



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: New Directions Support
Address: The Hub, 17 Eastgate Street, Stafford, ST16 2LZ
Service Type: Day Services
Date of Visit: 4th March 2019 / 25th March 2019

Authorised Representatives

This visit was made by three Authorised Representatives of Healthwatch Staffordshire. Catherine Wetton, Joanne Cook and Pauline Blackmore.

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 majority of the services facilities are located in Stafford town centre in a building leased from the county council. It is close to all local amenities. The main entrance is on Eastgate Street, with disabled access round the back of the building. There is no garden. Access to one of the workshops is outside; this is open to the elements.

The service also has a new satellite unit at Beaconside, on the old University site

Internal

The service shares the building with other businesses. There is a reception area which we were asked to report to, and to await the arrival of the manager. We were asked to sign the visitors book. The reception area is clean and spacious. There is CCTV in all communal and public areas.

New Directions have the use of offices and two workshops. Corridors were clean and free from clutter. There was a pleasant aroma of baking. All rooms were clean, light and airy and well decorated. Furniture appeared to be in good condition and fit for purpose. There are communal toilets and a disabled toilet, all were clean and fresh smelling with hand washing and drying facilities.

The new satellite unit at Beaconside is used as a centre for life Skills. This bungalow has a fully functioning kitchen and teaching areas, as well as outside gardens. The building has disabled access. The satellite unit allows service users to learn life skills in a naturalistic setting and is ideal for small group working. This new unit was visited by the Healthwatch Community Outreach on 25th March. For information about this visit, please see additional information on page 12 of this report.

Client Numbers

We were given very detailed information of service users. There is no set maximum, the service model allowing New Directions Support to expand to meet individual needs. The services have flexibility of accommodation and staffing and these can be increased if required.

The latest figures available prior to our visit were that 48 people were registered as services users, with up to 20 attending on a weekday and with up to 10 spaces available on a Saturday.

Staff Numbers

New Directions Support have different staffing compliments each day due to the different amounts of service users attending, and the need to maintain the staffing ratios of 1 to 3, (once any 1 to 1 staffing is accounted for).

The staffing establishment is one Manager/Chief Officer, one Deputy, two Co-Ordinators, one Finance Officer and seven support workers, with a further two staff available on a “bank” to cover as and when.

There are no in-house maintenance or catering staff as they are not required.

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

We were met by the Manager of the service and the Deputy Manager. The Manager gave us an in-depth account of the service since its setup in 2013. The Manager has extensive experience in social care. The Deputy has been with the service since its set up, first as a support worker, progressing to senior support and then Deputy Manager. The Deputy told us that she has undertaken a management qualification. There is a comprehensive staff handbook.

The management operate an open door policy and we observed a relaxed and friendly interaction between management and staff. There are monthly staff meetings which incorporate any in-house training staff may have requested. For example, Makaton and Epilepsy Awareness. In addition to whole staff meetings, staff also have 1 to 1 supervision meetings every 6-8 weeks with the Deputy Manager. These meetings are used to document performance and to discuss any concerns that staff may have, and also to highlight any training needs.

During our meeting and tour of the service with the Manager we observed his interaction with service users. It is evident they know the Manager well and that he knows them individually.

Comments

The management have a thorough knowledge of the service and the staff and relationships are good with both.

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

Some of the session leads are support workers and have vocational expertise rather than formal qualifications (for example art teachers).

All staff training is recorded electronically on an HR IT system. This portal allows for individual training records and has the ability to run specific training reports as required.

All staff undertake accredited DMI training through cascade training (to breakaway level only) and New Directions is an accredited NHS DMI training centre.

First aid qualifications are undertaken by staff according to perceived risk.

All staff undertake safeguarding training and are required to read and sign all risk assessments.

All new staff have a mandatory 2 day induction training-programme which is signed off by a senior member of staff.

All staff attend regular support and supervision sessions around once every 6 to 8 weeks depending on the number of hours they work. These confidential sessions are with a line manager and are used to support staff in their work, including opportunities to discuss working with specific service users and embed in-house training. They are thus seen as a 1 to 1 training opportunity for staff and can also be used to identify external training required.

Staff also attend a number of in-house training opportunities, often with external trainers. In 2018 this included work with speech and language therapists around The Total Communication Environment concept, work around effective communication with people with Autism, De-escalation theory, and practical Makaton skills.

Staff are also able to access external training where this is deemed relevant to their role. Recently the deputy manager completed her QCA ILM level 3 in management and the finance officer is undertaking a Book-keeping qualification.

Staff ratios are 1 to 3. Some service users require 1 to 1 support and this is provided. All staff have been DBS checked.

Staff we spoke to were very happy in their work. They appeared motivated and enthusiastic. They confirmed that the Manager and Deputy are very approachable and supportive. They feel they are provided with the resources to do their job well, and if they feel they need any self development or training then this is taken on board and provided.

Additional training by outside agencies is paid for by the service if it is relevant to the job role and of benefit to the service. For example, one staff member requested dementia training and this was arranged. Staff are provided with the relevant information about the service users to enable them to effectively support them, e.g. personal files and service user passports.

Comments

Staff are happy in their work; they feel valued. They welcomed us into their work areas and were happy to chat and answer our questions.

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

Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the service users needs. They have access to personal files and passports. They are all familiar with the safeguarding policies and procedures.

During our visit it was evident through their interactions with service users that they knew them well and treated them as individuals.

Comments

Staff are supplied with the relevant information about service users. They demonstrated that they are very knowledgeable about each individual and understand their personalities, needs and preferences.

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

Activities are structured and planned 6 weeks ahead. Certain activities take place on specific days such as art and crafts; service users attend days that meet their interests. On the day of our visit service users were engaged in craft and baking.

The service has links to outside organisations such as the gatehouse theatre where service users can practice their drama and rehearse for plays.

Special events are celebrated. On the day of our visit service users were engaged in making crafts for Mother's Day. They have recently engaged in activities for Valentine's Day and Chinese New Year.

Service users are encouraged to express their personal interests, for example, someone has an interest in music and wants to make a record player, staff have supported this, and a record player is presently being constructed.

All activities are fully inclusive, occasionally a service user may want to do something different to the planned activity, where this is possible it will be arranged.

The service encourages service users to complete the yearly survey, this highlights how satisfied service users are with the range of activities on offer and also asks for suggestions for future activities. As a result of a recent survey music has been introduced.

Service users are also encouraged to participate in the community; for those who are able work experience at local charity shops is arranged.

Fund raising for Macmillan and red nose day also takes place.

We were advised that New Directions runs a structured session timetable with a variety of activities which are available on set days. This means that individuals attend for the sessions that meet their outcomes. The only exception is Saturday afternoon which is seen as a user-led social group and where the group members determine the programme of activities.

Individuals with one to one support have individual programmes which will include some of the activities but which will also include specific activities around personal outcomes such as swimming, phonics, horse-riding and similar.

An example of a recent timetable includes the following items;

- Toolbox (A mixture of design and create activities in the workshop)
- Independent Living Skills (Cookery)
- Art
- Technology
- Work Experience
- Independent Living Skills (Community)
- Woodwork
- Drama
- Active Day (Sports/Rambling/Games and Outings)
- Project Group
- Lifestyle
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All sessions incorporate an element of training under supervision as people work towards their specific outcomes. Some specific accredited courses have been run through external providers in 2018 including road safety training, health and safety in the home and horse care.

New Directions Support are able to link in with external to support individuals towards employment. Internally they can support service users in voluntary placements, as well as heightening people's awareness of employment as a concept and teaching softer skills within the ILS sessions.

Comments

Service users are offered activities to suit their individual interests and preferences. All activities are fully inclusive. Activities take place in the centre and off-site. Regular walks across Cannock chase are organised. Each day service users have access to the shops in the town centre. Our observations showed service users to be happy and engaged in activities.

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

The service doesn't offer meals. Service users bring in their own lunch or can go into the town with the support of a member of staff to buy their own. They have access to the kitchen where they can heat up food in the microwave or make toast. Drinks are unlimited and are freely available throughout the day.

Comments

The management informed us that they are in the process of opening a new building which will be used for cooking skills. Here service users will be taught to cook their own meals.

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

Each service user has an individual care plan and passport. The service transports the service users to the centre in their own cars. All staff using their vehicles have business insurance.

One service user is Muslim and the centre makes provision for Friday prayers. This service user also doesn't speak English so the staff are teaching him basic English and also learning key words of his language so they can communicate with him.

Comments

New Directions Support takes account of each individuals needs and preferences and accommodates these within people individual care plans.

Client Experiences and Observations

The service users we spoke to were very positive about the service. They told us they enjoyed the activities and liked the staff. Excellent rapport between service users and staff was observed.

Family / Carers experiences (if available)

We were not able to meet any family or carers on this visit, however we have been shown extensive documentation showing that the family and carers are kept well informed and their feedback is welcomed.

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 service has a complaints and compliments policy which we were shown.

The service collects the views and effectiveness of the service by sending out annual surveys to service users and their families/carers. A recent survey completed by families/carers highlighted a need for respite care over the weekend. As a result of this the Saturday club has been set up.

We viewed the 2018 carers annual quality questionnaire, this showed the following:

94 % of carers strongly agreed and a further 6 % agreed they were happy with the overall service that New Directions provide.

87% of carers strongly agreed and a further 13 % agreed that the service meets the needs of the person they care for

87% of carers strongly agreed and a further 13 % agreed they would recommend the service to another person.

The survey confirmed that 100 % of carers were positive about the service - we noted that there were no negative comments at all.

The carers and families have regular meetings, where any concerns, comments and complaints are raised, and the service is able to feed back to the families and carers. This can include plans for expansion and any other changes that may be happening. Also, issues like hospital passports, issues with check-ups, and other issues not directly pertaining to the day service can be discussed and the families and carers supported, or sign posted, where necessary.

Comments

New Directions works effectively with service users and their carers to provide a service which is transparent and meets their requirements. We were advised that no complaints have been made against the service in the last 12 months. Suggestions for development and improvements are taken on board.

Additional information

The service runs Monday to Friday a.m. and p.m. sessions and on a Saturday afternoon.

New Directions are planning an expansion of the service to a bungalow on the old Staffordshire University site, where the service will make use of the garden and the rooms to further enhance the independent living skills of the service users.

Healthwatch visit to the bungalow on 25th March 2019

The bungalow that New Directions have acquired is situated on the bank overlooking the exit from the old Staffordshire University site. It is reached through the main small access road through the site and has adequate parking close by. The building is surrounded by lawns and trees, giving it an almost rural feel in comparison to the Stafford town site. The bungalow is surrounded by a hedge, with a path (with wheelchair access) leading to the front door, through a small terraced garden. There is a small slabbed terrace with two sheds on it and room for a green house.

Inside, the decor has been freshly painted in light blue, and the carpet replaced. A galley kitchen has been installed, and during the visit 2 members of staff were assisting 5 clients making apple crumble. The bungalow has a bathroom that wouldn't look out of place in a family home; this is not only for use by those using the building as a bathroom but also helps the staff teach the clients how to clean and look after the facility as part of independent living skills.

There is a large room, that has been set up as a dining room, which can also be used for crafts. There is a room which is glazed on three sides with fantastic natural light, which overlooks a large sloped garden and patio. The patio is due to be cleaned and overhauled so it will be suitable for the service users to have meals outdoors and take part in other activities outside. We were told how it is hoped that over the spring and summer, the service users can learn gardening skills to grow vegetables, flowers, herbs and fruit that they can use in the kitchens. There will be a large gate that will give access into this part of the garden from the access road through the site. Another room that has one wall that is mostly windows. This also gives a view over the sloping garden. The other two rooms, the size of small single bedrooms, are currently being used as office and storage space.

Comments

The adaptations to the building to make it suitable for teaching service users independent living skills is currently in early development, but already the atmosphere in the building is one of light, fun and friendliness. With the development taking place at the bungalow it should be a great asset to the service and its users, as well as helping them raise their profile locally, as they plan to have a banner along the bottom hedge saying who they are.

Summary, Comments and Further Observations

The management and staff are highly motivated and enthusiastic. They obviously care about the clients and the quality of service provided. We were impressed with the detailed care and concern for the service users.

We were struck by the level of skill the service users were applying in their art work. Having such talented staff in residence is a huge asset and the quality of the work the service users are producing is outstanding.

It is also really good to see how any money the service has made has been put back into the service to improve the facilities; for example a very large interactive television that can also work in a similar way to an Ipad and is extremely user friendly for those with learning disabilities or physical disabilities such as using a wheelchair.

We found that the service met all of the Quality Indicators that are considered within this report and provided a well-managed, effective, caring and responsive service.

Comments

It was a pleasure to visit New Directions and we wish to thank the staff and the service users for making us feel so welcome, giving us such open access, sharing detailed information and telling us about their positive experience of the service.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Action

We did not feel it necessary to make any recommendations in respect of this high-quality service.

Provider Feedback

Healthwatch Staffordshire received the following feedback from the New Directions Support management in respect of the visit.

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

We found the visit to be a very positive experience. It allowed us to present the representatives with evidence to support their questions and the whole visit was conducted in a very respectful and professional manner by the 3 representatives. They all took time to speak to staff and service users as well as the management team to ensure that they could collaborate what was being said from a practical perspective, and a wide array of evidence was requested, and provided, to support their enquiries.

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 were surprised that the final report was based around 7 Quality Indicators which we were not made aware of before the visit. If we had known these were the criteria for the visit beforehand we would have been able to structure our responses around the various sections.

It may also have been useful for Healthwatch to speak independently to carers as part of the visit to gain their objective views and we hope this is something that can be developed for future visits

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;

We are interested in the specific quality indicators being used to evaluate services and this will allow us to concentrate on specific areas as we move forward. This is the first time that a specific set of quality indicators has been used within independent day-opportunities providers and it is good to see a structured approach being taken to the issue of quality within services like ours.

Overall, we are delighted that the final report is so positive and highlights that Healthwatch do not feel it necessary to make any recommendations in respect of our high quality service.

The management made an additional comment as follows;

Thank you to the three representatives involved who carried out the visit in a very sensitive and professional manner and we look forward to another visit in due course

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.



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