

Enter & View

Aspire Stafford Ltd
25th February 2019

Report



<http://healthwatchstaffordshire.co.uk/>

email: enquiries@healthwatchstaffordshire.co.uk

Freephone 0800 051 8371



Part of the Healthwatch Staffordshire remit is to carry out Enter and View Visits. Healthwatch Staffordshire Authorised Representatives will carry out these visits to health and social care premises to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows Authorised Representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation – so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand. Healthwatch Staffordshire Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch Staffordshire safeguarding policy, the service manager will be informed and the visit will end. The Local Authority Safeguarding Team will also be informed.

Provider Details

Provider: Aspire Stafford Ltd
Address: Northfield Community Centre, Magnolia Avenue, Stafford, ST16 3DU
Service Type: Day Centre for Adults with Mild to Moderate Learning Difficulties
Date of Visit: 25th February 2019

Authorised Representatives

This visit was made by two Authorised Representatives of Healthwatch Staffordshire.

Purpose of Visit

Healthwatch Staffordshire is making a series of visits to Day Services throughout the county in order to report on the range and quality of these services. Each service will have an individual report and an overview report on Day Services in Staffordshire will be compiled once the visits are completed.

A good service should...

1. Have strong, visible management
2. Have staff with time and skills to do their jobs
3. Have good knowledge of each individual client, their needs and how their needs may be changing.
4. Offer a varied programme of activities unless a specific service is offered.
5. Offer quality and choice to their clients around food and mealtimes, where applicable.
6. Accommodate clients personal, cultural and lifestyle needs.
7. Be an open environment where feedback is actively sought and used

The methodology to be used is to;

- Consider the care and services offered and whether this is delivered in a way that promotes dignity and independence.
- Consider staffing levels and the level of the care provided.
- Talk to people using the service, if they are happy and willing to do so to gain their views on the opportunities available to them.
- Talk to relatives, if they are available to ask if they are happy with the care provided to their relatives and whether they are aware and feel able to report any concerns/ complaints.
- Consider staff training and the support offered to enable staff to do their jobs well.
- Observe interaction at all levels between clients, staff, Manager, and visitors.

Physical Environment

External

The Centre is part of the Northfield Community Centre, allowing the clients to be in the heart of the local community. The Centre is newly built and is in very good condition. The grounds are well maintained, and have a public footpath through the centre. The classrooms have a sedum planted roof, and the provider has tables and chairs outside for the clients to use on warm days. The grounds are looked after by the clients as part of the gardening programmes.

There is a circular area outside the classrooms with trees, which offer shade in the summer, which the clients often use during lunch or when having classes outside.

Internal

The Northfield Centre is a community centre, with Aspire Stafford Ltd using some of the rooms downstairs. The rooms are light and airy, with lots of colour and pictures. The Clients have also helped redecorate other rooms that they use within the centre.

Adjacent to the rooms Aspire use are public toilets (mens, womens, disabled) and a shower room. There is CCTV covering the adjacent coffee shop but not within the rooms themselves. There is no visitors book to sign.

The interior of the building is modern and, as would be expected, in good condition. At the time of our visit there was the aroma of the cooking the clients have been doing - Vegetarian Cottage pie. Everywhere was clean and tidy.

The equipment is clean and in good order. Part of Aspire's aims is to teach the clients life skills such as cleaning, tidying, washing up and housework, so the clients clean up after themselves and help keep the place in good order; eg, if mugs still have tea staining on the inside, the clients are asked to wash them again so the insides are properly clean.

The corridor joining the rooms is a public space, so is kept clutter free and clear. The spaces in the rooms themselves are adequate for clients with mobility issues to use a walking frame or wheel chair easily. All the floors are level, again allowing those with mobility issues excellent access.

Client Numbers

Maximum Number of service users: 50

Current Number of service users: 38

Staff Numbers

STAFF NUMBERS		ON DUTY		
	Total	Morning	Afternoon	Other
Trained / Qualified Activity Leaders	6	Varies on day always have at least 2 -on a Monday 4	Varies on day always have at least 2 -on a Monday 4	N/A
Trained / qualified Activity Staff	6	Varies on day always have at least 2 - on a Monday 4	Varies on day always have at least 2 - on a Monday 4	N/A
Carers / support staff/driver	2	1	1	Driver works each day
Maintenance	1	1	1	N/A
Administration	1	0	0	Works weekends and evenings
Management	1	1	1	As above

Staff numbers vary from day to day depending on number of service users.

Temporary Staff are not used, however the activity staff are all sub contracted. The Drivers is the only full time member of staff apart from the Manager.

Management

Management - A good service should have strong visible management.

The manager should be visible within the service, provide good leadership to staff and have the right experience for the job.

Our findings

The manager has a strong presence at Aspire. Communication is ongoing throughout the day, from before the clients arrival. The staff have been carefully selected by the Manager, and are from a variety of backgrounds. On speaking to staff members, they had nothing but positive comments to make about the support they get from the manager. She is a visible member of the team most days, unless she has meetings to attend.

The manager has a background of working in a college environment with people with learning difficulties. Her background has given her the knowledge to provide a flexible and empowering service to the clients, allowing the staff to give input into the service and encourage and support each other. The manager takes great pride in the staff and their abilities, and genuinely cares about the client wellbeing, progression and chance to learn differently. We were advised that this is reflected in the success of the service.

The manager is passionate about integration of the clients into general society and helping the clients become self-reliant, but also teaching them empathy, compassion and tolerance. She works closely with both staff and clients to enable each individual's goal setting to be fluid, flexible and above all, workable. She also works with the clients' families and carers, to show progress and encourage learning to carry on in the home environment e.g., making a cup of tea or peeling a potato.

Comments

The manager has also recently started using Facebook as a way of allowing the families and carers of the clients to get a better understanding of what the clients do and how they are developing new skills. This has been especially helpful in engaging some families who otherwise wouldn't engage.

Staff Experiences and Observations

Quality Indicator 2 - Have the staff the time and skills to do their jobs

Staff should be well-trained, motivated and feel they have the resources to do their job properly.

Our findings

The staff are sub contracted and mostly work part-time. The staff that I spoke to had been with the company a number of years and both obviously loved working there and were passionate about their roles. The staff are highly trained and motivated, caring individuals. Because a lot of their work is guidance they are able to take the time and use their skills to encourage the clients and each other.

Mandatory training for staff includes:

- First Aid
- Safeguarding
- Aspire Induction Training

Additional training available is ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) and Skill up-dating depending on changing needs of a client.

The staff are given regular training in Safeguarding, First Aid, AED (Automated External Defibrillator) and Food Hygiene, all of which are regularly renewed and kept up to date. The Driver has had a full induction and special training for working with people with learning difficulties. The sub contracted staff are expected to search and do any additional training themselves, but Aspire provide any appropriate group training. The group training, such as First Aid, is sourced externally, and any training is brought in from people who understand the type of service Aspire provide.

The staff feel well supported by their manager. She is hands on, whilst not micro managing. She integrates with the service users and the staff and is usually available. If any issues with time or resources crop up, they feel that the manager is approachable.

The staff feel that the cover is acceptable, and that people help each other out. As they are all subcontractors (except the driver) and from a variety of backgrounds, they recognise that they each have different strengths and play to this, so work well as a team. Team morale is good, and there is a feeling of camaraderie amongst the team.

Comments

Staff are motivated, have good working relationships with the management and appeared to have the skills and time to do their job well.

Quality Indicator 3 - Do staff have good knowledge of each individual client, their needs and how their needs may be changing
Staff should be familiar with clients' histories and preferences and have processes in place for how to monitor any changes in wellbeing.

Our findings

Each client has an individual record including information from their social worker, family and carers. This records allergies, histories, preferences and they are regularly updated. The manager alerts her staff to any changes as soon as they are made known to her. This means sometimes the staff will receive text messages before the start of the working day to alert them that there has been a change. The records are kept up to date, and are regularly reviewed. All staff and contract staff are DBS checked and have safeguarding training which is regularly reviewed.

There is a visual record for the client's well-being; there is a 'traffic light' system in place on the daily record. If a client is on amber, the staff know the client will have had a minor accident or incident. If it is red then the staff and manager will discuss the best way to manage this, as the client will have had more than 2 incidents or accidents. This may be as simple as getting the client to slow down in the kitchen when they are chopping vegetables, or to take more care when cooking, or as complex as an external family issue. Behaviour is also monitored in this way. This is treated as a "Dilemma" and the staff respond accordingly.

A Dilemma incident occurred while we were observing; the staff took the client to one side to discuss the issue that was upsetting them. While this was happening, the clients themselves, checked that each other were alright, that no one was upset, worried or disturbed by the client's change in behaviour and them becoming upset. The clients showed empathy and compassion for each other, and this was encouraged by the staff. On return, the staff explained what had triggered the behaviour in the individual and again, the staff and clients showed empathy and compassion. The individual client will now be monitored more closely for a period of time, to see if there are any other impacting factors on the change in their behaviour, and relevant support will be given by staff to the client and their family/carers.

It was observed that the staff really care about the well-being of the clients, that they are happy, content and empowered as much as possible. Nothing is forced and leeway is given to clients and alternatives found should a client not want to join in with a particular activity. The staff work very closely with the clients to understand what the client's individual needs, wants, goals and ideas are. While milestones and learning outcomes are reached, they are met in what would be seen as unconventional academic ways, but this works well for the clients so outcomes such as literacy and numeracy are achieved.

Reviews are variable, from every two weeks to six months, depending on the progress of the client. The service feeds back to the carers and families of the clients, although some families and carers don't seem to want to engage that much. However, the service has tried to encourage engagement by using Facebook, which is yielding positive results.

Comments

It was clear that the staff knew the clients and their individual needs well and supported people both as individuals and groups so that all received appropriate care.

Activities

Quality Indicator 4 - Activities - Does the service offer a varied programme of activities?

Services should provide a wide range of activities and support clients to take part in activities, unless the service offers a specific type of service rather than a wider range of opportunities.

Our findings

Types of Activities on offer			
Indoor	Outdoor	Off-site	Visits / trips out
Reading, writing	Travel Training	Allotment	Trip to Llandudno
Maths, budgeting		Team Exercise in community	Trip to Wedgewood Centre
Cooking		Drama	Meals out -Average 6 per year
Cleaning		Gardening	Trip to London
Washing and Ironing		Local Gym	
Work skills			
ICT			
Cake Decorating			
Animal Care		Animal Care	
Hairdressing			
Skin care and personal grooming			
Yoga			
Dance			
Photography and video making			
Pottery and felt making			
Communication and Presentation Skills		Communication and Presentation Skills	
Drama			
Arts and crafts			
Enterprise Activities			
Fundraising		Fundraising	
Sewing/knitting			

The service provides a wide range of activities, which includes activities that the clients themselves want to try or take part in. Due to the clients having mild to moderate learning difficulties, and most of them having come through mainstream education, the service tries to stay away from traditional classroom styles. The core areas are independent living skills, gaining paid employment, and social integration. Most clients stay two to three years, so the service feels it important that the activities are client centred.

There is a focus on small groups; the centre prefers fluidity rather than prescribed classes. They want their clients to have new experiences and develop new skills rather than do activities they've done before. Client engagement is what is first and foremost, and the individual programmes are built around each individual client. They feel that clients learn better if skills are embedded into activities rather than formal lessons, e.g. maths becomes a part of organising a trip or cooking a recipe. An example of this was with the safe-guarding activity the clients took part in, where they learned how to be safe online, about the emergency services and what to do in case of an accident. They enjoyed it so much and wanted to learn more, so it has been extended.

The clients take part in three activities a day, which are listed on a board in the main room. Each activity is ticked off when completed. The fluidity allows the clients to take longer with an activity if they need to. If a client doesn't engage, this is dealt with appropriately by the staff and the manager. If they refuse to engage, then the tick is 'red'. None of the clients want to get a red tick so if one appears on an activity, they often decide they want to do it after all. The clients wouldn't be in any trouble, the manager and staff would talk to them to find out exactly what the issues are and if there are any underlying problems that need dealing with, but the clients like to feel part of the group, so would prefer to join in.

The clients are encouraged to specify what activities they would like to do, alongside any skill building that is appropriate. The activities include a large variety of independent living and life skills; such as washing and ironing, budgeting, cooking and reading menus, skin care and personal grooming including hairdressing, communication and presentation skills, ICT and cleaning. They are encouraged to participate in skills that will help them into employment, including CV writing, job applications, work experience (which is tailored to them achieving paid employment), enterprise activities, and work skills. Clients learn to socialise in their own community as well as the wider community, and use of soft skills (active listening, good communication skills, appropriate social behaviour) is encouraged. This covers the understanding of behaviour that is appropriate in public situations which may be different to within the client group and at home.

They are encouraged to take part in physical activities such as trips to the local gym, gardening and dancing (there is a public community disco on regularly, run by the Northfield Community Centre that the clients are encouraged to attend along with their families and carers). They have also participated in Yoga classes and Dance classes, which are part of the activities available to the public at the Northfield Community Centre.

There are also a large variety of craft-based activities such as cake decorating, photography and video making, pottery and felt making, drama, arts and crafts, sewing and knitting. Animal care is also on offer. If a client has a specific interest, the company will do their utmost to assist the client in being able to do that activity; e.g. one client really wanted to go riding, so this was made available to him.

Group trips outside of the local area are a regular occurrence, the most popular being a recent trip to Llandudno. During our visit we were able to observe a visit being planned; the clients are encouraged to plan as much as the trip as they can, including budgeting and costs, arranging transport, etc. They are supported by the staff but the clients do most of the work themselves.

Comments

There is a wide range of activities available including valuable life skills.

Catering Services - where applicable

Quality Indicator 5 - Catering - Does the service offer quality, choice around food and mealtimes?

If relevant, Services should offer a range of meal choices and adequate support to help clients who may struggle to eat and drink and accommodate different preferences and needs around individual dietary requirements.

Our findings

Meals are planned by the clients with the support of the staff, a month at a time. They try to incorporate traditional holidays such as Saints Days and Burns Night, along with pie week and other similar weeks or days. The allotment the clients tend supplies seasonal veg and herbs, some of which are frozen in house and used at a later date. They include meals and recipes from different cultures, such as Chinese New Year, bread making, baking, and desserts as well as main meals.

The clients can choose whether to eat from the daily menu a dish that they have helped cook. They can also choose to bring a packed lunch or buy food at the adjacent café. The meals from the café are reasonably priced, but it is cheaper to eat the food the clients have prepared. Those bringing a packed lunch or purchasing from the café sit with the other clients at the dinner table and they all eat together. The kitchen has a warm and friendly atmosphere. It is well supervised and the clients eat communally round a large table, giving it a family feel. This adds to communication, social interaction and the feeling of community.

The meals made in the kitchen are healthy and nutritioux, and are prepared and cooked by the clients themselves. This enables the staff to include maths, literacy, practical skills and independent living skills as part of the process, so the clients are learning without realising it. They are also encouraged to try new food. The clients are also encouraged to clean up including washing up, after the meals, as part of learning to be independent. There is a rota and a 'lucky dip' of who gets to help, which the clients enjoy.

Dietary requirements are adhered to; there is an allergy sheet for everyone, all cultural needs are catered for and they have gluten free food twice a week. The clients have bright, colourful crockery, and are assisted with cutting up food if they are unable to, and encouraged to slow down their eating, to discourage choking. At every meal time the staff check with the clients if there are any food issues, in case something has changed.

Drinks are served alongside the meals, and hot and cold drinks are readily available throughout the day. The clients are encouraged to serve themselves. In the kitchen, alongside the kettle, is a hot water dispenser. The clients who are not able to use the kettle are able to make themselves a hot drink using this, and it has been so successful that some families and carers have now had them installed at home.

Photos are sent home to the families and carers of the clients using kitchen utensils and preparing meals; such as using a vegetable peeler to peel a potato, to show the families that the clients are able and to encourage the practice to continue at home.

Fresh fruit is available throughout the day.

Comments

There is variety and choice around food and mealtimes and the regular cooking of meals by the clients enhances their skills. Clients received appropriate support as necessary to the individual at mealtimes.

Quality Indicator 6 - Does the service accommodate clients personal, cultural and lifestyle needs?

Services should be set up to meet residents cultural, religious and lifestyle needs as well as their care needs, and shouldn't make people feel uncomfortable if they are different or do things differently to other clients.

Our findings

The service users have choices over food and drink as mentioned earlier. The care plans, activities and outcomes are tailored to each individual. The staff treat the clients with respect and compassion, and with a sense of humour. We observed a lot of smiles and laughter from the clients and the staff. When I spoke to the driver, who has a police background, he said he was particularly struck by how kind and fun the clients are, how capable they were but also how vulnerable they are. He felt he'd gained a much greater understanding through working with them and it was obvious by the way he spoke about them and the body language how much he respects the clients.

The clients cultural, religious and lifestyle needs are met. Activities are deliberately chosen to enhance their lifestyle and to reflect a myriad of cultures and beliefs, so the clients gain an understanding of others as well as their own.

One important aspect has been use of the toilets. As the toilets the clients use are part of the Northfield community centre, it has been a useful tool in teaching clients what is appropriate behaviour in that setting. One client has a tendency to stare, so the staff try to teach them that the general public may find that uncomfortable and encourage them to use the disabled toilet, so they have more privacy and are less likely to find themselves in 'a dilemma'.

Client Experiences and Observations

It is obvious that clients are comfortable and relaxed within the service environment. A number of them have attended other establishments but when asked were quite positive that this was the one they preferred because of the choices it offered. Other clients who struggled to verbalise, but fully understood the question were also positive in their response.

They enjoy the flexibility and variation provided by Aspire which provides activities that are directed at specific outcomes and events. For example, clients were eager to talk about the plans they are making for a show that they are organising for the Autumn of 2019. Here responsibility is given to them for all the details of staging a show. This ranges from booking the venue and examining costs to the actual writing, casting and performance of the show. There were pictures on the wall of a previous show staged by clients at Stafford Gatehouse theatre in 2017. This reinforces the ethos of the service to provide skills to clients which can be transferred to other areas of their lives.

We shared some games with clients, whilst waiting for the afternoon session to formally begin. This was great fun for all. The clients were not only helping and supporting each other but also us, the visitors. There was some competition between clients but it was good hearted, relaxed and fun. It was very much a family atmosphere with great efforts made towards inclusivity by everyone.

Some clients are being assisted towards work placements and in chatting to them it was evident that this was an exciting time of their lives. They felt Aspire had provided them with both the confidence and skills to go to work. One of them said he had never imagined that he would have the skills suitable to take up a placement and that he may be able to have a job. Staff explained that they were happy to encourage and tutor clients in their chosen areas as well as for the standard activities. This flexibility was obviously appreciated by clients since they felt that their ideas were both recognised and valued.

Family / Carers experiences (if available)

There were no family members / carers at the service during our visit.

Quality Indicator 7 - The service should be an open environment where feedback is actively sought and use.

There should be mechanisms in place for clients and relatives to influence what happens in the service, such as a Clients and Relatives Committee or regular meetings. The process for making comments or complaints should be clear and feedback should be welcomed and acted on.

Our findings

Where possible Aspire encourages clients to express their personal preferences and be involved in the decision making around their activities during their time at the service. Examples of this are provided in the previous sections. At the same time clients are shown that there are many other unusual and varied activities available if they wish to be involved. One client said that she did not really want to go to the gym but knew she must take exercise so she was encouraged to try yoga.

There are no formal committee meetings around service development, but close contact is kept with carers and relatives and any concerns about clients are raised immediately. As stated earlier, the manager has started using social media in order to contact some hard to reach carers, which provides instant and effective contact. Photographs of clients undertaking activities are also sent to carers to show not only the breadth of activities but also that clients can undertake perhaps more complex tasks than anticipated by carers.

Comments

It may be helpful, if it is not done so already, to make sure that feedback that is received is logged so that it can be demonstrated that feedback is welcomed and acted upon.

Summary, Comments and Further Observations

This organisation provides an excellent service to its clients. There exists a flexible and supportive environment which helps clients attain a wide range of goals. These goals are based around client needs and tailored to their abilities; so successes are frequent and reinforce the positive learning that is ongoing for the clients. While attending the service an individual client may well be able to attain independent living skills plus employment experience, perhaps whilst working on a charitable project to help fund activities.

It was obvious throughout our visit from the behaviour of the clients (and the staff) that all who attend feel happy and supported.

Comments

We would like to thank the staff and clients for making us so welcome and sharing their personal stories with us.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Action

We do not feel a need to make any particular recommendations to this high quality service, other than to suggest that they consider how they may gain and record feedback about the service from client and families / carers and how they may demonstrate their response to feedback.

Provider Feedback

To be filled in by Healthwatch if feedback received

DISCLAIMER

Please note that this report only relates to findings we observe on the specific date of our visit. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all residents and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.



Healthwatch Staffordshire

Room 31, Staffordshire University Business Village
Dyson Way, Staffordshire Technology Park
Stafford
ST18 0TW

<http://healthwatchstaffordshire.co.uk/>

email: enquiries@healthwatchstaffordshire.co.uk

Freephone 0800 051 837

Part of (ECS) Engaging Communities Staffordshire

