

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

# Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council - 1 Lanark Close

## Inspection report

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## 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?

Outstanding 

Is the service well-led?

Outstanding 

# Summary of findings

## Overall summary

The inspection took place on 29 March, 4 and 5 April 2017. The first day of the inspection was unannounced, which meant the staff and provider did not know that we would be visiting. We informed the registered manager when we would visit for the second and third day of our inspection in order to meet a wide range of people who used the service and join a relatives meeting.

1 Lanark Close is registered to accommodate up to 16 people but the provider is operating the service as a 12 bedded care home providing short-breaks, a transitional service and a crisis bed for approximately 77 people per year who have a learning disability. Some of the people who used the service may have in addition to a learning disability a physical disability or mental health need. People normally arrive for their stay in the afternoon and depart on the morning their break finishes. But when people were in a crisis situation they could immediately access a stay at the service and were fully supported by staff to deal with any emotional distress as well as, with their consent, access to other organisations and services that could assist them during this stressful period. During their stay at the service people had access to hotel style accommodation, a gym, sensory room, games room, internal and external activities such as going to discos, the cinema and making crafts, as well as access to advocacy and mental health services.

There was a registered manager in post at the time of our inspection who had worked at the service since April 2014 and became the registered with CQC in October 2014. 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 most striking aspect of this dynamic service was the strong sense of leadership, commitment and drive to deliver a service which improves the lives of the people who use the service and their relatives in a fulfilling and creative way. The culture embedded in the service was an absolute commitment to deliver a person-centred and responsive short-break service, which relatives described as a lifeline for them as well as a fantastic place for people to use. We found that the registered manager had encouraged staff to constantly think about improvements. Staff told us that prior to and following people's visits to the service they looked at what went well and how they could make the next stay even more special for each individual. We found that the management style had led to staff, people who use the service and relatives feeling they were an integral to and an essential partner in assisting to develop and enhance the service.

Although over 77 people use the service each year staff were devoted to ensuring each individual found their lives were enriched by they experience that they kept very up to date with each person's life. Staff could readily discuss at length and in great detail each and every person who came to 1 Lanark Close, what they liked and their support needs. We found the staff empowered people to voice their wants and aspirations for their lives and then supported them to achieve these goals. It was evident that people's voice was heard as following people and relatives giving feedback that the environment needed to be updated the provider had completed major refurbishment work and installed high quality baths, showers and furnishings. They had

created more space for people to use by converting an office on the upstairs floor into a pool room as well as enhancing the gym, games room and sensory room. The standard of décor within the home was of a very high quality.

During their short breaks people were encouraged and supported to establish new friendships, to learn new skills and transfer these into their everyday lives. A number of the people enthusiastically told us about the skills book they completed, which encouraged the development of a new skill each time they visited such as using a computer or cooking and to practice the ones they had already learnt. Relatives told us that the availability of staff support for people to develop their skills was invaluable and gave them confidence that over time individuals would become more self-reliant.

We heard how staff explored with people all of their interests and celebrated every achievement and each of the steps they took to move towards their ultimate goal. Staff believed that by celebrating each step people would gain confidence and increase their desire to reach an ultimate goal, whatever that was, such as continuing to have a happy life with their parents for longer, seeking employment or moving into their own accommodation. We found this drive to support people to grow and develop was exceptional and rarely seen within short-break services.

The service was making a difference to people's wellbeing by working well as a team, in harmony with one another sharing the same values and principles. The service was proactive in providing people with a range of information to assist them to make decisions about their health and wellbeing. Staff worked with health and social care professionals in ways that benefited people. They were actively contributing to supporting people to understand how to manage mental and physical well-being. Staff recorded clearly in the records the advice provided by the professional whilst at the service or, if appropriate, when at home in order to support the person to follow the advice given.

The service provided outstanding care to people. Staff were exceptionally caring and inspired people to do well in achieving their goals. People were cared for by staff who knew them well and understood how to support them and maximise their potential. The service's visions and values promoted people's rights to make choices and live a dignified and fulfilled life, this was reflected in the care and support that people received. People were listened to and their voice was heard in a variety of creative ways such as by people taking part in surveys each time they visited.

Staff understood people's different ways of communicating and how to make people feel valued. They supported people to make decisions for themselves and spoke with people about their wishes and preferences. Staff were observant and reported any changes in people's needs. They were flexible in adapting the way they provided care ensuring they were person centred. The system for booking at the short-stay service was extremely efficient and we heard that 99% of the time people got the days they picked. Also if plans changed or emergencies occurred, relatives told us that the service would readily try to accommodate any requests for different days.

The benefits of this service were illustrated within a short film which the people who used the service compiled to raise awareness of the resources available at 1 Lanark Close. In the short film, people were seen laughing, conversing, going out and about in the community and completing activities in the service. People told us that the involvement with 1 Lanark Close was contributing to their mental health wellbeing and providing social interaction which was meaningful and person centred.

Relatives were also able to attend a monthly meeting, run by an independent carers service who the provider had commissioned. These meetings provided relatives with access to a wide range of information

about practical matters such as making benefit claims as well as speakers coming to each event and a support network. It also gave relatives access to a space with an independent person where they could discuss all of the everyday stresses of being a carer.

At each visit people actively chose what they wanted to do that day and for the duration of their stay. People had formed great friendships with each other whilst at the service, which had extended out to their everyday lives. We heard how people got together to work out when they would all go to the service to stay. Thus at times there could be groups of people who wanted to go somewhere together and individuals or a couple of people wanting to go out to a different place or event. Previously the provider had bought a people carrier for the service but the registered manager and staff found this inhibited them when organising the activities. In response the provider had organised access to various minibuses and community drivers to take people where they wanted to go on an evening and also purchased a car so people could go out on a one-to-one basis.

People also enjoyed a wide range of activities whilst at the service, which included craft work and access to a games room, pool room, sensory room and gym holding static bicycles, rowing machines and a treadmill. All of the staff had completed training to enable them to support people to use the gym equipment. At each visit people actively chose what they wanted to do that day and for the duration of their stay. The staff promoted healthy eating and discussed all aspects of physical care with people and the registered manager was trained in mental health first aid.

Since the last inspection the provider had redesigned the catering arrangements and replaced the cook/chill equipment. Health and nutritional technicians now prepared freshly cooked food and worked with the people to assist them to develop their cooking skills. We enjoyed a meal with people and saw that this was very much a combined effort with people assisting each other to get plates, drinks and so forth as well as an opportunity for all to catch up with what had been happening in each other lives since they last met.

Staff told us they received supervision on a monthly basis and they received annual appraisals. Staff were well respected within the organisation and were being provided with comprehensive training including specialist training. We found there was a culture within the organisation of striving for excellence and assisting all to reach their maximum potential. Staff were supported to achieve excellence in their roles through attending specialist training around working with people who have a learning disability and self-reflection. The provider supported staff to complete external training and the registered manager had recently completed training as a best interest assessor.

The service actively participated in wider projects and kept up to date with what was going on within the health sector and social care sectors. They were committed to developing a service tailored to meet the specific needs of people; in particular their empathy towards people who were living with a learning disability was displayed by their efforts and hard work involved in developing a responsive short-break service. The staff demonstrated a passion to ensure people were supported to live ordinary lives and this extended to the relatives. We found that if relatives had appointments to attend but were finding difficulty getting to this because of needing support for their relative the staff would suggest their relative came to 1 Lanark Close.

We found staff had an understanding of safeguarding and how to whistle blow. The service provided people who used the service with easy-read information about the different types of abuse and who to contact if they needed support. The registered manager was aware of risks within the service and was undertaking an analysis of risks. The service had emergency plans in place and took action when they became aware

someone was at risk.

Staff were confident within medication management and were skilled to identify side effects and report them. People's care needs were risk assessed with risk management plans in place and support for staff when they needed it. Recruitment checks were carried out and there were a high number of staff who worked within the service for many years, which provided consistency.

## 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 remains good.

### Is the service effective?

Good ●

The service remains good.

### Is the service caring?

Outstanding ☆

This service was exceptionally caring.

People were extremely well cared for. People were consistently complimentary of staff and the support they provided. People were treated with respect and their independence, privacy and dignity were promoted.

Staff interacted with people in a way which was particularly knowledgeable, kind, compassionate and caring.

Staff took time to speak with people and to engage positively with them. People were consistently involved in conversations and reviews about their own care and contributed to making decisions with the help and support of staff and other professionals.

### Is the service responsive?

Outstanding ☆

The responsiveness of the service was outstanding.

People's needs were being responded to quickly and the service was creative in the way they delivered support to people.

People received care and support that was based on their needs and preferences. They were involved in all aspects of their stay at the service and were supported to lead their lives in the way they wished to when at the service.

The service demonstrated they were innovative in devising a unique short-stay service specifically tailored to meet the needs of people who were living with a learning disability.

There was a system of complaints in place which were

investigated and dealt with by the registered manager.

### **Is the service well-led?**

**Outstanding** ☆

The leadership of the service was outstanding.

The core of the culture within the service was caring and person centred, driven by senior staff and the registered manager who were passionate about the best possible short-break service for the people.

The registered manager had completed audits including an analysis, such as of safeguarding incidents, health and safety incidents and accidents, surveys with staff and people who use the service.

There were publications of achievements of people and of the service within the provider's newsletters. The registered manager had encouraged and enabled people who used the service to be actively involved in sharing their experiences and they had made a film about 1 Lanark Close, which was available as part of the information shared with prospective users of the service.

The registered manager and other staff consistently demonstrated their commitment and drive to provide an outstanding service.

The effective leadership throughout the organisation had led to the extensive upgrade of the building, new and innovative ways to support people being introduced and a culture of person-centred care.

# Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council - 1 Lanark Close

## **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.

One adult social care inspector completed this unannounced inspection on 29 March, 4 and 5 April 2017.

We reviewed information we held about the service, including the notifications we had received from the provider. Notifications are reports about any changes, events or incidents the provider is legally obliged to send us within required timescales.

We contacted external healthcare professionals and the placing authority commissioners to gain their views of the service provided at the service. The service completes a survey with people every time they have a stay and we reviewed the survey results, which had received 126 responses from people who used the service and 35 of the 73 relatives. We reviewed this and used the information to form a part of our discussion with people who used the service and relatives.

Over the course of the inspection we spoke with 15 people who used the service and nine relatives. We spoke with the registered manager, assistant manager, two senior carers, four care staff, the health and nutrition worker, the housekeeper, a community learning disability nurse and the meeting facilitator from the independent carers service. We looked at three care records and medicine administration records (MARs). We also looked at five staff files, which included recruitment records, as well as records relating to the management of the service.



# Is the service safe?

## Our findings

People and relatives we spoke with told us they felt the service was safe. One person told us, "It is a good place and I love coming here." Another person said, "I'm coming here in two days and have already packed my suitcase, as I'm so excited." And another person said, "It is the first time I have come here but found all the staff and other people have made me feel happy to be here."

Relatives said, "The service is a godsend and the staff are wonderful. It is brilliant and I don't know what we would do without Lanark. It gives [relative's name] a break from us, which they sometimes do need and us the opportunity to recharge our batteries." And, "There is no question that [relative's name] is safe here, in fact, if they got the chance they would stay here forever." And, "The staff at Lanark provide 1st class care and support and since the manager came this has got better and better."

Risks to people using the service were assessed and plans put in place to reduce the chances of them occurring. For example, one person was at risk in relation to managing their money and the person, staff and external professionals had developed a care plan to help keep them safe. Risk assessments were regularly reviewed to ensure they reflected current risk. Regular checks of the premises and equipment were also carried out to ensure they were safe to use and the required maintenance certificates were in place. Accidents and incidents were monitored for any trends, and plans were in place to support people in emergency situations.

Safeguarding and whistleblowing procedures were in place to protect people from the types of abuse that can occur in care settings. Staff told us they would be confident to report any concerns they had. There had not been any safeguarding incidents since our last inspection but the registered manager told us how these would be investigated, including making referrals to relevant agencies.

People's medicines were managed safely. Staff received training to handle medicines, and the medicine administration records (MARs) we reviewed were correctly completed. Medicines were checked, monitored and safely stored each time people visited to ensure people had access to their medicines when they needed them.

There were enough staff deployed to keep people safe. The number of staff on duty changed to reflect the number of people using the service each day. The registered manager worked five days a week and a minimum of a senior, three support workers, a health and nutrition worker and housekeeper were on duty each day. Overnight there was a waking night shift worker and one to two sleep-in staff. People told us there were plenty of staff and enough to accompany them to go out and about each day. One member of staff said, "We always pull together as a team and the rota is really well planned so there is always enough staff to support the people who are staying."

The provider's recruitment processes minimised the risk of unsuitable staff being employed. These included seeking references from previous employers and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. The Disclosure and Barring Service carry out a criminal record and barring check on individuals who intend to

work with children and vulnerable adults. This helps employers make safer recruiting decisions.

The premises had recently been refurbished to an extremely high standard and were clean and tidy.

## Is the service effective?

### Our findings

Staff received mandatory training in a number of areas to support people effectively. Mandatory training are the courses and updates the provider thinks are necessary to support people safely. This included training in areas such as health and safety, fire safety, first aid, infection control, moving and handling and food hygiene. Additional training was also provided in areas such as working with people who live with learning disabilities and mental health awareness. Training was closely monitored by the service's administrator, which ensured staff regularly attended refresher courses to ensure they followed current best practice guidance.

Staff spoke positively about the training and the access they got to the mandatory courses as well as the ability they had to attend new and external training. Staff told us they found all of the training was really informative. We heard that each year the provider sets aside two full days for staff to complete training as a full team. The training sessions not only cover mandatory courses but speakers visit to share information about the latest developments in the sector and additional training is provided around specialised areas such as epilepsy care and working with people who live with a learning disability but are also developing dementia.

Staff were supported with regular supervisions and appraisals. Supervision is a process, usually a meeting, by which an organisation provides guidance and support to staff. Staff said they found these meetings useful and records confirmed they were encouraged to raise any support needs or issues they had.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is required by law to monitor the operation of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards. 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.

People who lack mental capacity to consent to arrangements for necessary care or treatment can only be deprived of their liberty when this is in their best interests and legally authorised under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA). The procedures for this in care homes and hospitals are called the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and when people live in their own home this would be via an application to the Court of Protection.

People who use the service came for short stays of up to a week but mainly a few days so the registered manager had worked with the supervisory authority to determine how best to manage admission and discharge of the people who were deemed to lack capacity to consent to their stay. The agreed process they used was to obtain DoLS authorisations for all the people who lacked capacity and keep these active until the person no longer used the short break service. All of the staff we spoke with were aware of the person's right to make representations against a DoLS authorisation. The registered manager and staff were knowledgeable about the principles of the MCA and knew how to arrange capacity assessments should

people's capacity change. They had completed a best interest assessor course to enhance their understanding of the MCA requirements.

The registered manager and staff had attended several MCA and DoLS training courses. They had used this learning to inform the way they worked with people who may lack capacity to make decisions. We saw that new mental capacity assessment forms had been introduced and these ensured staff adhered to the requirements of the MCA. The staff were very clear that even if people had a mental disorder this did not automatically mean they lacked capacity and all the records showed they used all mechanisms to enable individuals to make decisions. Staff had used these forms to make decision specific assessments and 'best interest' decisions were clearly recorded.

Since the last inspection the provider had redesigned the catering arrangements and replaced the cook/chill equipment. Health and nutritional technicians provided home cooked meals and assisted people to develop their cooking skills. People's nutritional needs and preferences were assessed and recorded in their care plans. People were actively involved in managing their own diet and preparing their own meals. People were free to choose whatever they wanted to eat and drink but staff encouraged people to eat fruit and vegetables, and the menus showed this was successful.

We enjoyed a meal with people and saw that this was very much a combined effort with people assisting each other to get plates, drinks and so forth as well as an opportunity for all to catch up with what had been happening in each other's lives since they last met. People were very complimentary about the meals provided at 1 Lanark Close and one person said, "The food is always really good and there are always lots of things to choose from."

Staff were proactive in providing people with a range of information to assist people make decisions about their health and wellbeing. For example, people were made aware of the benefits of exercise and healthy eating. People told us that staff had helped them to consider minor changes to their lives such as using the gym as a way to improve their health. Staff worked with health and social care professionals to seek advice that would benefit the people and were actively contributing to supporting people to understand how to manage mental and physical well-being. People, when appropriate, were supported to access external professionals to monitor and promote their health.

The staff team had a close working relationship with the community learning disability nurse and were able to refer, with people and their relatives input, individuals directly to this service. The community learning disability nurse was able to support people with all aspects of their healthcare needs from finding dentists who worked with people who were nervous to liaising with psychiatrists about any mental health matters. The registered manager had cascaded this learning to staff and provided relatives with this training during the monthly meetings.

The registered manager and staff were extremely knowledgeable about the physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes that can affect people living with a learning disability. They told us when people first used the service how the change could be difficult for the individual and how they followed a transition model to allow people to become more accustomed to having short-stays at the service. This involved initially visiting during the day to look at the building, then coming for a couple of hours when a few people were using the service and then coming for an overnight stay. Staff told us that as the person got used to the service, they met existing friends or made new ones and together the group would start to work out what dates they all wanted to come to stay. But because people met so many others using the service there was usually a like-minded person or friend at the service when they stayed.

Staff recorded clearly in the records the advice provided by the health care professional whilst at the service or, if appropriate, when at home in order to support the person to follow the advice given.

## Is the service caring?

### Our findings

The service's visions and values promoted people's rights to make choices and live a dignified and fulfilled life, this was reflected in every aspect of the care and support that people received. People were exceptionally well cared for and were consistent in their high praise of the service. Relatives told us that the registered manager and staff showed genuine concern for people's wellbeing, including their own. One person said, "Lanark Close is brilliant. I have learnt new skills and love coming here. I can't wait for my stay to come around. What is good is most times all of my friends get together and pick the same dates so we are all here together." Another person said, "The staff are great and I would say Lanark is an excellent service." Another person said, "They [staff] are fantastic. Without them I wouldn't have made so much progress."

When people were in a crisis situation they could immediately access a stay at the service and were fully supported by staff to deal with any emotional distress as well as, with their consent, provided access to other organisations and services that could assist them during this stressful period. The culture embedded in the service was an absolute commitment to deliver a person-centred and responsive short-break service, which relatives described as a lifeline for them as well as a fantastic place for people to use. Relatives said, "We would rate the care being provided as outstanding. The staff are absolutely committed to the people and so kind and compassionate. [Name of relative] is always buzzing when they come home and have never ever been upset during the stay in fact I think they love the staff as much as us."

The provider, registered manager and staff commitment to provide a caring service extending past the people who used the service and to the relatives as well. Relatives told us about occasions when events had befallen them and they had needed additional support, which they found the staff at 1 Lanark Close were more than willing to provide. For instance we heard how a relative had needed to support a family member when they were unwell and staff had become aware of this so discussed how they could help to support. This had led, with the relative and person's permission, to staff discussing with the person's social worker the option to increase the number of days the person could have at the service. The relative told us the staff had such an insight into them and the individual they had picked up on the changes in the way they were acting and had not ignored this but found a solution. The relative said "The staff are a godsend and so in tune with us, I can't thank them enough for recognising and then finding a way to provide us all with the extra support during such a stressful period."

Relative also told us that staff had supported them to access services that would assist them maintain their own well-being and would move 'heaven and earth' to make it possible for them to request extra respite breaks. We found that if relatives had appointments to attend but were finding difficulty getting to this because of needing support for their relative the staff would suggest their relative came to 1 Lanark Close.

We saw many examples of staff providing support with compassion and kindness. Staff spent time chatting, encouraging, laughing, and joking with people. We saw that where people requested support it was provided promptly and discreetly by staff. Everyone we spoke with was complimentary of the staff who supported them. Throughout the inspection we saw that staff were not rushed in their interactions with people. We saw that the registered manager and staff all spent time chatting with people individually and

supported them with their care and support needs and to engage in activities. The community nurse told us that staff had a close working relationship with people and readily identified when changes had occurred. They found that staff were extremely compassionate and would always support people to resolve issues. The community learning disability nurse told us staff were sensitive to changes in people's presentation and could recognise when individuals would benefit from the input of specialist psychological services and found staff appropriately referred individuals to them so this support could be provided.

We spoke with one person who told us they had just started to use the service. They told us how staff had kindly helped them to sort their belongings out and to make it feel like home. They told us staff were really kind and welcoming. They felt this was a service they could continue to use because all of the staff and the people made them feel an important and a very welcome guest. This person said, "The staff are really good and I feel happy here." Other people told us that staff took a real interest in them and wanted to make their time at 1 Lanark Close special and so had discussed with them what else could be in place. This we heard had led to people telling staff they liked to 'look good' and staff creating the beauty salon and gym. Some of the staff working at the home were trained beauticians, hairdressers and personal assistants and we heard they had shared this knowledge with the people so supported them to learn new skills in these areas.

Another person had needed to use the service because of a crisis and talked about how the staff had helped them deal with this unforeseen occurrence. Staff told us how when they first moved into the service how they relied on staff to support them, had been extremely distressed by the whole change and found it difficult to manage their emotions. Over a period of time staff worked hard with the person setting achievable goals for them to aim to do in many areas and deal with their anger about the move. The person was now at a stage when they were considering what their long-term options were and staff were supporting them to look at everything from a move to their own home to more supported accommodation.

Although over 77 people use the service each year staff were devoted to ensuring each individual found their lives were enriched by their experience that they kept very up to date with each person's life. Staff could readily discuss at length and in great detail each and every person who came to 1 Lanark Close, what they liked and their support needs. The registered manager and staff told us how they worked with people who used the service to motivate them to become more independent. We found the staff empowered people to voice their wants and aspirations for their lives and then supported them to achieve these goals. People were being cared for with a level of support which was above and beyond providing support with task based activities such as washing and dressing so extended to developing new life skills, form and maintain friendships and explore opportunities to look at the broader opportunities available within the community. During their short breaks people were encouraged to learn new skills and a number of the people enthusiastically told us about the skills book they completed. People used a workbook, which allowed them to look at the skills they wanted to develop, practice these during each visit and record how well they were getting on. Relatives told us that the availability of staff support for people to develop their skills was invaluable and gave them confidence that over time individuals would become more self-reliant.

People had choice and control over their lives and that staff responded to them expressing choice in a positive and supportive manner. Staff were passionate about their work and demonstrated a kind and caring approach with all of the people they supported. We saw staff actively listened to what people had to say and took time to help people feel valued and important. Staff understood people's communication methods and readily used sign or other communication aides to assist people to express their views and join in conversations. There were very lively and multi-layer conversations going on with people using verbal and non-verbal communication. One person, with the assistance of staff acting as translators, discussed with us their enjoyment of ice-cream and how the staff made sure when they came to 1 Lanark Close their favourite ice-cream was available.

Staff told us how they worked in a way that protected people's privacy and dignity. For example, they told us about the importance of providing people with choices and allowing people to make their own decisions. They told us the importance of encouraging the person to be independent and also the need to make sure people's privacy was maintained, for example making sure curtains and doors were shut when providing personal care. One staff member said, "This job is all about enabling people to be independent and getting the best out of their stay at Lanark." The staff team was committed to delivering a service that had compassion and respect for people.

The registered manager and staff readily assisted people to access advocacy services. An advocate is a person who works with people or a group of people who may need support and encouragement to exercise their rights. From examination of records and discussion with the person who used the service we could see the advocate visited as and when needed. For instance the staff facilitated access to an advocate for one person so they could consider their future accommodation with an independent person. They have also provided a wealth of information to relatives about the function of advocacy, when it may be needed and the role of the relevant person's representative (RPR) under the MCA.

The provider also employed an independent carers service (which is an advocacy support service) to run relative's meetings, which were designed to not only provide information but to offer people a support network. The relatives we spoke with told us they had found this support invaluable, as they have been able to meet and make friends with other people in similar circumstances. They told us that as a group they can share their experiences and learning plus assist each other to resolve problems they are facing. They also found that having an independent person run the groups made them feel more able to discuss all sorts of issues and stresses they may face when being a carer. A relative said, "It is fantastic that Lanark set this group up and I would be lost without it now. It has been a great forum to come and talk to other parents about our trials and tribulations knowing they will understand. We have formed a great team for sorting stuff; if one of us talks about a problem we know someone in the group will have had the same issue and some idea of what to do about it. Also [name of registered manager] is always a great source of information and a right good problem solver."

During the inspection we spoke with a representative from the independent carer service who told us about their role as the facilitator of the carer's meetings and experience of working with the staff at 1 Lanark Close. They said, "The team are absolutely brilliant here and so supportive. I have found [name of registered manager] is such an inspiration she has been so helpful not only in relation to the meetings but for me as well. I have learnt so much from coming here and can say my confidence has really grown."



## Is the service responsive?

### Our findings

The service organised the short-breaks in three-monthly cycles and the required dates needed to be requested in advance. When people require one-to-one support they are counted as using two places so the maximum occupancy is reduced from 12 places. With 77 people using the service for one to seven days up to five times each year this would to the outsider seem a mammoth task of logistics to ensure people got the dates they wanted. However, we found that the administrator had been able to guarantee 99% of everyone's preferred dates. We also found that if people had emergencies and needed to re-arrange the date or required extra dates this was normally accommodated. Alongside this we found that the registered manager knew people's likes and dislikes and staff skills so well they were able to match the staff team to who was coming to stay so that the people would get their visit. For example there was a qualified hairdresser and a qualified beautician in the staff team so when people were due to visit who loved pampering sessions the registered manager ensured these staff were on duty.

The provider was extremely supportive of staff developing a fulfilling environment for the people and had allowed staff to create a salon. We found this was decorated and filled with equipment one would find in the best salons. People told us that they found using the salon a relaxing experience and commented, "The staff are like proper hairdressers and I always look my best when I come out of the salon. It's great. My mom doesn't recognise me coz I look so posh."

The service provided person centred care for people by providing a culturally rich service with a range of meaningful activities for people. The group of people who used the service came from all parts of Stockton-on-Tees, had experiences of different access to financial resources, upbringing and had different religious beliefs. We found that the staff had embraced this diversity and ensured that each person was made to feel valued and encouraged to take an active role in designing their stay at the service. Everyone we met told us what an incredible service and resource 1 Lanark Close was and how their lives had been enriched and empowered by the service. People and relatives told us that the opportunity to come for short-breaks at the service added much more to their lives than just a break. We heard how people learned new skills or enhanced other skills, made friends and had a wide range of new experiences.

Relatives told us the service provided them with the opportunity to have experiences many people took for granted such as holidays, learning crafts and being members of various clubs. They also told us that their relatives loved coming to 1 Lanark Close so they were not anxious about the break. This aside they had been pleasantly surprised to find that their relatives had become more confident in themselves following each visit and developed a range of skills. A relative said, "I see them grow each time they come back from Lanark. I never thought [relative's name] would be able to cook and clean but they can. Mind they always think at home that's my job!!" Another relative said, "[Relative's name] is so excited to be at Lanark, they prepare days in advance and always come back full of what they have been doing and learning. It is a real treat to see them so enthusiastic about life."

One person said, "I can do so much more now and this is because I can try new things and I'm just doing the bit about learning computer skills in my workbook. I never ever thought I would be able to do stuff like that."

We heard how staff explored with people all of their interests and celebrated every achievement and each of the steps they took to move towards their ultimate goal. Staff believed that by celebrating each step people would gain confidence and increase their desire to reach an ultimate goal, whatever that was, such as continuing to have a happy life with their parents for longer, seeking employment or moving into their own accommodation. We found this drive to support people to grow and develop was exceptional and rarely seen with respite services.

Another person told us about how staff had fulfilled their wish to learn to operate washing machines and now they were going to be able to learn how to use a Flymo. We heard that when they first started coming to the service they had never used a washing machine but had a passion for them so knew every make and model. Their dream was to work in a laundry so staff had supported them to learn to operate the machine and the service had purchased an industrial model, which this person could use. The registered manager and the person discussed how becoming confident to use that type of machinery had prompted them to consider what else they could learn about. They were currently researching lawn mower equipment to work out which was the best model. The plan was for the service to purchase a Flymo, which the person could then learn to use during their stay.

Other people told us about their passions and ambitions for the future and how staff looked at the steps they would need to take to achieve them and how the service could help them to get there. The staff were passionate and determined to assist people to achieve these goals. Throughout the inspection we found there was a culture of striving for excellence including supporting people to reach their maximum potential.

The registered manager told us the service existed to provide an environment in which people could not only relax and enjoy a break but to become more confident, skilled, independent and self-reliant. It was clear that the provision of care was not task-led and did not adhere to a fixed timetable. The registered manager and staff were flexible in the way that they supported people and changed priorities as the situation demanded. For example, staff changing plans in light of what people wanted to do. Also the registered manager designed the rota around not only the volume of people using the service on a particular day but also the client group attending so as to match them with staff who had relevant interests and skills.

At each visit people actively chose what they wanted to do that day and for the duration of their stay. People had formed great friendships with each other whilst at the service, which had extended out to their everyday lives. We heard how people got together to work out when they would all go to the service to stay. Thus at times there could be groups of people who wanted to go somewhere together and individuals or a couple of people wanting to go out to a different place or event. Previously the provider had bought a people carrier for the service but the registered manager and staff found this inhibited them when organising the activities. In response the provider had organised access to various minibuses and community drivers to take people where they wanted to go on an evening and also purchased a car so people could go out on a one-to-one basis. The registered manager ensured that ample drivers were on shift to be able to use the car. People also enjoyed a wide range of activities whilst at the service, which included craft work and access to a games room, pool room, sensory room and gym holding static bicycles, rowing machines and a treadmill. All of the staff had completed training to enable them to support people to use the gym equipment.

When we visited people were engaged in a wide and diverse range of activity. Some people went off to a local disco, whilst others made crafts such as Easter baskets for their girlfriend or boyfriends and other people went off to the shops. The service was full of chatter and energy with some people giving us a rendition of their favourite songs and others competing in table tennis competitions in the courtyard. We found the service was very vibrant and dynamic.

Amongst this stimulating and fun environment staff skilfully and effectively supported one person who had needed to stay at the service because of breakdown in their placement. The staff worked closely with the person to consider their feelings and when appropriate to look for quiet time. The person came and went freely throughout our visit and within a short period of time was joining in all the activities. We saw staff keep everyone involved in the discussions and readily acted as interpreters for people who used non-verbal communication methods by providing a running commentary in sign language. Staff also worked adeptly with other people who were quieter. We observed they encouraged people to join in as much as they wanted in the hustle and bustle of the main communal areas as well as to utilise the sensory room, pool room and games room. One person said, "I'm shy but whenever I come here I quickly am a part of the gang. I love it. It is so different from everything else I do and I think I am a party person."

It was evident from discussion that all staff knew people well, including their personal history, preferences, likes and dislikes. Individual care and support plans clearly identified emotional needs and anxieties, how they presented and the support the person required from staff to manage and reduce them. Episodes of anxiety and/or any incidents that occurred were recorded and reviewed on a regular basis to identify any trends and if current management strategies needed to be adjusted. The community learning disability nurse we spoke with discussed how they worked in partnership and had in combination could readily respond to people's needs. The community learning disability nurse said, "Should any one need extra support or face new challenges that would impact their physical or mental health Lanark Close staff will quickly spot this and looked to find ways to assist people to resolve the concern or to use creative ways to address the problem. The Lanark Close staff are able to directly refer people to our services and we are always on the end of the phone should staff or relatives need some advice."

We viewed documentation which demonstrated that the service was person centred in their consideration of the impact of the care they were delivering for people. Each person had a detailed and comprehensive assessment, which highlighted their strengths and needs. The standard of the records were comparable to those seen for people who live permanently in a care setting. Care records reviewed contained information about the person's likes, dislikes and personal choices. For instance care records clearly detailed communication methods for people and the signs people used. This helped to ensure that the care and treatment needs of people who used the service were delivered in the way they wanted them to be. Care plans provided guidance to staff about people's varied needs and how best to support them. For example, one person's care plan discussed the intense emotions they experienced and how to support them to express these in a safe and controlled manner. We found the care records were very well-written and were very informative.

Care plans were reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they accurately reflected people's current support needs. Daily notes and handovers were used to ensure staff coming onto shift had the latest information on people in order to provide responsive care. There was evidence people were involved in their care planning when the care plan was initially written and thereon every time the care plan was reviewed. The risks for people were reviewed every six months or when there was a change with updated risk management plans detailing what the changes were and how the change was to be managed by the service. Each time the care plan was reviewed a staff member involved the person and their main carer in the process. We asked the registered manager and care staff how they communicated any changes to people's needs and heard that routinely before someone is scheduled to stay the staff team discuss any changes or actions they needed to take to meet the person's needs.

We checked to see how the service was communicating what the complaints procedure was to people who use the service. The service user handbook which was written in plain English and easy read went through the procedure for making a complaint clearly for people. Complaints could also be made by email or in

writing and were dealt with by the registered manager. We viewed the system in place for managing complaints. We found all complaints had been thoroughly investigated and an outcome presented for the person. We found that where any errors or near misses occurred the registered manager was upfront in acknowledging the shortfall and critically looked at how this could be prevented in the future. People and the relatives told us they knew how to complain and raise issues. Relatives told us they were extremely confident that the registered manager would address any issues.

## Is the service well-led?

### Our findings

Relatives and people told us that their opinions 'truly matter' and the registered manager acted upon their suggestions. One person told us that they had said to the registered manager and staff that the new beds that the provider had recently bought were bigger than the old ones so a little more tricky to navigate. The same day the staff had looked at how to make the bedroom easier to manage. The registered manager told us the new beds were 'tough beds' so the frames were a little larger but with a bit of creative moving of the furniture they had been able to make the same amount of space in the bedroom. We observed the staff and registered manager listening to suggestions people made, acting upon them and then thanking the individual for making them.

A relative said, "They really listen to us and look at any issues no matter how small they are, for instance they have the carer's meeting on different days each month to make sure people can at least get to some. We wanted to come to all of them as we find them really useful. However, we couldn't get to the meeting when it was on a Wednesday and one day [registered manager's name] asked why we weren't at the meeting. We explained the problem was [relative's name] doesn't go to day services then so we can't come she said why don't you bring [relative's name] along. She said we have staff cover and would be happy to spend time with [relative's name] and I think that would be a useful use of their time as you get so much from the meetings."

The service was managed by a person who was registered with the Care Quality Commission as the registered manager for the service. They told us their ethos, in line with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's statement of purpose, was about offering people choice, opportunity and respect and enabling them to achieve their personal best. We observed the registered manager demonstrating these values consistently during the inspection. They interacted warmly with people, who clearly recognised them and were at ease engaging with them on first name terms. One person told us, "[Registered manager's name] is brilliant! We get on really well and she takes an interest in what I'm doing and how I am. She makes everyone feel special." Since the registered manager came into post in 2014 we noted how the service had moved from providing a good service to an exceptional short-break service, where staff went the extra mile to make every visit for people a special and invigorating stay. This led to people reporting their absolute excitement around the prospect of a stay at the service and relatives finding they could relax and as they said 're-charge' their batteries in full knowledge and confidence that their relative was having a good time.

The culture embedded in the service was an absolute commitment to deliver a person-centred and responsive short-break service, which relatives described as a lifeline for them as well as a fantastic place for people to use. We found that the registered manager had encouraged staff to constantly think about improvements. Staff told us that prior to and following people's visits to the service they looked at what went well and how they could make the next stay even more special for each individual. Staff spoke enthusiastically about the registered manager, saying from the instant they had come into post the registered manager had supported them to critically review the service and look at how to deliver excellence. They describe with passion the journey the service had taken from being a good enough service, but which they recognised needed to develop in areas such as being person-centred to now being an exceptional and unique short-break service. The staff discussed how the registered manager constantly

strived for excellence and had empowered them to do this as well. A member of staff said, "This is the best place I've worked. [Manager's name] is so supportive and really does know how to do a good job. Since she came into the post the service has just got better and better." Another member of staff commented "[Manager's name] is a wonderful manager. They always look at the getting the best for people and making this an excellent service." And another member of staff told us, "[Manager's name] will go the extra mile to see individual needs are met and she really does make a difference."

We asked people and relatives what they thought about the service and all told us they believed the service was unique and delivered a service that was 'second to none'. They found that over the last few years the staff had constantly strived to improve the service and make sure it became a place where people wanted to come back to time and time again. A relative told us "The changes at the service are not only cosmetic in the last 18 months the whole atmosphere has changed. Staff have really stepped up to the plate and made this an absolutely brilliant resource." We heard from staff how relatives had been so taken by what 1 Lanark Close had achieved in terms of making people feel included in community life that when a local club for people living with a learning disability had stopped attendees showing affection and forming relationships they opened their own club. We heard this new club had been featured on local news and on the back of this a couple of attendees, who stayed at 1 Lanark Close, had been on the TV programme This Morning. One of the people said, "It was me that went on This Morning and it was so exciting. During the show my boyfriend proposed to me."

Within this dynamic service there was the strong sense of leadership, commitment and drive to deliver a service which improves the lives of the people who use the service and their relatives in a fulfilling and creative way. There was effective leadership at differing levels within the service from the top down. The core of the culture within the service was caring and person centred driven by managers who were passionate about the service. The provider clearly valued the people who used the service and this was seen in the changes to the environment they had undertaken over the last two years. In conjunction with people who used the service the provider and registered manager had considered the environment. People had told them the building needed to be upgraded. In response to the feedback the provider had completed a major refurbishment programme within the service. We found they had installed high quality baths, showers and bedroom furnishings. The standard of décor within the home was very high quality and reflected that a great deal of consideration had been given to giving people the experience of staying in a top class hotel. They had created more space for people to use by converting an office on the upstairs floor into a pool room as well as enhancing the gym, games room and sensory room. They had also actively encouraged staff and the people to look at how else the environment could be enhanced. This had led to staff being able to design and create a salon that mirrored the décor of expensive salons in the community. People reported these changes had been based on asking them what they wanted.

The registered manager closely listened to and took on board comments people who used the service and relatives made. For instance, in response to comments about activities the provider and registered manager had also critically reviewed people's access to community provision. They found that the lease car was underused and not cost effective because only a few people could go out at one time so staff were always needing to get additional transport organised such as taxis. Therefore they had negotiated access to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council day service minibuses and their community drivers who now take people wherever they wanted to go on an evening. The provider also purchased a car so people could go out on a one-to-one basis, which meant people could go to various different events during their stay.

The service was creative and proactive in ensuring that people and their relatives were the driving force in shaping the service and therefore had opportunity following each visit and during the relatives meetings to give meaningful feedback about the quality of the support they received. People could request a personal



meeting with the registered manager whenever they wished, and easy read surveys were completed at the end of each of their stays. A survey is sent out once a year to the relatives. The survey results from both those with people and with relatives showed a 99 -100% satisfaction rate, with over 80% of respondents. People made very complimentary comments in the survey such as "Absolutely cannot fault Lanark!" And, "Go out of their way to help you and your family." And, "Well done for providing a great service and peace of mind."

People told us they had been asked if they wanted to make a film about 1 Lanark Close, which was to show what it was like at the service. They explained staff told them they could say anything they wanted about the service and all the people we spoke with told us they could only think of very good things to talk about. In the short film people were seen laughing, conversing, going out and about in the community and completing activities in the service. People told us that the involvement with 1 Lanark Close was contributing to their mental health wellbeing and providing social interaction which was meaningful and person centred.

The registered manager had a well organised team approach with everyone within the team clear about why and what the purpose of the service was. We found that the management style had led to staff, people who use the service and relatives feeling they were an integral to and an essential partner in assisting to develop and enhance the service. The provider had a range of effective monitoring systems in place to assess the quality and safety of the service. An annual assessment was completed where the provider gathered feedback from staff, and external stakeholders to determine what the service was doing well and where it needed to improve. Regular audits were carried out, looking at areas such as accidents and incidents, safeguarding, complaints, the administration of medicines and the safety of the environment. Systems were in place to ensure in between visits staff could keep up to date with any changes in individual's needs. The service manager visited regularly to carry out audits and review safeguarding cases, to ensure appropriate action had been taken. The provider was kept informed about the service in a weekly report which included medication errors, assessments under the mental capacity act (MCA) notifications to the Care Quality Commission and safeguarding concerns. Findings from the audits were analysed by the quality action group who met twice per month, and we saw records of actions planned to improve the quality of the service where appropriate.

The service demonstrated through their newsletters and other documentation that they had strong links with other organisations such as the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust community learning disability nurse and local Dementia Support Network and the Stockton-on-Tees Borough council welfare team. The staff team had been nominated for carer awards and entered projects to win awards from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. We heard that the staff team were well-respected by the provider and often asked to represent them or be a showcase for the work being done to achieve awards. In December 2016 the provider gained the Better Health at Work Gold Award, which is a national award. They have recently been given the go ahead by the national awarding body to work towards the Continuing Excellence Level of the Better Health at Work Awards. The provider, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council also won the Best Council of the Year award for 2016. In May 2016 the registered provided gained the Customer Service Excellence award. The Customer Service Excellence standard (previously known as Charter Mark) is an official UK standard for public sector organisations. It measures quality of delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude in the provision of public services. The two inspectors involved in assessing whether the provider should be awarded this charter mark visited 1Lanark Close to meet staff, people who used the service and attend at relatives meeting. Prior to achieving this charter mark the provider had achieved the Investor in People Award. The registered manager discussed as part of their continuing improvement agenda the intention of the staff team to enter more provider and external award schemes.

Staff attended monthly meetings, which we heard were constructive and allowed all staff to voice their opinions. Minutes of these meetings were seen during inspection. One staff member said, "[Registered manager's name] has really made a difference to the team since she came into post three years ago. She has brought everyone together and helped us to see the benefit of constantly looking at how to improve the service. This is now such a different service from when I first started." A relative said, "I used to work here before retiring and in the last few years Lanark has become unrecognisable from what it was. Don't get me wrong Lanark was always a good service but now it exceeds all expectations and is such a fantastic place for people to come to for a short-break."

External health and social care professionals had attended a number of staff team and carer's meetings to benefit people using the service. There were examples of such professionals sharing expertise to help with transition for a person newly using the service, and to help develop and deliver an improved service for a person needing support with their behaviour. This partnership working ensured the service being provided was of a high quality, and reflected current best practice in working with people's specialist needs.