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23 December 2020

Dear Dr Minh Alexander,

Thank you for your emails of 20 October and 2 December 2020 and for sharing your concerns about one of our inspectors, Emma Hatfield, following a ruling by an employment tribunal against a Director of a provider company, Pearl Jackson. You stated you were concerned that Emma Hatfield, CQC inspector was not impartial and did not understand her duties towards whistle-blowers. You felt this would present a risk to vulnerable service users because she may not act appropriately on Safeguarding intelligence.

Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in responding to you. I asked Ros Sanderson, Head of Inspection in the North to review the whistleblowing cases you refer to and to speak to Emma Hatfield to see how she responded to the information provided.

Ros saw from our records that on 10 January 2019 a whistle-blower, Karen McGuire contacted CQC with information of concern. This was referred to Emma as the lead inspector for the service. Emma called her back the same day and spoke with her regarding her concerns. She told Emma that she had left her employment at the service, Charlton Court, Pudsey, Leeds. Karen McGuire gave Emma the names and details of service users who she was concerned for having allegedly witnessed abuse and neglect. Emma thanked Karen for the information and asked Karen to contact her again at any time if she needed to share anything further with us. On the same day Emma referred all the cases to the safeguarding team at Leeds City Council for consideration under their safeguarding procedures. The concerns related to 10 service users. Emma was satisfied that she had taken the appropriate action in referring the cases mentioned to the local authority.

Later that day Emma was contacted by email by the registered manager at Charlton Court, Kelly Hopkinson, who reported to Emma that a staff member had left the service without notice and had made a number of allegations of a safeguarding nature. The manager informed Emma that the same staff member had taken to social media and was making inappropriate comments online about the service. Emma's role as an inspector involves supporting whistle blowers to raise concerns they may have about the care people receive as well as supporting providers to improve care and support for people using their services. Emma described her conversation on this day with the registered manager as a supportive one. This was in the knowledge that she had already spoken with the Karen McGuire and was happy that all of the information of concern Karen had

raised had been reported to the Leeds City Council safeguarding authority. Emma said the comment she made to the registered manager of the service was not made in relation to Karen McGuire but was in relation to the fact that information was being shared on social media.

The registered manager told Emma that she had 'undertaken a survey with every staff member and with all residents who have capacity, asking about any neglect of residents in the home or theft of property in the service and was analysing all the feedback.' Emma supported this action as she felt it was open and encouraged feedback from those that matter.

Emma had further contact with Karen McGuire who clarified the full names of those people she had been concerned about and also shared further concerns about five other people. Again Emma, without delay, referred the cases to Leeds City Council safeguarding team.

Emma then contacted the manager by telephone and informed her of all the concerns that CQC had received whilst protecting the identity of the staff members. Emma informed the manager that in line with our whistleblowing policy all the concerns had been reported to the safeguarding team for their consideration and had also spoken with the contracts monitoring officer at Leeds City Council.

Emma received a further email from the manager of the service who informed her that a previous staff member was contacting relatives by phone and they were coming to see the manager concerned and upset by what they were telling them. She told Emma that she had been able to reassure them and they were leaving happy and satisfied with what they were being told by her. Emma was concerned that contacting relatives may have caused them distress and was extremely unfortunate. The manager told Emma she was planning to hold a relative's meeting to try to support relatives who had been contacted. Emma agreed this would be a good plan. Again, Emma's response to this was intended as supportive to both the manager and the relatives.

Emma's support for the registered manager did not in any way detract from the actions Emma had already taken to support the staff who had contacted her.

The safeguarding team kept in contact with Emma to keep her informed about what action they were taking, including getting positive feedback from people living at Charlton Court and their relatives. They informed Emma that the safeguarding issues she had raised were "resolved at initial enquiry". They advised Emma of a date they would visit the service with representatives from the CCG and contracts team from Leeds City Council. They told Emma that they had been involved with the service for over 4 years and spoke highly of the manager.

In April 2019 Emma moved to another team and handed over this service with a full handover to another inspector.

Emma feels her support throughout the process for the manager did not distract her from the core tasks as a CQC inspector given the safeguarding concerns that were raised at the time. Emma was never asked to be a part of the employment tribunal and so has not been able to respond in any way regarding her email

exchange with the manager. She was not able to clarify with the tribunal the specific actions she undertook on behalf of the CQC and therefore their judgement of her practice was not a judgement based on the facts. I am satisfied that Emma took all steps to ensure people living at Charlton Court were safeguarded in a timely way and in line with our policies and procedures.

As with all of the services that we regulate, CQC continue to regularly review information received about Charlton Court and will monitor and regulate the service in order to ensure that the care people receive is safe and effective.

Please call us on 03000 616161 if you have any questions.

Thank you again for contacting us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M.C. Cridge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a smaller 'C'.

Mary Cridge  
Deputy Chief Inspector