

Aurora Options

Aurora Options

Inspection report

Unit 3
California Building, Deals Gateway
London
SE13 7SB

Tel: 02086942717
Website: www.auroraoptions.org.uk

Date of inspection visit:
07 April 2016

Date of publication:
09 May 2016

Ratings

Overall rating for this service	Good ●
Is the service safe?	Good ●
Is the service effective?	Good ●
Is the service caring?	Good ●
Is the service responsive?	Good ●
Is the service well-led?	Good ●

Summary of findings

Overall summary

Aurora Options is a supported living service which provides care for people with learning disabilities living in the boroughs of Lewisham, Southwark and Bexley. The provider also runs two care homes in Lewisham.

The service was last inspected on 17 July 2014. All of the regulations we looked at were met.

The service has a registered manager. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they are 'registered persons'. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run.

The provider's safeguarding policies and procedures helped to protect people who were supported by Aurora Options. People felt able to raise concerns about their safety with staff who were clear on the action they would take to protect people.

Risks were assessed and managed so people's activities were not restricted unnecessarily.

People were supported to have their medicines as prescribed and there were safe arrangements for managing them.

Staff were recruited safely and there were enough to provide flexible support. They were trained and supported to assist people appropriately and in line with their individual needs.

Staff were trained in the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and understood the need to gain informed consent for peoples' care and support. They were aware that best interests meetings were required in circumstances when this was not possible.

People were supported to prepare meals which met their needs. People's health care needs were addressed and the staff team had worked effectively with health professionals to achieve good outcomes for people whose needs increased.

People told us they found the staff who supported them were caring and they got on well with them. We observed respectful interactions between people and staff. People were encouraged to be as independent as possible.

People had a good quality of life as they took part in a range of activities they enjoyed and promoted their inclusion in the community. People were involved in their care planning and reviews. The plans were person centred and reflected people's own views.

People were able to complain and raise issues about changes they would like to be made to their service. As

well as the complaints procedure there were several routes to enable them to do so, including a service user involvement group, annual surveys and tenants' meetings.

The provider made a series of checks and audits to manage quality in the service. They monitored events in the service and promoted person centred care. There were effective working arrangements with other organisations and Aurora Options encouraged coordinated support for people.

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. There were good arrangements to keep people safe from harm. Risks were managed well and people were protected from abuse. There were safe arrangements for dealing with emergencies. People received medicines as prescribed and they were managed safely.

Staff recruitment procedures were thorough and included appropriate checks to make sure applicants were safe to work with people. There were adequate numbers of staff available to support people.

Is the service effective?

Good ●

The service was effective. Staff were trained and supported to carry out their roles. People were supported in line with the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Staff supported people to prepare food that met their preferences and nutritional and health needs.

Is the service caring?

Good ●

The service was caring. People were treated with respect and their privacy and dignity were maintained.

People were encouraged to be as independent as possible and learn skills that allowed them to. They were supported with relationships that were important to them.

Is the service responsive?

Good ●

The service was responsive. People were involved in planning their support so that their wishes and goals were included. People took part in a wide range of activities they enjoyed.

People had opportunities to give their views and complain about the service and changes were made as necessary.

Is the service well-led?

Good ●

The service was well led. Checks and audits were carried out to ensure that the quality of the service was maintained. There was

an open culture at the organisation and views were welcomed from people and staff.

There were good working relationships with other agencies that promoted the effective support of people using the service.

Aurora Options

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection was planned to check whether the provider is meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008, to look at the overall quality of the service, and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014.

The inspection took place on 7 April 2016. We gave the registered manager 48 hours' notice of our inspection. The manager was given notice because the location provides a supported living service and we needed to be sure that someone would be in the office to assist us with the inspection. One inspector carried out the inspection and she was accompanied by a colleague from our Strategy and Intelligence department who was observing the inspection process.

Before the inspection, the provider completed a Provider Information Return (PIR). This is a form that asks the provider to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they plan to make. We also looked at notifications sent to CQC. A notification is information about important events which the service is required to send us by law.

We looked at personal care and support records for three people. We looked at other records relating to the management of the service, including medicines records, complaints, accident and incident records and three recruitment records.

We spoke with six of the people who used services. We spoke or had e-mail contact with nine staff, including the registered manager, support staff, and managers of the supported living services. We received feedback from four health and social care professionals.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

People were helped to keep safe because the provider had good arrangements to do so. A person told us their home was fitted with a burglar alarm and this helped them to feel safe from uninvited people entering the building. They also told us the manager had arranged for a community police officer to talk to the people who lived in the house about keeping safe, and what to do if they did not feel safe. People told us they would talk to their key worker and the manager if they were unhappy and did not feel safe. People told us that the people who shared their homes got on well together most of the time. One person said occasionally "people are angry." They said staff helped to resolve disagreements between people.

Aurora Options had made a DVD to show to people which helped them to recognise abuse and if they had concerns about it what they should do. The DVD was called 'what is abuse' and all people using Aurora Options services were shown it. Safeguarding was discussed at people's individual meetings with their key workers and at groups meetings. Staff had discussions with people to help them to recognise then they may be at risk both in their homes and outside in the community and how to keep themselves safe. A health and social care professional told us that Aurora Options "shows true regard for people's safety."

People were protected from risks associated with the activities they took part in. For example one person's plan included the arrangements that would keep them safe when they were cooking. It identified that areas of potential risk included using the oven and knives and showed the measures in place to keep them safe. A health and social care professional told us they believed Aurora Options had, "good risk assessment and management processes."

People had enough staff to assist them because staffing was arranged to take into account their needs and activities. A staff member told us that the rota was flexible and was arranged to make sure people were accompanied to appointments and activities. People told us staff were available when they needed them. In some of the properties staff were available 24 hours a day and in others staff were there for part of the day. There were arrangements for people to call for assistance when necessary. People were included in making checks of health and safety equipment, including the fire alarms and they knew what action to take if they were activated. One person told us when a member of staff was late arriving they telephoned the manager who helped them. A member of staff told us, "I believe there are enough staff to provide support". Vacancies were filled by a staff bank and when necessary agency staff. The service used agency staff who were familiar to people were used whenever possible.

People were protected against unsuitable staff working with them because the provider followed safe staff recruitment procedures. People who applied for jobs provided information about their work history and they were interviewed by senior members of staff. The provider did checks of the person's suitability for the work by requesting at least two references, including one from the person's previous employer and checks of people's eligibility to work in the UK. They also did a check of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) records which replaced criminal record bureau checks. The provider confirmed staff in post when they had successfully completed a probation period of at least six months.

People were protected from the risks associated with medicines because people were supported by staff who had sufficient knowledge to help people safely. People confirmed they had their medicines when they needed it and it was stored safely. Each person had a document called a medicines profile which gave staff essential information about the medicines the person was prescribed, when, why and how they took them. Staff knew about possible side effects which people could experience. The staff had information about how people preferred and needed to be supported with their medicines. For example if they preferred to take tablets with a drink, the records stated which drink they liked and if the person needed it to be thickened. Some people took medicines only in certain circumstances when they were required. Staff had information so they were clear when the person required the medicine. Records of times when people had the medicines were clear and complete.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

People were helped by staff who were trained and supported by managers at Aurora Options. Staff felt the training opportunities were good, one said, "I have attended many training sessions both externally and internally". All staff completed essential training including safeguarding, health and safety issues, medicines management, the staff code of conduct and values. Staff told us training was arranged so they developed skills to meet people's needs, one staff member said:, "If any issues come up in the service ... my manager will organise specific training for this." For example the manager told us they had arranged training sessions about dementia from the Downs Syndrome Society so staff understood the support needs of people with these diagnoses.

People were assisted by staff who were supported to meet their needs. Each member of staff had individual supervision meetings with their line manager and team members met together to discuss issues of general concern. A staff member said about the support they received, "I can raise any issues or concerns I have with [my manager]."

Managers carried out staff appraisals where their training and professional development needs were considered. We heard from staff that managers were supportive if they wished to further their career and facilitated training for them to do so.

People told us staff asked them if they could provide care and support. Staff understood people's communication needs and took time to ensure people understood the decisions they needed to make and when necessary best interests meetings were held. 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 heard that best interests meetings had been held on occasions when people needed dental treatment but were unable to give informed consent. The service had made good arrangements to ensure that the principles of the MCA were followed or people who used the service. For example an entry on a document that explained a person's needs in relation to consent. The entry said "I may need more time and help to say yes or no to treatment and a best interest process may be needed."

Staff knew people's health needs and how they should be met by the meals and drinks they were served. For example some people required food and drink of a consistency that would fit with their swallowing needs. People told us they had food and drink that met their preferences. One person said they helped staff to prepare meals and staff knew what they liked to eat and they helped them prepare food from their cultural background. The results of a recent survey of people who used the service showed the majority of respondents agreed that they had a choice of healthy food to eat.

People were assisted to have contact with healthcare services so they could maintain their health. People were encouraged to have an annual health check-up and to see their GP in between as necessary. People

said they saw their GP when they needed to as well as a range of other professionals to meet their specialist needs. One person said "I see Dr [name], my doctor". Other professionals included Speech and Language Therapists, occupational therapists, opticians and dentists. A health and social care professional told us that a senior member of staff had "sought out training, and proactively contacted various members of the multi-disciplinary team and outside services to meet the needs of the clients." Another health and social care professional told us how staff had helped a person after a period of ill health to regain their health and mobility. They said staff had worked effectively with a range of professionals to support them. People benefitted from staff working jointly with health care services to address their needs.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

People said they got on well with staff and liked them. One person said, "I like my keyworker" and when speaking about another staff member said, "I'm really fond of them." People said staff were helpful, they felt comfortable talking with them because they were "nice". When staff talked with us about the people they supported they did so with warmth and respect.

We observed staff with people and saw their attitude was respectful, patient and friendly. Staff encouraged people to express their views to us. A health and social care professional said their experience of staff was that they had, "a caring attitude towards the service users" and they, "were impressed by the dedication of staff."

People benefitted from receiving care from staff who were required to treat them with respect and dignity. The manager told us the staff recruitment systems included assessing applicants' attitude towards people and ensuring they understood the need to treat people with respect and dignity. The need for a positive and empowering attitude to people was included in the support worker job description. This was reinforced in 'values' training provided during the staff induction programme.

People valued their privacy and this was respected by staff. One person told us one of the things they liked about where they lived was their own bedroom in which they put things that were special to them.

Many staff had worked for Aurora Options for several years and knew people for a long period. This helped people to build up trusting relationships with staff. People said staff made arrangements for them to keep in touch with people important to them, including family members and friends.

Staff supported people to make decisions about their care and how they would like it to be arranged. A person talked about the goals they had for the future. They said they had a plan for how to achieve them which staff helped with. We saw a member of staff using communication aids to support people to make decisions and plan for the future. They used photographs, symbols' and plain English to present people with choices and recorded their decisions to make sure they were put in place.

Some people were part of a self-advocacy group and this assisted them to have their views heard about the organisation and other aspects of the support they received from Aurora Options. People were supported to develop communication passports which assisted them to communicate with people they did not know well about their wishes and needs.

People we met had registered to take part and vote in forthcoming elections so they could express their views.

People were helped to be as independent as possible. A person told us they had had 'travel training' with staff so they could go on some journeys safely alone. People played a part in the running of their household by deciding the menus, shopping, cooking and cleaning their home.

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

People's individual needs were assessed; they took part in the assessments and highlighted what was important to them. People and staff devised care plans from the assessments. A person read their care plan to us and showed the details reflected their interests and goals.

Staff understood the importance of individualised care. The ethos of Aurora Options was that care planning should be person centred and plans were written from the person's point of view. All of the care plans we saw used accessible formats that were suitable for the people they were about. The ones we saw used plain English and photographs. People said they looked at the care plans with their key workers and at review meetings so they could make sure they included their current needs and wishes. If they wished to, people invited relatives and friends that were important to them to the care review meetings.

People enjoyed taking part in a range of activities and care plans included details of the support staff gave to do so. For example a person told us they liked going to the cinema and for walks with family members and friends. Another person said they enjoyed doing voluntary work and liked to go sailing. Other people told us they went to social clubs where they met friends and they liked cooking food from their culture and sharing it with the people they lived with. We heard that people who chose to participated in events to celebrate Black History month and had made dishes to reflect a range of cultures as part of their marking of the event.

People were assisted to develop new interests, a person told us they were hoping to take up voluntary work and staff were helping them to apply for it. Some people attended educational classes, including music, dance and cookery.

People had the opportunity to mix with people from their local community through the activities they followed. Aurora Options had a social inclusion team which assisted people to develop links within the community and try out new leisure activities, adult education and hobbies. A health and social care professional told us people's activities reflected their developing skills. For example, people no longer attended a day centre as they, "became more confident accessing their local community" and they said, "this was an extremely positive outcome for the individuals."

People had the opportunity to give their views about the service through individual and group meetings and surveys. Meetings were held in the properties for the group of people who lived there. People's views about where they lived could be passed to the housing association responsible for the property. Issues about care and support could also be raised at these meetings and staff would respond by making changes or informing the manager about people's views. Surveys were conducted each year of people who used the service, their families and friends and people were able to give their views confidentially though this method.

People knew they were entitled to complain about the service the received from Aurora Options and were encouraged to do so when they wished. One person told us, "I talk to [my keyworker] if there are any

problems." and they felt confident they would help them to tell people in charge so their complaint would be dealt with. Records of complaints showed complainants were informed of the outcome of their complaints and if any action was taken to prevent it recurring.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

People benefitted from a stable management team at Aurora Options. The service had a registered manager in post as required by their registration with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). She was suitably qualified and experienced for her role and people who used the service were familiar with her.

Staff told us they enjoyed their work, one staff member said, "I enjoy working for Aurora Options." and another said, "It is a lovely organisation." A third staff member said they felt the organisation was, "open" and they could give their ideas to senior staff about changes they felt people would benefit from. They described their line manager as, "hands on" and "responsive".

People had access to senior people in the organisation and were able to express their views to them so they could be considered as part of the overall management of Aurora Options. The registered manager chaired meetings of people who were part of the 'service user involvement group'. A representative from the group met with the board of trustees twice a year to inform them about their work. This was a group to ensure people had their voices heard in the running of the organisation. We met people who were part of the group. They said they enjoyed the meetings and liked letting managers know what they thought of the service. People were included in staff recruitment processes and this allowed them to influence employment decisions.

The provider and registered manager had established systems to review and audit the quality of the service. Managers checked services and made recommendations for improvement. The issues they looked at included medicines, care planning and managing people's finances. Every month unannounced spot checks were taken place out of office hours. The registered manager took part in these. The provider collected information about the findings of the checks and the operation of the service so they were informed about quality issues. The information included data about accidents and incidents, complaints and safeguarding matters.

Aurora Options has signed up to the 'Driving up Quality' code which was established by providers of learning disability services in response to the poor practice revealed at Winterbourne View. Organisations who signed up to the code did so in recognition of the importance of improving quality in services for people with learning disabilities. We saw information about the code displayed in the organisation's office.

The provider's staff management practices had been achieved the silver standard awarded by the 'Investors in People' organisation which assesses organisations on their staff management practice. This demonstrated the provider's commitment to providing good business and people management. They had also achieved the British Assessment Bureau's Quality Management Standard of ISO 9001 award.

Aurora Options worked effectively with other agencies. They liaised with the housing associations which provided the accommodation for the service. They met with them each month to ensure that the quality was maintained in the accommodation and people's needs were met by the places where they lived. We heard from a health and social care professional that Aurora Options highlighted the need for agencies to be

clear about how they coordinated their support for individuals who had personal budgets. They said this was used to improve the way that services worked together to meet people's needs.