

## Independent Support Limited

# Independent Support

### Inspection report

Enterprise Chambers  
276 Furlong Road  
Stoke-on-trent  
ST6 5UN

Tel: 01782437790  
Website: [www.independent-support.co.uk](http://www.independent-support.co.uk)

Date of inspection visit:  
15 May 2019  
21 May 2019  
22 May 2019

Date of publication:  
28 June 2019

### Ratings

Overall rating for this service

Outstanding 

Is the service safe?

Good 

Is the service effective?

Good 

Is the service caring?

Outstanding 

Is the service responsive?

Good 

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding 

# Summary of findings

## Overall summary

About the service: Independent Support provides personal care to people living in their own homes which included supported living settings. At the time of our inspection there were 17 people who used the service.

People's experience of using this service: People and their relatives felt safe using this service. They told us they had high levels of confidence in the staff and were very complimentary about the caring nature of staff. Staff provided significantly high levels of care and support to people.

The service was exceptionally well-led by managers who were motivated to put people at the heart of the service. People and their relatives were highly complimentary about the registered manager. There were extremely effective governance systems in place. The registered manager and the deputy manager were open to new learning and continuously improving the service.

Professionals found the service was highly skilful in partnership working. As a result of the significant partnership working people's care needs were effectively met. There were enough staff employed by the service to meet people's needs.

The service applied the principles and values of Registering the Right Support and other best practice guidance. These ensure that people who use the service can live as full a life as possible and achieve the best possible outcomes that include control, choice and independence.

Pre-employment checks were carried out before staff began working in the service. Staff were supported using induction, training and supervision. Staff training included a range of subjects to meet people's needs including medicines administration and food hygiene. Additional support was provided by the registered manager via an on-call service to staff and relatives.

People were protected from harm by staff who understood what they needed to do if they had any safeguarding concerns. People's personal risks had been identified and steps put in place to avoid harm.

The provider had systems in place to monitor the service including accidents and complaints.

Staff provided appropriate support to people and did not discriminate against them. They enhanced the quality of people's lives by assisting them to develop confidence and new skills.

Care plans were updated each week as required and provided the necessary guidance to staff to ensure people received the best of care.

For more details, please see the full report which is on the CQC website at [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

Rating at last inspection: Good (Last report published December 2016).

Why we inspected: This inspection was carried out in line with our inspection scheduling.

Follow up: We will continue to monitor the service through the information we receive and discussions with partner agencies. Our next inspection will be carried out in line with our inspection scheduling unless information of concern comes to light. Should concerns arise we may bring forward our next inspection.

## The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

### Is the service safe?

The service was safe.

Details are in our Safe findings below.

Good ●

### Is the service effective?

The service was effective.

Details are in our Effective findings below.

Good ●

### Is the service caring?

The service was exceptionally caring.

Details are in our Caring findings below.

Outstanding ☆

### Is the service responsive?

The service was responsive.

Details are in our Responsive findings below

Good ●

### Is the service well-led?

The service was exceptionally well-led.

Details are in our Well-Led findings below.

Outstanding ☆

# Independent Support

## 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. This inspection was planned to check whether the provider was meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Act, to look at the overall quality of the service, and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014.

**Inspection team:** The inspection was carried out by one inspector.

**Service and service type:** This service provides care and support to people living in a 'supported living' setting, so that they can live as independently as possible. People's care and housing are provided under separate contractual agreements. CQC does not regulate premises used for supported living; this inspection looked at people's personal care and support. The service also provided support to people living in their own homes. Not everyone using the service receives a regulated activity; CQC only inspects the service being received by people provided with personal care; help with tasks related to personal hygiene and eating. For people the provider helps with tasks related to personal hygiene and eating, we also consider any wider social care provided.

The service had a manager registered with the Care Quality Commission. This means that they and the provider are legally responsible for how the service is run and for the quality and safety of the care provided.

**Notice of inspection:** We contacted the service the day before our inspection to advise them of our site visit. This was because the service is small and we needed to be sure, the registered manager would be in. The inspection site visit took place on 15 May 2019. On the same day we visited people with their permission in their supported living service.

**What we did:** Providers are required to send us key information about their service, what they do well, and improvements they plan to make. This information helps support our inspections. We reviewed this information together with information sent to us about events in the service to plan our inspection. We also contacted professionals including local authority commissioners and the local authority safeguarding team.

**During inspection:** We spoke with four people who used the service and six relatives. We spoke with six staff

including the registered manager, the service coordinator, staff supervisor and care staff. We carried out observations of staff interactions with people who used the service.

We reviewed three people's care documents and gathered information from other records held by the provider. These included audits, and accidents and incidents.

After inspection: We reviewed the evidence provided to us during the inspection.

# Is the service safe?

## Our findings

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

People were safe and protected from avoidable harm. Legal requirements were met.

Systems and processes to safeguard people from the risk of abuse.

- Staff were trained in safeguarding and were aware of how to report any concerns. They felt confident in reporting any issues to the registered manager.
- People's finances were safely managed. Audit checks were carried out weekly by administration staff.

Assessing risk, safety monitoring and management; Learning lessons when things go wrong.

- Risks to people had been assessed in detail. Staff understood people's personal risks and knew how to avoid harm to people.
- Safety aspects of the service were routinely carried out. Any maintenance issues were dealt with and reported weekly to the registered manager, who in turn ensured the provider was made aware.
- Accidents and incidents were monitored by the registered manager.
- Staff felt they were constantly learning about how to improve the service to avoid things going wrong. The registered manager told us they had recently learned lessons about working with the police when it had been necessary to call them out.

Staffing and recruitment.

- The provider had a safe recruitment process in place. Pre-employment checks were carried out before staff began working in the service to check on their suitability.
- There were sufficient staff on duty to meet people's needs. Checks were carried out by the registered manager to ensure staffing levels were sufficient to cover people's individual support needs.

Using medicines safely.

- Medicines were safely used by staff. Staff were trained in the receipt, storage, administration and disposal of medicines.

Preventing and controlling infection.

- People were supported by staff to ensure their home was clean and tidy. Gloves and aprons were available to staff to reduce the spread of infections.
- People's laundry was individually washed either by themselves or with staff support.

# 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.

People's outcomes were consistently good, and people's feedback confirmed this.

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

- Assessments of people's needs were detailed and in line with national standards. Professionals with specialist knowledge confirmed to us the staff had involved them in assessing people's needs and setting up people's support arrangements.
- People were involved in assessing their choices and preferences. These were documented in people's weekly diaries.
- Relatives commented to us that staff knew people well. They described to us how people's needs and choices were met by the staff.

Staff support: induction, training, skills and experience.

- Staff were supported through a period of induction to familiarise themselves with the service and gain the necessary experience to work in the service.
- The registered manager monitored staff training to ensure staff were up-to-date.
- Staff received further support from the service managers using supervision and appraisal.

Supporting people to eat and drink enough to maintain a balanced diet.

- People worked with staff to set a menu with other householders for the week. If people wanted to eat a different meal staff were available to support them prepare their chosen food.
- Staff encouraged people to eat and drink healthy options. This had resulted in one person losing a significant amount of weight which had led to an improved lifestyle.

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

- Evidence in people's files showed regular contact with other agencies to seek their advice and guidance to provide effective care.
- Professionals told us staff kept in touch with them and quickly notified them if there were any changes to people's needs.

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

- People had chosen colours and patterns for an artistic member of staff to decorate particular walls.

Supporting people to live healthier lives, access healthcare services and support.

- People were enabled to attend appointments and healthcare professionals were welcomed into people's homes.
- People were supported to participate in activities which supported their well-being.



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 Act 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.

We checked whether the service was working within the principles of the MCA, whether any restrictions on people's liberty had been authorised and whether any conditions on such authorisations were being met.

- Staff were provided with training in the MCA and DoLS. Although the service had not applied to restrict anyone of their liberty, the registered manager was in discussion with local services to see what steps needed to be taken to keep a person safe.
- The service worked in partnership with other professionals and relatives who had been granted Power of Attorney through the Court of Protection.

## 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.

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 felt staff really cared about them. Two people wanted to talk to us about how good staff were. Arrangements were put in place by the registered manager, so we could talk to them by phone whilst they were on their lunch break at college and a work placement. They were highly complimentary about staff and told us about their achievements and that they chose what they wanted to do. They gave their staff ten out of ten. The strong caring ethos of the service was underpinned by the behaviour of the registered manager and the deputy manager. They repeatedly told us it was the people's service and they were the main partners in their care.
- People had benefitted enormously from a very stable and secure environment created by the staff with strong professional boundaries in place. These boundaries successfully meant people were very well-treated with appropriate levels of friendliness. Because of the stability, one person's life had radically changed for the better. There had been a momentous decrease in adverse behaviour. Their relative wished they had begun to use the service earlier as their relationship had improved. They attributed this to the service delivering high levels of care. Another person's challenging behaviour had been eradicated. After previously experiencing a poor service, their relative told us they were no longer anxious if they got a call from the service. They said they only received, "Happy phone calls now." One person had increased in confidence. Their relative told us staff always gave the person choices about what they wanted, and they had' "Come out of their shell."
- Staff were very proud of people's achievements and praised them for achieving their goals. We saw people beaming with pride when staff spoke about their significant achievements. This included one person losing a significant amount of weight which meant they were then able to go on outings. Staff had ensured people were offered annual cost-effective passes to local attractions.
- The registered manager spoke with us about how staff had come together to support a person have their own possessions when they had moved in with nothing. The person felt welcomed into the service.
- Relatives were effusive in their comments about the service. They described staff in glowing terms and used words such as, "Brilliant", "Absolutely brilliant" and "Absolutely superb." One relative told us they thought they knew what a good service was until they came across Independent Support and now they really knew.
- New workers were introduced to people at a pace which met their needs. This meant people were able to develop relationships with new staff members. Relatives really valued this aspect of the service.

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

- People were truly empowered to use their own voice. Staff used pictures and easy ready documents to support this. The many and varied photographs taken by staff showed staff had enabled people to express

their wishes and make their dreams come true. Staff were delighted when one person told them they could not be bothered to do something as this meant they had developed the confidence to use their voice. People held household meetings where they freely expressed how they wanted their house run. One person told us they had very much enjoyed interviewing for their new staff. Another person on understanding the inspector's role approached us with confidence to tell us about their positive experience.

- Extremely effective systems were in place to ensure people were involved in the service; their voices were heard. Every Sunday staff sat down with each person to review their week and seek their views. Staff followed an easy read format using pictures and open questions which resulted people directing their own care. People confirmed staff listened to their wishes and dreams. Staff were extremely proud a person had been able to say they wanted to go on holiday as this meant they had come a long way. Despite significant obstacles with personal documents, staff had successfully reached the point where the person could book the holiday. Another person had been delighted when their wish to meet their sporting heroes had been fulfilled. Staff were busy trying to find a singer's next show, so they could see their favourite star on stage.
- The Sunday discussions reviewed with people issues such as relationships with housemates. They were picked up at the earliest opportunity and staff were able to provide high levels of emotional care to seek resolutions with people.
- Staff really listened to people and valued their contribution. One person had recently had a special birthday. They had directed their celebrations. Their preferred menu had resulted in night staff being delegated specific tasks to bring their burger menu to fruition.
- People were encouraged to speak up for themselves. Staff had a very clear understanding of the role of advocacy in people's lives. A professional told us staff respected the role of the advocate and offered people the opportunity to speak with their advocate in private. When a person needed clarity, staff were extremely informative and helpful to the person.
- A family and friends support group had been set up to encourage the participation of others in the service. The registered manager told us attendance had so far been less than they had hoped for, and they were looking at ways to increase the size of the group.

Respecting and promoting people's privacy, dignity and independence.

- Promoting people's independence was a key feature of the service. Staff broke down targets set by people into small steps. This included supporting people to travel to an agreed point and then people travelled on their own to their destination. One person's activities for their preferred day was in their bedroom so they could see what was happening at each point. Relatives spoke to us about people increasingly developing more independence skills including cooking and self-care skills.
- People were continuously involved in learning and developing new skills. They were motivated and encouraged by staff. One person experienced difficulty in planning their week. Staff supported the person to plan their own days, one day at a time.
- Staff were all trained in dignity and respecting people. People were not told what to do by staff but were encouraged to think about what they might like to do. Staff respected people's choices. They spoke to people in a dignified way and respected their privacy.

# Is the service responsive?

## Our findings

Responsive – this means we looked for evidence that the service met people's needs.

People's needs were met through good organisation and delivery.

Planning personalised care to meet people's needs, preferences, interests and give them choice and control.

- The service was developed and designed in line with the principles and values that underpin Registering the Right Support. People had made choices about their personal lifestyles. Staff supported people to attend work placements, attend a local college and volunteer in a local charity shop.
- Staff were supportive of people maintaining regular contact with their families. Relatives spoke of people having contact with them on days agreed between them and the person and using text messages to stay in contact.
- Staff understood the Accessible Information Standard. Scrapbooks using photographs had been developed with people to document their lives. Whilst the scrap books had provided a focal point for people's outings and trips to events they also documented people's achievements in their daily lives. For example, photographs of food shopping had been included.
- Care plans were person-centred and updated when required on a weekly basis.

End-of-life care and support.

- Staff had put in place care plans with contact details of important relatives who needed to be informed if anything happened to people who used the service. They recognised that this was often a distressing issue to discuss with relatives for the younger people they supported, and they were respectful of their wishes.
- People were supported to engage in a religion of their choice from which they were able to draw support and comfort.

Improving care quality in response to complaints or concerns.

- The provider had a complaints policy in place. The registered manager gave examples of the complaints they had addressed. One person who used the service had wished to make a complaint. Their complaint had been given due attention and they were provided with an outcome to their satisfaction.
- Relatives we spoke with during the inspection told us they had no need to make a complaint. They felt if they wished to discuss any issue they could contact the registered manager directly and were confident they would receive a prompt and sympathetic response.
- Relatives and people who used the service were able to text the registered manager with any comments. They told us the registered manager got back to them within minutes.

## 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.

Service leadership was exceptional and distinctive. Leaders and the service culture they created drove and improved high-quality, person-centred care.

Planning and promoting person-centred, high-quality care and support with openness; and how the provider understands and acts on their duty of candour responsibility.

- The registered manager and the deputy manager were passionate about building upon the strong ethos of person-centred care they had developed. There was a tremendous drive and energy to place people at the heart of the service. There were excellent examples of how people had thrived in the service.
- People had developed the values of the service based on their standards of a quality service. The values were embedded throughout the service. There were many examples of the values in action. For example, staff showed great empathy with people. People approached staff with great confidence and trust. Relatives and staff told us the registered manager was extremely approachable. One person spoke of the registered manager and said, "She's a nice lady."
- There were very effective governance arrangements in place with each staff member being extremely proactive at placing people's needs at the heart of the service. People's views and comments were included in governance reports. A very clear structure of accountability meant vital information was readily transferred with ease and actions were readily agreed and carried out. This included staff carrying out people's wishes and ensuring they were always very well supported.
- Managers were acutely aware of their responsibilities to promote person-centred care whilst also continuing to balance the needs and wishes of relatives. They gave examples of how they were working to arrive at a consensus which protected the person's rights and ensured the person's contribution was highly valued.
- The many photographs held by the service and in the newsletters showed people received particularly high-quality care. The photos ranged from people developing cooking skills, being pampered, accessing community events, for example, a Salvation Army lunch club, to going to fun fairs, zoos and on holiday. This meant people led very busy and meaningful lives.
- The registered manager had an exceptional focus on linking people to their community. They sought community events, shared them with the staff and supported people to fully participate in community life. This included volunteering and visits to events in the local park.

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

- The registered manager and the deputy manager had many years' experience of working within the care sector. They were extremely enthusiastic and committed to their role. Relatives described the registered manager as, "Brilliant", "Outstanding" and "Very Supportive". Staff told us they felt very well supported. One staff member told us the registered manager was the best manager they had ever had.
- The registered manager had an in-depth knowledge of regulations. Following notice of the inspection, staff

had prepared for the site visit and brought significant evidence to demonstrate they met the regulations.

- The provider and the management team had complementary skills and knowledge which promoted excellent team working and delivered a highly cohesive service.
- The service had received several positive comments in a satisfaction survey carried out in December 2018. The registered manager had been very prompt when relatives had wanted to discuss a topic.

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

- Innovative ways were used to engage the public in the service and ensure people were a part of their community. The Eden Project's 'Big Lunch' initiative, designed to bring people together and get to know each other in the neighbourhood, had been adopted by the service. Neighbours were invited to join people for lunch to get to know each other. People were engaged in making the posters and delivering the invitations. People were also engaged in developing positive images of their home. They had made poppies and attached them to the fence outside as a creative way to show they shared in Remembrance Sunday.
- The registered manager had reflected on all aspects of employing staff from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. They had written and implemented a unique risk assessment designed to look after staff during Ramadan. Actions had been put in place to support a member of staff.
- People were offered the opportunity to be involved in staff recruitment. They had written their questions for the candidates. One person told us they had "Really enjoyed" the experience.

Continuous learning and improving care.

- With an emphasis on continuous improvement the registered manager and the deputy manager were very open to new learning and developments. They had recently undertaken a Skills for Care course on well-led. They used reflective practice to assess their learning, particularly about how to value staff more. They had set up a file to show their positive contacts with staff to recognise the outstanding difference staff made to people's lives. The service had implemented an employee of the month award.
- When the service began, the registered manager had an office within a supported living service. The registered manager said as the service had progressed this was not viable for a true supported living service. The provider had built a separate office to afford people greater privacy in their own home.
- Managers had oversight of developments in the service which included national initiatives such as STOMP which stands for stopping over medication of people with a learning disability, autism or both. They also strongly supported people's personal characteristics to ensure no one was discriminated against.

Working in partnership with others.

- There was a clear determination to work in partnership with others and achieve the best outcomes for people. Relatives really appreciated the close working relationships they had with the service. They told us they only had to pick up the phone and the registered manager or the staff acted immediately. Explanations and discussions had taken place with relatives about, for example, healthy diets to improve people's well-being.
- The whole service worked together in a constructive partnership and together they looked to successfully engage others. Professionals spoke about the registered manager being very skilful in partnership working. One professional told us the registered manager was, "Spot on." They had high levels of trust and confidence in their partnership working with the service. When concerns were shared with other professionals the service had continued to monitor issues and enhance their learning about people's needs.