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Type of inspection: Announced (short notice)

Completed on: 24 September 2019

Service provider by: L'Arche
Service provider number: SP2003002642

Service no: CS2008180509
About the service

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Information about all care services is available on our website at www.careinspectorate.com

This service was previously registered with the Care Commission and transferred its registration to the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

L'Arche Edinburgh is registered to provide housing support and care at home to people with learning disabilities who are living in their own homes. These services are delivered in a combined way by the same staff team. The service supports people living in their own flats and also people living in three shared houses in the Leith and Restalrig areas of Edinburgh. Support ranges from a few hours a week to 24 hours a day.

The service is provided by L'Arche (UK) which operates as part of the International Federation of L'Arche, which is grounded in the Christian tradition. The service welcome people of all faiths and none. The service is overseen by a local committee and regional leader, and is managed by a community leader and a registered manager. Support is provided by house leaders, deputes and assistants, some of whom live in the shared houses.

The service states its aims and objectives include:

- to provide personalised, flexible support and care including some 1:1 day activities,
- to value each individual, ensuring that we see people with disabilities having as much to give as to receive,
- to create a sense of belonging, not just to L'Arche but to the wider community and beyond that, the world,
- to be open to people's own spiritual needs, enabling them to draw on the resources that can provide.

At the time of the inspection the service was supporting 16 service users, known as core members.

What people told us

Before the inspection we received six completed Care Standards questionnaires from supported people and relatives. We also spoke with two relatives by phone and received emails from three relatives.

During the inspection we met eight core members, in their own homes or at a craft group in the L'Arche offices. We observed how comfortable people were with the staff supporting them and with each other. We observed how much people enjoyed socialising, sharing meals and taking part in the new craft group.

Comments included:

“I hope you give them high scores.”

“I am part of the listening group and managers ask for my views about the service. I like being part of this group. If new staff are coming to support, they always meet me beforehand. I have regular reviews. I can tell staff if I am not happy about something and they will try and sort it.”

“Overall I am happy with the quality of the service. Communication between staff and client’s relatives could be much better.”

“I am very happy with the quality of the care my relative receives. He is clearly thriving, learning new skills, having new experiences, becoming more trusting and secure the longer he lives with the L'Arche community.”
My concern is, as always (and now even more so) about staff turnover and the need to constantly re-train new staff and losing good assistants who have developed good relationships. Now the concern is more acute as staff are often from other countries, including Europe.

“Our son has a much more interesting life; his social life is much better! L’Arche’s impact on his quality of life is very positive. He is well cared for and supported in his daytime activities. An important aspect of this is that assistants live in. This means that there is always someone around. We have always been very satisfied with the quality of the staff that L’Arche manage to attract, even though some assistants do not stay for very long, but this is, perhaps, only to be expected given that many are young people using their gap year to work with people with learning difficulties.”

“We felt when our son was at home, he was living our life, as opposed to his own. He went along with doing things that we thought he might like or felt he should be doing. He had no real peer group at home and isolation was an issue. At L’Arche things are very different. He retains a level of independence that allows him to explore other options with a peer group or individually with a helper from the organisation. His world has opened up and he is experiencing all kind of things and enjoying it. He is very happy and contented and we feel he is valued and recognised as a person in his own right by all there as well as the wider community. We chose the house specifically for the atmosphere of community and inclusivity as we were certain this would work well for him. He would not do well on his own. His quality of life is significantly enhanced. When he initially left home there was a huge adjustment for everyone. On the whole he weathered it well. The staff were kind and kept us informed reassuring us that our boy was in good hands. There were a few issues around organisation etc, nothing major. At the heart of it all was good will and concern for our son. When the new house leader took over, the appearance and the general well-being of the house changed significantly. It had been a warm and welcoming home before, but it improved 100% on what was already there. The ethos did not change, and it remained a stable, welcoming home. I have been invited on a couple of occasions to participate in the interviewing of staff. Whilst I appreciate and welcome this, I choose to sit in on interviews as an observer only, so as not to encroach on the expertise of the staff. It does allow me to appraise potential new staff members. Staff come from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicity and experience. We welcome this for our son as it opens up his world. This encourages him to appreciate that he may have to alter his approach to make himself understood, removing the barrier of “comfort zone” which he slips into very easily when he is with us. We have found that in the majority staff are committed and caring often going above and beyond their duties. They respect our boy and listen to us which is very important. They are also usually young, which is refreshing and stimulating for him. We cannot praise L’Arche enough. Our son has his own life which he enjoys. With us in the background which is where we should be. Thank you for this opportunity and thank you L’Arche for everything you do for our son and us.”

“I am very happy with the care my brother gets. He is very well looked after and extremely happy. He has come on leaps and bounds, talking more and saying new words all the time, which is clearly due to the one-to-one care and attention he is receiving.

My only concern is that although there are a few staff members who have been working in the house for a while now, there has been a long period of time where there has been new staff coming and going which I feel is a bit unsettling for the residents. We have been told that things should be more settled now.”

“L’Arche has made my relative’s life very fulfilling. He is very settled and happy there. He has a varied day programmes and he decides what and where he goes. It is wonderful to see him treated as an individual with his thoughts and concerns being listened too. I am consulted about some activities such as holidays and bigger events. He can and does tell me what he does with enthusiasm. His quality of life is excellent. His medical condition is well cared for and I am very grateful to the staff. The care is excellent. The staff are forever changing and that does have me concerned at times.”
There has been a very big change of staff recently and I am concerned that my relative’s medical issues and special requirements may not be discussed. Poor communication remains an issue and I have raised this concern with both house leader and community leader. I can’t say it has improved at all. The ethos of L’Arche is wonderful and I dearly wish there were more houses in Edinburgh.”

“I couldn’t ask for better for my relative. The staff are so nice. They had patience and understood her grief and the time it took for her to settle. She knows it is her home now. There’s so much going on, they always seem to be doing something. They have brought her on. My relative adores the leader. It is good that the leader has been there for some time. We are invited to visit. She is always ready, if we are taking her out. They made a special effort for her big birthday. I get email updates. The staff respect our legal powers and consult me. They are angels. I can’t thank them enough.”

“I am very happy with my relative’s care. They run everything past me, and they have good ideas. The leader has been so nice and reassuring. Sometimes it’s the little things that matter most, like making sure she doesn’t have pressure sores, making her comfortable. They’ve been very good with her diet. They asked if it was OK to try a new music activity and I’ve heard people got a lot out of it. I used to have a weekly phone call, which I liked, so I’ll bring that up with them now that they have a full staff team.”

Comments from professionals included:

“Our managers who have fairly regular contact with L’Arche say staff contact and communication is good. Staff always come over as very caring and focused on the welfare and well-being of people they support and always seem to have the best interest of the individual at the heart of what they are doing.”

“We have one service user who is supported by L’Arche. I attend his L’Arche review and L’Arche staff attend our annual review. I am in contact with staff members at our 6-month review and I meet L’Arche staff at times when the service user is picked up. I was very impressed by the person centred care when attending their review. I feel the service user has made great progress since first moving to live with L’Arche and is very at home in his house. From observing how the staff interact with him I believe there is a positive sense of community in the house and his individual needs and wishes are being tuned into and respected. This is also illustrated by his stimulating weekly timetable of activities.”

“I have found them to be a reliable provider, person-centred in their approaches and keen to engage with the Council when required.”

“I am really struck by the level of commitment and dedication from staff and how they want to support people in the best possible way. Staff appear resilient and not overwhelmed by their work. There is openness and humour and the team element is important to them. The managers have a good approach and look at the support offered to staff.”

Self assessment

There was no requirement for the service to provide a self-assessment for the inspection year 2019/20. Issues relating to quality assurance, feedback from people using the service and their relatives along with the quality of the service’s improvement plan are considered throughout the inspection.

From 1 April 2018, the new Health and Social Care Standards replaced the National Care Standards. These seek to promote and improve outcomes for people who experience care. Services should now be providing support in accordance with these standards.
These are:

1: I experience high quality care and support that is right for me.
2: I am fully involved in all decisions about my care and support.
3: I have confidence in the people who support and care for me.
4: I have confidence in the organisation providing my care and support.
5: I experience a high quality environment if the organisation provides the premises.

The full standards can be viewed at:

From this inspection we graded this service as:

- Quality of care and support: 5 - Very Good
- Quality of staffing: 5 - Very Good
- Quality of management and leadership: not assessed

What the service does well

We have evaluated this service as very good. This means the service has evidenced major strengths that result in very positive outcomes for people who use the service.

People had trust in the staff and the organisation providing their care and support. They experienced warmth and compassion and felt safe, settled and secure.

The emphasis on creating and belonging to a community, both within the shared houses and across L'Arche Edinburgh, was a standout feature. Everyone was welcomed, included and their contribution was equally valued.

People were well supported to shape and control their own lives. There was a strong ethos of respect and joint decision-making. Support plans were detailed and current and contained very useful information to guide staff including strategies to avoid or reduce distress. We saw these included symbols and pictures so that core members could be as involved as possible in developing and reviewing their plans.

People said that concerns, ideas and suggestions could be raised freely. There were opportunities to have a say in how support could be better for everyone, for example: through representing others at L'Arche participation events and influencing national policy.

Staff were able to tell us what individuals’ needs were, and how they were supported. Staff knew what it meant if a core member behaved in a particular way and how they could help. They used words, signs, symbols and gestures to aid communication. We observed staff implement agreed strategies in order to reassure core members.

People were leading as full and varied lives as possible, learning skills, gaining confidence and contributing to the L'Arche community. Staff spoke about balancing of fun and routine in daily life and they understood that everyday experiences could enhance people’s quality of life.

Staff comments included:
"I have the privilege of managing one person’s support. He was supported to go on two holidays this year. It was incredibly beneficial for him, as observed by those supporting him. He gained a lot from being away, particularly spending time with other core members. He impressed us all with his relaxed attitude and his ability to adapt to new surroundings and routines. He was also very much in control and was supported in each decision about what he wanted to do and when. It is amazing to see that he can thrive away from home with the support of those he knows well. There were thorough contingency plans, however, they were not needed. He has also been supported to explore tactile techniques recommended by a professional. These have had a good impact on his quality of life in a way that he is in control of. This has had such a positive impact on his mood, he smiles and laughs with others often."

"Three core members asked me to organise a holiday for them - now in its 3rd year. I’m very proud that I have managed to find a holiday that everyone enjoys so much and extremely proud of the team of assistants who commit each year to making this so successful. Because of the stability and strong support another person had her first holiday in 17 years. She also came to the National Gathering in Liverpool and achieved a lifelong goal to visit the Cav and had her picture taken with the statue of Cilla Black. It was a wonderful privilege to see her in such a happy place! In May I supported one woman to perform her role as the community rep at national level. This was her third time of attending and because of the consistency of support she was able to attend two of the meetings by herself. I was so proud of her. We will be attending again in October and she has said she will try to go to a meeting alone again."

"I supported one woman to go to a spa overnight and she had such a great time. The work from the team over the past few years helped her to get to a place where she was happy to go on holiday and treat herself, she also came to Liverpool to the National Gathering and had a great time."

Staff had received training in adult protection and knew the actions they would take if they had any concerns.

Care adapted to people’s changing needs. Core members had health action plans, which recorded outcomes of appointments and what needed to be done to keep core members healthy. The service worked in partnership with health services and other agencies. For example, advice had been sought about anticipatory/end of life care. The service impressed with a deep understanding of people’s needs for open and honest information and reassurance. An important annual event for the community was a gathering to remember those who had passed away and to share memories.

People had confidence in staff and were satisfied that L’Arche attracted and selected the right people for each role. Core members and their families could be involved in recruitment. New staff were matched to core members needs and preferences.

The service recognised that staff turnover was a concern for people and worked hard to ensure that people experienced stability. Where agency staff were used, these were named, familiar staff.

A new formation process was underway for new staff, to better prepare them for their role and enable them to establish connections across the L’Arche Edinburgh community. Staff said this was a positive development.

There was very good access to training including to achieve a recognised qualification. In addition, there were regular staff meetings, social gatherings and opportunities to learn, reflect and develop. External practitioners had been sought to build on reflective practice.

Staff received one-to-one supervision and the frequency had improved. Managers had a new system which enabled better oversight of when supervision was completed or overdue. We were pleased to see that supervision topics now included core member’s outcomes.
All staff were registered or in the process of registering with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

The whole team was seen to be enthusiastic, motivated, open and receptive. Staff demonstrated a strong value base, consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards. They described a supportive culture which allowed honesty and welcomed suggestions. Newer staff were comfortable asking questions. The workforce was informed and engaged. They listened to and respected each other and leaders.

Staff comments included:

“We recently requested training for autism, and it has been followed up quickly.”

“We working for L’Arche is a place where I feel heard and respected. I feel the people we support are also heard and respected. I feel very supported by both my team leader and the senior management, and feel acknowledged for the work that I do, I also feel the other teams are supportive of each other. I am doing my SVQ 2 and I have a support with the parts I struggle with and feel if I need any other support it is available to me.”

“The best company I’ve ever worked for. I feel safe and listened to, respected by my managers. I am given opportunities to voice my opinion, concerns and opportunities to grow and develop.”

“It’s a safe place to work and service users are being treated with respect and as equals.”

“We have a really good retention of assistants. I think this says a lot about the strength of support for each other as well as for the core members. I feel very fortunate to be part of a team that show such commitment. I have felt very supported by my line manager in my role and find the response to requests for support prompt and helpful.”

There was pride in the organisation, its work and achievements. Managers appreciated how the community had pulled together, stepping up to meet challenges. Assistants felt that they had more to offer and welcomed delegated tasks and new responsibilities. Other comments included:

“My overriding experience is one of being part of a community that is genuinely centred on core members. I have had a strong sense, since joining the community, that core members are-in different ways- the start and end point of all ‘activity’. There is a fundamental respect for core members and a recognition that we are in a relationship with them—as individuals—that is potentially transformational for all involved. This is not about ‘us caring for them’ but an attempt at forming genuine relationships where all can learn and grow. I can honestly say that, in my experience, L’Arche Edinburgh consistently and genuinely put this approach into action on a daily basis. Staff formation and development is taken seriously as this obviously impacts on the quality of care that core members receive. I am encouraged at the determination to tackle challenges in a constructive, inclusive and energetic manner. Our registered manager and human resources manager have responded so well to the community leader being absent through illness. Although this says something about them as individuals it is also a tribute to the community leader’s approach to staff development. They have been supported in this by others from within the community.”

What the service could do better

We discussed a small number of areas for improvement:

Some relatives felt better communication was needed.
Where the service cannot obtain pre-printed medication administration charts from the pharmacy, we discussed ways to ensure handwritten medication charts (MAR) were checked for accuracy.

Managers accepted that they still had work to do implementing the policy regarding supporting people with their personal finances. We provided some guidance about this so that all parties can be best protected.

The service agreed that deputy leaders should now be registered as ‘supervisors in care at home services’ with the SSSC, to better reflect their responsibilities.

We directed the service to SSSC good practice guidance on supervision.

We suggested that the leaders access refresher adult protection training at level 2/3, or train the trainer, with Edinburgh Council.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.
Previous recommendations

Recommendation 1

In order to support and develop the staff team to support core member’s outcomes, staff should receive regular supervision.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that “I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.” (HSCS 3.14)

This recommendation was made on 9 July 2018.

Action taken on previous recommendation

We saw that staff had new supervision agreements and there was a revised supervision template. Staff did receive supervision, and for some staff, this was more regular. Managers had a new system which enabled better oversight of when supervision was completed or overdue and were confident that they could monitor this better now. We were pleased to see that the supervision template included discussion of supporting core member’s outcomes. We found that the quality of recording varied and that this might not accurately reflect the detail of the discussions that took place. We directed the service to SSSC good practice guidance on supervision. Sufficient progress had been made to meet this recommendation, however, an area for improvement was to keep improving access to regular supervision.

Inspection and grading history

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