk; or to register for child minding, day care and to act as foster parents or carers.

Participation - This describes processes that allow individuals and groups to develop and agree programmes, policy and procedures.

Personal Plan - This is a plan of how support and care will be provided. The plan is agreed between the person using the service (or their representative, or both of them) and the service provider. It is sometimes called a care plan mostly by local authorities or health boards when they commission care for people.

How you can use this report

Our inspection reports give care services detailed information about what they are doing well and not so well. We want them to use our reports to improve the services they provide if they need to.

Care services should share our inspection reports with the people who use their service, their families and carers. They can do this in many ways, for example by discussing with them what they plan to do next or by making sure our report is easily available.

People who use care services, their relatives and carers

We encourage you to read this report and hope that you find the information helpful when making a decision on whether or not to use the care service we have inspected. If you, or a family member or friend, are already using a care service, it is important that you know we have inspected that service and what we found. You may find it helpful to read previous inspection reports about his service.

The Care Commission

We use the information we gather from all our inspections to report to Scottish Ministers on how well Scotland's care services are performing. This information helps us to influence important changes they may make about how care services are provided.

Reader Information

This inspection report is published by the Care Commission. It is for use by the general public. You can get more copies of this report and others by downloading it from our website www.carecommission.com or by telephoning 0845 603 0890.

Translations and alternative formats

This publication is available in other formats and other languages on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iarrtas.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

هذه بایتسد یم وونابز رگید روا رولکش رگید رپ شرازگ تعاشا هی

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

یرخأ تاغل بو تاقيسينت تب بلطلا دن ع رفاوتم روشنملا اذه

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.

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Improving care in Scotland