



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

Name: Care FirstGroup

Provider: Care First Management Services Ltd

Centre visited: Silica Road, Amington Industrial Estate, Tamworth B77 4DT

Service Type: **Care First** is a specialist training and development college

Skills Tank is an independent specialist provider that develops young adults 16 - 25, who are in transition to a new service, and adults 25+ with moderate to severe learning difficulties/disabilities.

Community Prospects CIC Limited deliver a flexible, fun and fully supported day provision to young adults 16 - 25 and adults 25+ with mild to moderate learning difficulties/disabilities, brain injuries, autism and/or mental health

Date of Visit: 29th January 2019

Authorised Representatives

This visit was made by two Authorised Representatives of Healthwatch Staffordshire, Julie Thurlow and Catherine Wetton.

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 Care First Group was easily located with good signage. There was a large car park and it was easy to find the entrance. The building itself was surrounded by gardens which were tended by the students and were in good condition. There was a large garden where vegetables and fruits were grown with greenhouses for the plants. Unfortunately, the plastic tunnel had been damaged in a recent storm, there are plans to replace the plastic in place for when the weather improves. In addition, there was a sensory garden. The garden was a habitat for wild life and was well maintained. One building was not being used; until recently it was being rented to another company, but it is hoped to bring this back into use for students with severe learning needs. It will contain an independent living style unit to teach the more severe students independent living skills.

Internal

The inside of the building was well maintained and welcoming, each room was large and spacious. It was bright and cheerful throughout. Students and staff had an input with the decoration. There was one door frame that had been damaged by a student, but the management was aware of this, and is on the repairs list. There were eight rooms including the restaurant. They hope to use more rooms in the future as the centre develops and expands. In the reception there was a five-star food rating for the Skills Tank and the Greenhouse Coffee shop. There was evidence of student activities throughout the centre including a range of photographs of events that had been undertaken.

There were a number of toilets for staff and students, but one room has been ear marked for a room that could be used for students with complex needs as it has a hoist inside to protect the dignity and respect the needs of the student. Further adaptations would need to be made and the inclusion of a changing bed; but this could readily be available in the future, should the need arise.

Client Numbers

250 per week

20 - 50 per day

Staff Numbers

STAFF NUMBERS		ON DUTY	
	Total	Morning	Afternoon
Trained Qualified Leaders			
Hub Managers	3	9.00-12.30	1.00-4.00
Lecturer/Assessor	3	9.30-12.30	1.00-4.00
Trained Qualified Staff Learner support Assistants:			
Education:	8	9.00-12.30 9.30-12.30	1.00-4.00 1.00-3.30
Carers & Volunteers	6-8	Various	Various
Maintenance	1	Various	Various
Administration	1	Various	Various
Management Hub Managers	2	9.00-12.30	1.00-4.00
Catering	5	9.30-12.30	1.00-3.30

The centre has a pool of bank staff to cover sickness and holidays.

Management

Quality Indicator 1 - 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

Care First in Tamworth is run by the Hub Manager who works with individuals. She is at the 'heart' of the centre and ensures it is run efficiently and effectively. She has been in this position for a number of years. In addition visits are made usually once a week by the Chief Executive Officer, the Head of Operations, the Head of Quality and Learning Development and the Head of Health and Well Being. This team of people are based at Head Office in Great Barr and visit the different centres in the group. It was evident that this occurred regularly as the students were familiar with all of them and the staff knew all their names and had a rapport with the students. The staff have been with the company for many years, in some cases from near the start. Staff retention seems very good.

Comments

The Management were positive and seemed to be effective. There was an excellent relationship between the management, staff and students which created a wonderful atmosphere. Everybody seemed to work as a team for the benefit of the students and passionately believed they could offer a good service to members of the community.

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

There were many different staff members, but all had a positive approach to their work. Due to the excellent staff and student ratio sufficient time was available for the tasks undertaken. There were Qualified Lecturer Assessors with Teaching Qualifications. They are trained on Assessment and Quality Assurance. All Staff have training in safeguarding, infection control, digital security, equality and diversity, fire safety, risk assessment, prevent training, Health and Safety, COSHH, Promoting British Values and Epilepsy.

In the Skills tank division and Community Prospects (non- teaching) staff are trained in Learning disability and Autism Spectrum Awareness, Medication, COSHH, Moving and Handling, Positive Behaviour Support, 'Pamova' (Prevention and Assessment of Violence and Aggression), Epilepsy, Active Support.

Some staff also have teaching qualifications.

Additional training is available to education staff on teaching and assessment training, course training and internal verification training.

There are regular internal staff training days, the majority of training is refreshed annually as per need, identified on individual training matrix via the HR department. Specialist training in relation to Behaviours that Challenge is every three years, to ensure staff are safe and supported in this complex area of work. They also liaise with external agencies, such as community nurses, speech therapy and occupational health when and where necessary, and have an excellent relationship with both.

In the Skills Tank Division and Community Prospects there is ongoing internal training around Autism Spectrum/Mental Health/Behaviour Management from Qualified and Experienced staff.

Care First have their own qualified coaches of positive behaviour support, NVQ Level 1 - 3 and NVQ Level 5 in Management.

Care First and associated groups take part in local disability forums and are keen for regulation to be introduced in regards to day services. They are regularly inspected by Ofsted, work to external quality standards as well as internal. They have regular school Funding Agency audits for school funding and City and Guilds audits by external qualified assessors. They are also audited by the local college.

Comments

The training is ongoing for all staff and is comprehensive. Staff are motivated as there are volunteers who help in the centre. Two past students have returned to the centre and offer voluntary help and are paid for some days as well. All staff seemed happy and enthused. Resources and ideas are shared throughout the centres. It is essential in this caring environment that staff enjoy their job as any negativity could pass to their students whose wellbeing may be affected, but we observed extremely positive, caring and motivated staff throughout our visit.

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

This was outstanding. The needs of the students are paramount. All members of staff knew the students names and were familiar with their background. They were in close contact with their families and we felt that the establishment was a 'family'. One young man got stranded in the morning on his way to the centre due to a road closure. When he failed to arrive at the centre the Hub Manager followed this up and a member of staff went to collect him. On another occasion one student needed safeguarding and stayed in the centre after the opening hours until the evening. The aim is to allow the student the best they can achieve and to be happy and to have a good quality of life.

When referred the family and the individual are contacted and a taster session is arranged. A member of the management team meets with individual students to assess them before they start, and also meets with the families to assess the home situation. Some parents have learning difficulties themselves, so this is also taken into consideration by the staff when liaising with them. If this is successful a transition period will be arranged where the student attends the centre for a period time to get used to new surroundings, new people and new routines. A programme is then arranged to suit the individual needs of the students and can be changed at any point if it is not suitable or learning in another area needs to be continued.

The CEO introduced a card which is the same size as a credit card. On the card is the student's name with a card number which is linked to the Police National Computer Base. If the student is in trouble, or feels vulnerable or threatened, they can give the card to the police and they can find out about the individual's needs and how they should be treated. Alternatively, they can pass the card to a member of the public or someone working in a shop, who can ring the number on the card and ask for support for the clients. In addition, when some students leave they have to walk under an underpass where problems can arise. An employee now walks with the students who catch the bus to help and support them when walking through this area. This helps give the students confidence and they feel safer than doing this themselves. These extra support mechanisms help the lives of the students outside the education centre which shows that they care about their students. There has been an 85% reduction in incidents involving people with SEN needs and the police since the introduction of the cards.

Due to the high ratio of staff to students the staff get to know the students very well so can monitor their health and wellbeing. Some students find it difficult to communicate and do so in non-verbal ways. Being able to observe a student the teacher/carer can monitor the situation and make changes to ensure the wellbeing of the student is maintained.

Comments

The Hub Manager is a very important person in this establishment as she gets to know the students really well and is a good link person between home and Hub. She is responsible for monitoring and raising concerns. There is a concern form that can be filled in by any member of staff and this will be acted upon. There are 3 Senior Managers all of whom are Safeguarding Leads and support the site should there be any Safeguarding Concerns identified and will support and advise the Hub Manager should a Safeguarding need to be made. One of the Senior Managers is also a PBS [Positive Behaviour Support] coach across the Care First Group. The Hub Manager has been working at the centre for many years and runs the catering side with the help of the students. As all students visit the canteen at least twice a day she is very familiar with them and is in a position to share information with other members of staff, if there is a need. A review of each student's needs is regularly reviewed and updated when necessary. This could range from weekly to monthly depending on the student.

Activities

Quality Indicator 4 - 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

The activities are divided into different areas. Firstly, catering where Menu Planning, costing, customer service skills, food preparation and shopping lists are amongst the many subjects being offered. Life and social Skills included work skills opportunities with organization such as the Rotary Club and working and training with the police and fire brigade. A Skills for Working Life qualification can be gained. They are also encouraged to make the sandwiches for local businesses and take the orders to the local businesses, to encourage social interaction and tolerance. They also supply buffets to local businesses, and cater to the general public in their café, where the students prepare and serve the lunches.

Conservation and Horticulture are also on offer where students maintain 2 acres of grounds, growing organic fruit and vegetables and making hanging baskets. BBQ's and Seasonal Fayres for held for family, carers, staff and professionals. Visits are made to Garden Centres and Wild Life Trusts. Working opportunities with the Wild Life trusts are available to assist in maintaining a conservation area. Students are able to gain a City & Guilds Accredited Qualification.

Woodwork and design include skills such as making bird boxes and benches and working together as a team. Items can be made to order for the public. Students can gain a City & Guilds Accredited qualification

Craft and design include recycling and vintage crafts and again City & Guilds Accreditation qualifications can be gained.

Community Prospects CIC is a person-centered service, so activities can be planned through any of the different areas shown above.

Training is given to students to help them to understand about the world in which they live, and this can be delivered using simplified information including visual and kinaesthetic tasks.

Students choose an area that suits them the best but some who have been at the centre for a longer period of time might have completed more than one area. This is dependent on how many sessions they complete. External course are specifically chosen where they have 90% practical and 10% academic content as this best meets the needs of the students.

Comments

We observed students completing simple work sheets on diet, fruit and vegetables. This was done as a group and all students were involved in this task and seemed to be enjoying and learning from this experience. This was a healthy eating exercise and it was good to see that healthy eating was being promoted.

When visiting the kitchen/flat area we were told that one autistic student who was not present on this day enjoyed baking. Upon questioning 'why baking?' we were told that this is what she enjoyed.

Catering Services

Quality Indicator 5 - 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

The kitchen/restaurant seems to be at the heart of this establishment offering a food service to the students and local residents and local business employees. In addition, a sandwich service delivers to offices and factories close by using a trolley supervised by staff.

The restaurant itself was a pleasant environment with pictures on the wall showing a range of recipes and students work. The restaurant was clean and well laid out - a comfortable place to eat and relax. Each table had fresh flowers and the forks and knives had a serviette wrapped around.

On the wall was a thank you letter from a lady in waiting representing the Queen as an afternoon tea was served to celebrate the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. Photographs, pictures and letters were sent to the Queen as part of the celebration. There was also a food allergy notice by the serving area.

Prices seemed very competitive - you could not get a cup of tea for 50 pence elsewhere! Main meals and desserts were served including a bowl of fresh fruit on the serving counter.

Students did not need any particular help at mealtimes and there was a wide range of food that would suit most people. Nuts were not included in the meals although no student had any allergies to be considered.

There is a four-week cycle of meals and these change with each season. Staff and students prepare and serve the meals, and everyone has to complete a Food Hygiene Certificate before they can work in the kitchen. Fruit, herbs and vegetables that are grown on site are used in season as much as possible.

Comments

On the day we visited the students served the food to us on our table with members of staff. This helped with their communication, sense of belonging and confidence building. All students were polite and well-mannered and tried to communicate as best as they could. The restaurant was a positive way of engaging the local community and also creating links with larger firms e.g. BMW who order food for buffets.

There is a very inclusive feel to the restaurant, and the students are very popular with the users of the services, to the extent the staff receive complaints if the students aren't with them on the sandwich run!

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

All students attending the centre are individual with different needs and these differences are catered for very well. Because of the sometimes complex nature of the issue of the individual all needs will be looked at very carefully, monitored and changed if necessary. At Tamworth one family did not want their child to take part in the Halloween Activities which was adhered to.

Comments

The students have severe learning difficulties and an alternative curriculum is provided. Many of these students they have faced challenges all their life and struggled with reading and writing and some can still not read and write. These students now have a chance to benefit from a structured curriculum which embraces their needs. They are encouraged to visit when they leave as they believe the centre should still be part of their lives.

Client Experiences and Observations

The students we spoke to love the service and find it enhances their quality of life. They don't like it when the centre is shut over Christmas and New Year, as they enjoy being there so much. Some of the people we spoke to especially enjoyed working in the gardens and being able to enjoy the produce they'd grown. One student in particular commented that he wouldn't want to go anywhere else. Trips and outings are organised for special occasions and the students commented on these as being especially enjoyable.

The students said that they care a lot about the card scheme that the centre runs, to help keep them safe. The cards give them a sense of well-being and safety, which can be incredibly important to vulnerable people. One young man had found his card had really helped improve the support he got in the community if there was ever a problem and was particularly careful about its whereabouts.

We were told that they really enjoy the catering side of the centre and being part of the community. The looks on the client's faces on being praised for their cooking and serving of the food they'd prepared said a great deal, in that they'd enjoyed the work involved as well as the positive feedback.

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

The Hub Manager said that feedback usually is passed to her verbally and she would deal with all problems that students may encounter.

All students have a Communications book which is passed between home and the Hub that the individual attends, in order to give information to the carer, and to also communicate about the day that the individual has had, or to communicate any concerns or behaviours that may affect them when at home or vice versa. The communication book also assists in prompting e.g a phone call to the carer for verbal discussion between staff and carers that could be of a sensitive, or complex nature.

There are also review meetings with parents where feedback is exchanged.

There is a complaints procedure form which is available in the office, but it might be a good idea to have some information about what to do if people had any problems or concerns available to them in reception. The senior staff and Hub Manager did say that they have very few complaints.

Comments

As there are twelve Care First Groups with two additional ones being planned in the future feedback is shared between groups to improve the service. It might be a good idea to have a Relatives and Carers Committee or group where interested people are invited to meet, to share experiences and discuss any ideas for improvements. This could then be shared across the group.

Summary, Comments and Further Observations

We believe this is a well-run establishment where each student is valued. There are varied programmes available with different content and these are tailored to the needs of the student. When work is accredited it is easier to justify what you are delivering but this establishment also delivers an unaccredited curriculum where students needs are considered on an individual basis to help deliver life skills.

Trips are planned and students have been taken to Cadbury's World and the Food Show amongst others to further their experiences.

It was good to see that social enterprise is encouraged where students grow and sell their produce at Summer fairs. The money made can then be reinvested based on students views and ideas.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Action

We would encourage people who are responsible for referring students to services to visit the centre where all the good work that is going on can be seen. This could give a greater understanding of the benefits of an alternative curriculum and the reasons why it is important to have a good staff student ratio. A visit gives a great understanding of the centre and the complex needs of students.

Today we were made very welcome and many people spent valuable time explaining the service - one that everyone is proud to be a part of. Any student who visits Care First is very fortunate to be part of a family that cares about each and every one of their learners.

Provider Feedback

When asked what they felt worked well about the way the Authorised Representatives carried out the recent Enter and View, they responded:

Although both Julie and Catherine had a job to do their approach came across professional, but also to listen and learn in a very different Day Opportunities for Adults with Learning Difficulties/Disabilities, Autism, and Mental Health they had not experienced before.

They were both quiet and calm around staff and students even when meeting students whose behaviour can challenge - this assisted greatly in relaxing both staff and students and avoided difficult situations arising which can happen within a split second with some of our client groups.

Both Julie and Catherine listened to the students, looked at their work and had interest in what students were doing and what staff were looking to achieve from the task in hand - showing an interest in the students work and speaking to them was received by the students very well which encouraged a positive response as students were very keen to speak to Julie & Catherine and to tell them about their achievements.

When asked if there were aspects of the Enter and View visit which you felt did not work well or could be improved, they responded:

We felt the whole experience, and the day, went very well because Julie & Catherine were 'interested' and respectful to everyone and asked direct, but appropriate questions to staff, and also understood that some students may have difficulty in relating to people they had not met before, or students who may not be able to answer questions.

All of my team were delighted with the visit and would welcome them again.

When asked, as a provider of a service, did the Enter and View visit help you to identify areas for improvement and if so, in what way, they responded:

In Julie and Catherine's recommendations they mentioned encouraging more visits by people who are referring into our service which we are hopeful, having had such a good report, and people seeing the report will encourage more visits from Social Workers, Commissioners, Staffordshire Borough Council as this has been lacking.

Since this visit we have had a visit from a Staffordshire Borough Council Commissioner for a meeting with a Senior Manager and to talk and look around the Hub which we hope will create referrals which have been lacking.

It was also recommended by Julie and Catherine about sharing feedback between groups to improve services, and to also consider having a Relative and Carers Committee or group to share experience and to discuss ideas for improvement - this has already been discussed and plans are in place to look at how this can be achieved by linking into the Tamworth Carers Hub, and Advocacy groups.

Additional comments

We are grateful for the visit being positive, pleasant, and supportive into an area of work which is very complex and hope our positive report can help to assist with a Quality Standards approach being formed for Day Opportunities that can in turn enhance skills and positive working across the area of Disabilities and Mental Health & Autism.

Such a positive report will certainly assist our drive to be the 'Best' in this area of work, and to continue to improve our Quality Standards throughout the Care First Group.

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 service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.



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