

Inspection report

Community Alarm Service Support Service

Merrystone Care Base
10 Blairhill Street
Coatbridge ML5 2PG

Inspected by: Morag McHaffie
(Care Commission Officer)

Type of inspection: Announced

Inspection completed on: 28 October 2005

Service Number

CS2004071322

Service name

Community Alarm Service

Service address

Merrystone Care Base
10 Blairhill Street
Coatbridge ML5 2PG

Provider Number

SP2003000237

Provider Name

North Lanarkshire Council

Inspected By

Morag McHaffie
Care Commission Officer

Inspection Type

Announced

Inspection Completed

28 October 2005

Period since last inspection

n/a

Local Office Address

Princes Gate, 60 Castle Street, Hamilton, ML3 6BU

Introduction

This combined service, Housing Support and Support Service - Care at Home, known as Community Alarms was registered by the Care Commission in 2004-2005 and is provided by North Lanarkshire Council. Community Alarm Service is an emergency response service based in Coatbridge and delivered to over 9886 people across the whole of North Lanarkshire. The care service is delivered by 43 Home Support Workers to the service users in their own accommodation.

The aim of the service is to “To provide a quality service which enables a wide range of people to remain in their own homes who otherwise may need to live in a alternative care setting”; “To provide 24 hour response service; reassurance to service users and carers; contact emergency services on behalf of service users; reduce admission to hospitals, care homes”; “To deliver an integrated service that compliments other support services being provided”.

Basis of Report

The service provider sent a Pre Inspection Return containing information about the service. The service provider also completed a self-evaluation form.

The Care Commission Officer contacted the manager to arrange a pre-inspection meeting and confirm the inspection would take place 28 October 2005.

During the pre-inspection meeting, 30 September 2005, the service provider was supplied with and asked to distribute

5 staff questionnaires (10% of actual staff employed).

1350 service users postcards (15% of the actual number of service users).

It was felt this was unmanageable and all parties decided that it would be reasonable to contact service users accessing Community Alarms 1 July–30 September 2005.

Unfortunately this was not possible due to the technical limitations of the system.

During the inspection which took place on 28 October 2005 the Care Commission Officer spoke with:

The Service Co-ordinator
Care Service Manager
2 Home Support Managers
Home Support worker
3 Administration Staff

The Care Commission Officer also looked at a range of policies, procedures and records including the following:

Accidents and Incident recording
Complaints Log
Financial Procedures
Medication Policy and Procedure
Minutes of staff meetings
Service Users Personal Plans
Staff Files
Staff training records

During the period 28 October – 7 December 2005 the Care Commission Officer received

completed questionnaires.

The Care Commission Officer took all of the above into account and reported on whether the service was meeting the Section of The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2002, Statutory Instrument No. 114 and following National Care Standards for Care at Home and Housing Support Service, as a combined service:

Care at Home : Standard 1 : Informing and Deciding

Care at Home : Standard 2 : The Written Description

Care at Home : Standard 4 : Management and Staffing Arrangements

Care at Home : Standard 8 : Keeping Well - Medication

Care at Home : Standard 11: Expressing Your Views

Housing Support : Standard 7: Exercising your Rights

Action taken on requirements in last Inspection Report

Not applicable as this is the first inspection since registration by the Care Commission during 2004-2005.

Comments on Self-Evaluation

This was completed in full by the manager and detailed strengths and areas for development.

View of Service Users

The Care Commission received 122 completed service user's questionnaires and the Care Commission Officer accompanied a Support Worker to an installation-home visit.

The Service Users responses offered a balance of positive and negative feedback.

"Staff were instructive and helpful"; "Wearing the pendant gives confidence"; "Have not had to use it yet although in place over a year"; "Social Services have always been approachable".

"Have leaflets but don't have a copy of care plan"; "A leaflet about the service and equipment would be helpful as you forget what is said at installation time"; "Don't know about complaints procedure".

Service users lacked clarity over the different roles and responsibilities of staff who visited their homes, as several responses wanted more or an increase of care at home service.

Response from the Service Co-ordinator regarding the above views of service users: It was felt it would be overly intrusive and unnecessary for care plan to be provided as the Community Alarm Service is a response service as and when necessary not on a planned basis. The majority of service users receive no other social work support and in the few cases where care plans are in place these would be devised by the Care Manager. An information pack is provided inclusive of the complaints procedure.

View of Carers

The Care Commission received 26 completed questionnaires by service users spouses or relatives and offered a balance of positive and negative feedback.

Carers comments

“Good and worthwhile service”; “Can keep relative at home”; “very pleased”; “Gives my relative confidence”; “Quick and efficient to return call and respond”; “Quick response when service user was not even aware alarm not working properly”; “Happy with home care and alarms even mistakes are quickly resolved”; “Good care in her final illness”.

A few of the negative comments, again communication issue based,
“Don’t know how to raise complaints”; “Not involved in review process.”

Regulations / Principles

National Care Standards

National Care Standard Number 1: Care at Home - Informing and Deciding

Strengths

The information provided to the prospective service users and their carers was the Welcome Pack which included a letter of introduction, contact details and no charge for the service. A leaflet and consent form "Sharing of Personal Information" explains information shared with other agencies involved in individuals care.

North Lanarkshire Council also produces and includes the following brochures in the Welcome Pack for Support at Home Services -
General Information; Bookmark; National Care Standards Information; Service Users Charter; Annual Report 2003/04; Frequently Asked Questions and Answers; Complaints Procedure.

A single shared assessment is completed by staff from the Social Work Area Team or Health Care staff and the order forwarded to the Community Alarm Service.

Community Alarm Service make use of the Tunstall (makers name) database system for all installation and can view the Social Work Information System (SWIS), which is an electronic data base inclusive of staff personnel and service users details, ability to identify absence and holiday relief, and shift rota. Those support plans sampled contained good assessment information, personal and emergency contact details, other agencies involved with the service users care, health information and a variety of health risk assessments. The support plans show evidence that service users activity of calls from the alarm system.

North Lanarkshire Council risk assessment documentation is available.

Areas for Development

The assessment process is completed by Social Work or Health Services inclusive of the risk assessment but not always with the service user in situ. (see recommendation 1).

National Care Standard Number 2: Care at Home - The Written Description

Strengths

Service Users who access the Community Alarm Service sign a contract of agreement referring to the following points: no charge for service, installation, staff access to premises, forced entry and misuse. The contract original is given to the service user and a copy kept in the file.

Service users may also have a copy of their full care plan generated by other social work services but not by Community Alarm Services. Service users sign a financial agreement and sharing of information with other professional agencies as part of the care plan.

The robust SWIS system assists by generating management reports.

Areas for Development

The sampled review minutes did not reflect that all interested parties are invited to participate.

(see recommendation 2).

Comment of Service Co-ordinator:

Community Alarm Service would not be responsible for arranging reviews. This would be done by Community Care Team Staff or the Area Team.

National Care Standard Number 4: Care at Home - Management and Staffing

Strengths

The service provider, Local Authority and the Area Office, have policies and procedures in written and electronic format which cover all legal requirements, health and safety issues, personnel matters and training courses. Responses from the staff questionnaires demonstrated a sound awareness and understanding of the provider's day to day implementation of the policies and procedures and felt they received updates on a regular basis. The annual training plan contained core and specialised courses and the responses from the staff questionnaires supported this.

The contents of the staff files sampled reflected that the Local Authorities robust recruitment process was being implemented. The personnel files indicated that enhanced Disclosure Scotland checks were completed for new employees and a process for retrospective checks being completed. Staff supervision and employee development takes place on a regular basis by management. Staff meetings are in place with minutes available.

Home Support Workers are provided with personal protective clothing and guidelines as to when and where they should be worn and used, is included in the induction course and the staff handbook.

Home Support Workers access the recording procedures for the support and assistance for medication, financial transactions, daily events and information regarding the service users.

Monitoring of quality and effectiveness of the service is completed with a corporate approach.

The completed staff questionnaires indicated an awareness of the role of the Care Commission and the Scottish Social Services Council.

Based in the building are a Care Service Manager and 2 Home Support Managers who have responsibility for the management of the Community Alarm Service. A further Care Service Manager and 7 Home Support Managers support all out of hours home care services throughout North Lanarkshire. These Support Managers are closely integrated with the day shift Area Team based staff as well as the Community Alarm service staff and joint working with the overnight and evening Nursing Service.

Community Alarm Service is supported by dedicated clerical staff.

Areas for Development

A number of staff questionnaire responses reflected a similar theme that "Training is available"; "Knowledgeable staff"; "Invaluable service"; "Personal safety in certain areas and lone working at night".

During the feedback Management indicated that the "guardian angel" service had been in place for over 1 year but had ceased in summer 2005. When "guardian angel" was reviewed Management found that there was a lack of uptake by staff . ("Guardian angel" – staff phone prior to entering and after leaving a building, preset time lapse and would generate emergency support if this was triggered). Overnight staff double up.

National Care Standard Number 7: Housing Support Services - Exercising Your Rights

Strengths

A copy of the Service Users Charter is included in the Welcome Pack providing information about rights and responsibilities and what can be expected from the service.

Service users were confident that the information held in personal plans was essential to their support needs and that these were kept secure, but accessible to them if they so wished. Service users can chose to sign up to, opt in/out of personal private and confidential information being shared with other necessary agencies. Interagency and departmental work is common practice during the installation process of the community alarm.

Service users confirmed that their privacy, dignity and right to confidentiality was always respected by staff. Service users observed that the staff maintained a professional manner towards them at all times.

Staff are able to identify hazards, needs for specialised equipment and receive training for the installation of the alarm, behaviour challenging to the service, illnesses related to older people, mental health and housing matters.

The Community Alarm Service office is not normally accessed by the general public. Information leaflets and posters regarding Independent Advocacy Services and other North Lanarkshire services are visible on various noticeboards located in the foyer of the local Social Work office.

Areas for Development

There were no areas for development for Standard 7 from this inspection.

National Care Standard Number 8: Care at Home -Keeping Well -Keeping Well - Medication (where help with taking medication is provided as part of the service)

Strengths

Service users are provided with information at the time of the initial assessment, confirmed on the written copy of the support plan and reiterated at the support plan reviews of what Home Support Worker's can and cannot do.

The Home Support Worker as with regards to "assisting, supporting and prompting service users to self medicate" and "only those medicines prescribed by a medical practitioner will be administered to a service user". Home Support Workers access the recording system in place for administration or refusal to take medication. Certain tasks are identified for interagency work, Support Workers and the District Nurses and specific tasks the sole responsibility of the Primary Healthcare Professionals.

Areas for Development

The Pre Inspection Return indicated that North Lanarkshire Council, Care at Home Service medication policy is currently being revised, as part of inter-agency initiative with a planned completion date of late 2005. On completion of the medication policy staff will receive necessary briefing and training. (see recommendation 3).

National Care Standard Number 11: Care at Home - Expressing Your Views

Strengths

Questionnaire responses reflected that some service users have a Community Alarm for emergency response purposes only and do not access other social or health services. Service Users take part in their care plan review and these meetings were minuted.

A comprehensive complaints policy is in operation and a complaints leaflet is available. Residents and relatives who were consulted were not fully aware of the complaints procedure, but were confident that should they feel it necessary to raise a complaint, staff and management would deal with it appropriately.

Monitoring of quality and effectiveness of the service is completed with a quarterly service users forum which is minuted and an annual survey. There is also a review completed 4-6 weeks after completion of installation.

The Care Commission report should be made available to Service Users and their Carers.

Areas for Development

All Service Users and their Carers should have access to the Complaints Procedure either via the leaflet or its inclusion in the information pack. (see recommendation 4).

Enforcement

none

Other Information

none

Requirements**Recommendations**

1. Home Support Service – Community Alarm Service to review the process for initial risk assessments.

National Care Standards 1. Care at Home - Informing and Deciding.

2. The Organisation and service provider to review the 6 monthly review procedure.

National Care Standards 2, Care at Home - The Written Description.

3. North Lanarkshire Council to forward a copy of the finalised medication policy to the Care Commission.

National Care Standards 8, Care at Home - Keeping Well-Medication

4. The Complaints Procedure could be made more accessible to Service Users and Carers.

National Care Standard 11, Care at Home - Expressing Your Views.

Morag McHaffie

Care Commission Officer