

Resolve (Care Northern) Limited

Highview House

Inspection report

Low Road
Kirk Merrington
Spennymoor
County Durham
DL16 7JT

Tel: 01388417550

Date of inspection visit:

27 April 2023

18 May 2023

23 June 2023

04 July 2023

Date of publication:

26 September 2023

Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Outstanding 

Is the service safe?

Good 

Is the service effective?

Outstanding 

Is the service caring?

Outstanding 

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding 

Summary of findings

Overall summary

About the service

Highview House is a residential care home providing personal care to up to 8 people. The service provides support to autistic people and people with learning disabilities who have a forensic history. At the time of our inspection there were 7 people using the service.

We expect health and social care providers to guarantee people with a learning disability and autistic people respect, equality, dignity, choices and independence and good access to local communities that most people take for granted. 'Right support, right care, right culture' is the guidance CQC follows to make assessments and judgements about services supporting people with a learning disability and autistic people and providers must have regard to it.

People's experience of using this service and what we found

Right Support

People received exceptional support from dedicated, highly motivated and compassionate staff. Staff fully understood people's needs and wishes and supported them to achieve their goals. Staff knew people extremely well and supported them to improve their independence and quality of life.

The service had received Autism Accreditation by the National Autistic Society, which is an autism-specific quality assurance programme. This accreditation recognised that the service had achieved a standard of excellence and followed a framework for continuous self-examination and development. This was an outstanding achievement.

People were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible and in their best interests; the policies and systems in the service supported this practice.

Right Care

People who used the service told us the care was exceptional and they were at the absolute centre of everything the provider and staff did. They received extremely compassionate care which exceeded expectations. Staff valued people as individuals and consistently promoted and protected their human rights.

The provider went far beyond what was required in terms of staff induction and training, for the benefit of people who used the service. This gave staff an excellent understanding of people's needs. Staff understood how to keep people safe and promoted positive risk-taking where appropriate. Staff were remarkable at supporting people to express their views. Staff used a variety of tools to communicate with people according to their individual needs.

Right Culture

The leadership of this service was exceptional and distinctive. Highview House was a truly unique service as the provider and staff team were fully committed to delivering excellence in research-based practice. Staff promoted people's independence, supported them with educational opportunities and meaningful activities, and enabled them to live their best lives possible. People said it was the best place they had ever lived, and their lives had been completely transformed as a result.

The registered managers led by example and were open about the high expectations they had of all the staff team. The staff were valued by the provider and leadership team, and they were recognised for their achievements. Staff were extremely complimentary about the support they received from the management team and how well they were treated as employees. The provider and staff team had won and been nominated for numerous social care awards.

For more details, please see the full report which is on the CQC website at www.cqc.org.uk

Rating at last inspection

The last rating for this service was outstanding (published 27 February 2018).

Why we inspected

This inspection was prompted by a review of the information we held about this service.

We looked at infection prevention and control measures under the safe key question. We look at this in all care home inspections even if no concerns or risks have been identified. This is to provide assurance that the service can respond to COVID-19 and other infection outbreaks effectively.

We undertook a focused inspection to review the key questions of safe, effective and well-led only. However, we identified exceptional practices in terms of how people were treated with dignity and respect, so a decision was made to also include the key question of caring.

For those key questions not inspected, we used the ratings awarded at the last inspection to calculate the overall rating. The overall rating for the service remains outstanding. This is based on the findings at this inspection.

You can read the report from our last comprehensive inspection, by selecting the 'all reports' link for Highview House on our website at www.cqc.org.uk

Follow up

We will continue to monitor information we receive about the service, which will help inform when we next inspect.

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

Good ●

The service was safe.

Details are in our safe findings below.

Is the service effective?

Outstanding ☆

The service was exceptionally effective.

Details are in our effective findings below.

Is the service caring?

Outstanding ☆

The service was exceptionally caring.

Details are in our caring findings below.

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding ☆

The service was exceptionally well-led.

Details are in our well-led findings below.

Highview House

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

The inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (the Act) as part of our regulatory functions. We checked whether the provider was meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Act. We looked at the overall quality of the service and provided a rating for the service under the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

As part of this inspection we looked at the infection control and prevention measures in place. This was conducted so we can understand the preparedness of the service in preventing or managing an infection outbreak, and to identify good practice we can share with other services.

Inspection team

This inspection was carried out by 1 inspector and 1 Expert by Experience. An Expert by Experience is a person who has personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses this type of care service.

Service and service type

Highview House is a 'care home.' People in care homes receive accommodation and nursing and/or personal care as a single package under one contractual agreement dependent on their registration with us. Highview House is a care home without nursing care. CQC regulates both the premises and the care provided, and both were looked at during this inspection.

Registered Manager

This provider is required to have a registered manager to oversee the delivery of regulated activities at this location. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Registered managers and providers are legally responsible for how the service is run, for the quality and safety of the care provided and compliance with regulations.

At the time of our inspection there were 2 registered managers in post.

Notice of inspection

This inspection was unannounced. We visited this service on 27 April, 18 May and 4 July 2023.

What we did before the inspection

We reviewed information we had received about the service since the last inspection. We sought feedback from the local authority and professionals who work with the service. We used the information the provider sent us in the provider information return (PIR). This is information providers are required to send us annually with key information about their service, what they do well, and improvements they plan to make. We used all this information to plan our inspection.

During the inspection

We spoke with 4 people who lived at the service and 4 relatives about their experience of the care provided. We spent time observing interactions between staff and people.

We spoke with 9 staff including both registered managers, 1 of the directors, 1 team leader and 5 support staff. One of the registered managers was also the nominated individual. The nominated individual is responsible for supervising the management of the service on behalf of the provider.

We reviewed a range of records including 3 people's care records and 7 medicines records. We looked at 3 staff recruitment records and a variety of records relating to the management of the service including meeting minutes and audits.

After the inspection

We received email feedback from 6 staff members and 5 professionals who work with the service. Between 28 April and 23 June 2023, the registered managers sent us further examples of outstanding practices relating to the key questions effective, caring and well-led.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

Safe – this means we looked for evidence that people were protected from abuse and avoidable harm.

At our last inspection we rated this key question good. The rating for this key question has remained good. This meant people were safe and protected from avoidable harm.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse

- People and relatives felt the home was safe. One person said, "When I lived somewhere else, I was always on edge and felt very anxious ... since I came here, I no longer feel like that as I feel safe. The staff are always on hand and [registered manager] won't tolerate bullying, assaults, or anything like that." Another person told us, "I feel safe here and the staff support me." A relative said, "[Family member] is safe as the staff in charge are very experienced and know the risks. There are not really a lot of staff changes and some staff have been working there for a long time."
- People were kept safe from avoidable harm because staff knew their individual needs well.
- There were systems to safeguard people from the risk of abuse. Staff had training on how to recognise and report abuse and they knew how to apply it.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management

- People, including those unable to make decisions for themselves, had as much freedom, choice and control over their lives as possible, because staff managed risks to minimise restrictions.
- People's care plans recorded what specific risks were relevant to individuals and measures staff should take to minimise such risks.
- Staff managed the safety of the living environment and equipment well through checks and action to minimise risk. Relevant health and safety checks were up to date.
- Staff could recognise signs when people experienced emotional distress and knew what to do to reduce the need to restrict their freedom and to keep them safe.

Staffing and recruitment

- There were enough staff to support people safely. People who required one to one support received this in line with their care and support needs.
- Staff recruitment and induction processes promoted safety. Pre-employment checks included obtaining references and checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The DBS helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and help prevent unsuitable people from working in care services.

Using medicines safely

- People received their medicines safely and effectively.
- Staff were trained to understand the safe handling of medicines. Regular checks were completed to ensure staff remained competent to administer medicines safely.
- The service ensured people's behaviour was not controlled by excessive and inappropriate use of medicines. Staff understood and implemented the principles of STOMP (stopping over medication of people

with a learning disability, autism, or both) and ensured people's medicines were reviewed by prescribers in line with these principles.

Preventing and controlling infection

- We were assured that the provider was preventing visitors from catching and spreading infections.
- We were assured that the provider was supporting people living at the service to minimise the spread of infection.
- We were assured that the provider was admitting people safely to the service.
- We were assured that the provider was using PPE effectively and safely.
- We were assured that the provider was responding effectively to risks and signs of infection.
- We were assured that the provider was promoting safety through the layout and hygiene practices of the premises.
- We were assured that the provider was making sure infection outbreaks can be effectively prevented or managed.
- We were assured that the provider's infection prevention and control policy was up to date.

Visiting in care homes

- There were no restrictions on visiting, in line with current government guidance.

Learning lessons when things go wrong

- Staff managed incidents affecting people's safety well. They recognised incidents and reported them appropriately. The management team investigated incidents and shared lessons learned.
- Staff recorded any use of restrictions on people's freedom and the management team reviewed these and looked for ways to reduce them. Staff were skilled at preventing incidents from escalating as they had a thorough understanding of people's needs.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

Effective – this means we looked for evidence that people's care, treatment and support achieved good outcomes and promoted a good quality of life, based on best available evidence.

At our last inspection we rated this key question outstanding. The rating for this key question has remained outstanding. This meant people's outcomes were consistently better than expected compared to similar services. People's feedback described it as exceptional and distinctive.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience

- The provider recognised that supporting staff to continually develop their skills, competence and knowledge was integral to ensuring the provision of high-quality care and support. The provider went far beyond what was required in terms of staff induction and training. Staff completed service specific training such as awareness of attachment theory, trauma-informed practice, and personality disorder awareness, which was delivered by a highly regarded specialist practitioner and a consultant psychiatrist. This gave staff an exceptional understanding of people's needs. A staff member said, "The attachment and trauma training is outstanding as it helps staff understand why something happened."
- The provider was an accredited member of the National Open College Network, which meant courses could be delivered in-house for staff and people who used the service on topics such as literacy, numeracy and food safety. This training was delivered with a specific focus on the individual needs of people supported and staff roles and responsibilities.
- The provider had developed their own accelerated leadership programme which identified, trained and supported staff to become managers over 2 years. One of the current registered managers had completed this programme after starting at the service as a support worker.
- Staff had completed Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) training which was accredited by Northumbria University. Staff thought it was fantastic the provider had allowed them the time to complete this. Staff felt the provider was completely invested in their continuous professional development.
- When staff first started at the service, they were supernumerary for 3 months. This was to give them time to complete relevant training and get to know all aspects of people's care and support needs and associated risks. Also, to give people who used the service time to get to know the new members of staff. New staff were allocated a mentor who was an experienced staff member.
- The service contributed to research and development to ensure staff were trained to follow best practice. In 2018 the service received Autism Accreditation, which is an autism-specific quality assurance programme. It was set up by the National Autistic Society in 1992 to improve the support available to autistic people in organisations throughout the UK and across the world. This accreditation recognised that the service had met a standard of excellence and followed a framework for continuous self-examination and development.

Staff working with other agencies to provide consistent, effective, timely care

- Feedback from professionals involved with the service was exceptional. One told us, "I believe this is an outstanding service provider. Service users are always very happy with the premises and enjoy being there, and this is evidenced when I attend to speak to them. The knowledge that staff have around dealing with the complex needs of their residents is really reassuring."

- People were supported to attend annual health checks, screening and primary care services. Where people were anxious about medical appointments, staff worked closely with health professionals to minimise people's distress with exceptional results. For example, one person was prescribed medication that needed to be administered at the local GP surgery. This caused the person immense anxiety and distress, and they were unable to leave the building. Staff worked closely with them and the GP surgery, and this person was now able to attend the local GP surgery to receive their medication. This was usually followed by a trip to a fast-food outlet, which is something this person could never have done before due to the anxiety this would have caused. This was now a positive experience for them and a huge achievement.
- The provider had an excellent relationship with the pharmacy and the local GP surgery. When people needed their Covid and flu vaccines, pharmacy staff put additional measures in place to minimise people's anxiety.

Supporting people to eat and drink enough to maintain a balanced diet; supporting people to live healthier lives, access healthcare services and support

- There was a strong emphasis on the importance of eating and drinking well. The service provided good quality food with a variety of different options to choose from, and people were involved in planning the menu for the week ahead. One person told us, "The food here is brilliant. When I first moved in, I told staff that I wanted to lose weight but didn't know where to start. Staff helped me to make healthy choices with my food and they helped me to start going to a gym. I've lost three stones gradually and I feel loads better. I could never have done that without the staff helping me. I feel proud of what I've achieved and that's thanks to the staff."

Assessing people's needs and choices; delivering care in line with standards, guidance and the law

- People's needs had been assessed thoroughly, prior to their admission, with involvement from a range of professionals.
- The management team and staff continued to review and update assessments regularly which helped ensure care plans reflected any changes.
- Care records included advice from other health and social care professionals. This advice was followed by staff.

Adapting service, design, decoration to meet people's needs

- The service was furnished and decorated to a very high standard. The grounds were extensive and well-maintained. There was an on-site board room/training room which had a large TV screen which could also be used as a monitor. During the pandemic this was used so people could do Zoom or Teams calls with friends, family members and professionals involved in their care. This was also used so people could watch major sporting occasions like the World Cup in a cinema-type setting, which people really enjoyed.
- In 2020 an outdoor lodge was purchased and located in the grounds. It was initially bought during the pandemic to facilitate visits but was now used frequently for social occasions, family visits or simply relaxing. People who used the service loved being able to use the lodge. Appropriate risk assessments were in place so people could use this safely.

Ensuring consent to care and treatment in line with law and guidance

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) provides a legal framework for making particular decisions on behalf of people who may lack the mental capacity to do so for themselves. The MCA requires that, as far as possible, people make their own decisions and are helped to do so when needed. When they lack mental capacity to take particular decisions, any made on their behalf must be in their best interests and as least restrictive as possible.

People can only be deprived of their liberty to receive care and treatment when this is in their best interests and legally authorised under the MCA.

In care homes, and some hospitals, this is usually through MCA application procedures called the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). We checked whether the service was working within the principles of the MCA, whether appropriate legal authorisations were in place when needed to deprive a person of their liberty, and whether any conditions relating to those authorisations were being met.

- The provider was compliant with the principles of the MCA.
- Legal authorisations to deprive people of their liberty had been sought from the appropriate authorities.
- The registered managers ensured people's capacity to make particular decisions had been recorded and any decisions taken on their behalf, were in their best interests and the least restrictive option.
- Staff were well-trained and extremely knowledgeable about the importance of getting consent. We saw staff involving people in day-to-day decisions in ways that promoted their involvement and independence. Staff had an excellent understanding of the Mental Capacity Act and its application to the people they supported. Where restrictions were in place, these were appropriate and proportionate to the risk posed.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

Caring – this means we looked for evidence that the service involved people and treated them with compassion, kindness, dignity and respect.

At our last inspection we rated this key question good. At this inspection the rating has changed to outstanding. This meant people were truly respected and valued as individuals; and empowered as partners in their care in an exceptional service.

Ensuring people are well treated and supported; respecting equality and diversity

- People who used the service were at the absolute centre of everything staff did. They received extremely compassionate care which exceeded expectations. Staff valued people as individuals and consistently promoted and protected their human rights. Staff were proud of and celebrated people's achievements.
- Staff were extremely caring and demonstrated exceptional empathy for the people they supported. One person said, "The staff are absolutely mint here. They're really caring and always treat me with respect which is new to me. If I'm having a bad day, they know exactly what to do or say to help me cope. It's outstanding."
- People spoke enthusiastically about the impact staff had on their lives. One person told us, "Without question, the staff here have helped me turn my life around. If I wasn't here my life would be a mess again and things would be out of control. I don't want to live like that anymore and the staff here have helped me see that. The staff are absolutely fantastic. They care about what they do and respect people who live here. I'm blown away how good this place is – everything about it from the home itself being really clean, to staff, to the managers, it's outstanding. I honestly can't fault it."
- There were several staff who had worked at the service for a long time. This had created a 'family' atmosphere where people had established caring and trusting relationships. Staff respected this was people's home and maintained appropriate professional boundaries. Most of the people who used the service had not always experienced relationships in such a positive way, so this was a significant achievement for them.
- When one person first moved in the provider ensured they had money to buy clothes and Christmas presents. This person said this made them feel valued and they had never had anyone be so kind to them before.

Supporting people to express their views and be involved in making decisions about their care

- Staff were exceptional at supporting people to express their views. Staff used a variety of tools to communicate with people according to their individual needs. Staff ensured they received the support they needed and wanted and were particularly skilled at supporting people to resolve any conflicts and tensions as they arose.
- Each week the service had a 'taking part' meeting where each person who used the service took it in turns to lead. This meeting was an opportunity for people to discuss the food menu, environment and activities, as well as to think about what had gone well that week and to do a 'round of appreciation' where everyone was encouraged to say something positive. There was an easy read agenda and minutes available so that people could be as independent as possible in leading and engaging in these meetings. Abuse and safeguarding were discussed, as well as dignity, so that people had an awareness of this, and where they

could go to complain if they had any concerns. This therapeutic focus helped people to discuss their emotions in an appropriate and solution-focused way.

- People had access to 'my time, my voice' sessions each week. This involved dedicated one to one time with an identified staff member (usually a person's keyworker). This was used to discuss any worries or concerns, research activities or items they would like to purchase, and to further develop their skills regarding risk management.

Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence

- Respect for privacy and dignity was at the heart of the service's culture and values. It was embedded in everything staff did. Staff supported people to attend volunteering placements and participate in educational and vocational opportunities which improved their quality of life and self-esteem immensely.
- Relatives said they would recommend the service to others and spoke positively about what staff had done during the pandemic. A relative told us, "I couldn't be happier. One thing I was impressed with was that staff took the trouble to have things for people to do during lock down, when people couldn't go out. I would recommend the service as it is excellent."
- Staff anticipated people's needs and recognised distress and discomfort at the earliest stage. They provided sensitive and respectful support and care to minimise the risks that people may pose.
- People's right to privacy and confidentiality was respected. Confidential information was kept securely.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

Well-led – this means we looked for evidence that service leadership, management and governance assured high-quality, person-centred care; supported learning and innovation; and promoted an open, fair culture.

At our last inspection we rated this key question outstanding. The rating for this key question has remained outstanding. This meant service leadership was exceptional and distinctive. Leaders and the service culture they created drove and improved high-quality, person-centred care.

Promoting a positive culture that is person-centred, open, inclusive and empowering, which achieves good outcomes for people

- The leadership of this service was exceptional and distinctive. There was a clear vision and ethos which put people using the service at the heart of absolutely everything the provider and staff team did. Highview House was a truly unique service as the provider and staff team were fully committed to delivering excellence in research-based practice. Staff promoted people's independence, supported them with educational opportunities and meaningful activities, and enabled them to live their best lives possible. Feedback from people confirmed this. People said it was the best place they had ever lived, and their lives had been completely transformed as a result. The provider's model of care had featured in published academic papers.
- People and relatives said the service was extremely well-managed. A person told us, "This place is outstanding because of the way staff are and how the managers run it. I honestly wouldn't want to be anywhere else. The staff here have done more for me in 10 months than hospital staff did in over 9 years." A relative said, "I would give it ten out of ten. With [person] being so happy, I feel it is well run. I am so pleased they went there. I would definitely recommend the service as it's the best place [person] has ever been in."
- Staff were extremely proud of the service and people's achievements, such as completing qualifications (literacy, numeracy and wellbeing and mindfulness courses) and doing everyday activities such as going out for meals and shopping.
- The provider operated a social enterprise called 'Fill Ya Boots.' This was established so garden produce and woodcraft items made by people who lived at Highview House could be sold on a commercial basis. The aim of this project was for people to develop their skills and work towards making an independent income through the enterprise. People and staff spoke very positively about this initiative.
- A staff member told us, "We offer an outstanding service as our staff go above and beyond to ensure we have a happy and relaxed environment for both staff and service users. This is reflected in the open culture we have, and it is clear when visiting any of our homes that the service users are thriving. This is down to staff having a positive outlook and offer the greatest of care to our service users."

Engaging and involving people using the service, the public and staff, fully considering their equality characteristics

- The provider was exceptionally committed to supporting staff to develop their leadership skills and further their professional development. Staff completed bespoke training courses which focused on evidence-based research and the individual needs of people supported.
- Staff told us they felt immensely respected, supported and valued due to the number of development

opportunities and benefits available to them. They had access to free private healthcare, digital GP appointments, counselling sessions, a back clinic, stress helpline, employee assistance programme and a discount scheme for high street shops and supermarkets. During the pandemic staff were given bonuses in recognition of how difficult working in social care had been. Also, they were given the opportunity to complete a training course of their choosing, which was not related to work and paid for by the provider.

- Staff were very proud of what they as a team had achieved in terms of national awards and recognition. The provider, service and individual staff members had been nominated for and won numerous national awards including winner of the 'The Employer Award' at the Learning Disability and Autism Awards 2023 and 'The Above and Beyond Team' award at the Stars of Social Care awards 2023.
- The provider sought feedback from people and those important to them and used the feedback to develop the service. The provider had a clear vision for the direction of the service which demonstrated ambition and a desire for people to continue to achieve the best outcomes possible.

Working in partnership with others

- The leadership team and staff worked extremely well in partnership with other professionals and feedback confirmed this.
- Both of the provider's services were an integral part of the local community. During the pandemic the provider worked alongside Spennymoor community outreach project and released staff to support foodbank deliveries. They also helped school children obtain computer equipment and access to the internet so they could keep up with their education when they couldn't go into school.

How the provider understands and acts on the duty of candour, which is their legal responsibility to be open and honest with people when something goes wrong; continuous learning and improving care

- People benefitted from a provider who was very open and honest. Where complaints or concerns had been raised, full investigations had been carried out to identify what had gone wrong and what lessons could be learnt.
- Throughout the inspection it was evident that the leadership team were all extremely passionate about their role. They took ownership of ensuring improvements were continually made to the quality and safety of the care provided.

Managers and staff being clear about their roles, and understanding quality performance, risks and regulatory requirements

- There was a strong framework of accountability to monitor quality performance and risk. Effective governance checks were well embedded into the running of the service. Managers and staff understood the importance of quality performance. The provider was constantly looking for ways to develop and improve further.