

East Lothian Autism Support Services Housing Support Service

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Type of inspection:
Announced (short notice)

Completed on:
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Service provided by:
Autism Initiatives (UK)

Service provider number:
SP2004006462

Service no:
CS2007156107

About the service

East Lothian Autism Support Service is registered as a combined housing support and care at home service to provide a care service to adults with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The service is provided by Autism Initiatives. The level of support provided varies from 24 hour support to a few hours per week, depending on people's assessed care and support needs.

At the time of the inspection 16 people were using the service. They were supported by staff teams in three geographical areas within East Lothian and Midlothian.

About the inspection

This was a (short notice) announced inspection which took place on Tuesday 16 December between 09:30 - 15:00 and Wednesday 17 December between 10:30 - 15:00. The inspection was carried out by an inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- observed four people being supported in their homes
- spoke with three family members, and reviewed five feedback questionnaires
- spoke with seven staff and the management team and reviewed 16 feedback questionnaires
- considered feedback from three visiting professionals
- reviewed documents in connection with people's care and support
- reviewed documents relating to staffing and the management of the service.

Key messages

- People were supported by staff who knew and understood them extremely well.
- People benefitted from staff advocating on their behalf so that knew their rights and could express their wishes.
- Family connections were supported and promoted.
- People were very well supported through periods of change, at a pace and manner that suited each individual's personality.
- There was strong culture of learning within the leadership and staff team.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support people's wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated the performance of the service under this key question as very good. We found significant strengths in aspects of the care and support provided and how these supported positive outcomes.

People benefitted from being supported by staff who had often known them over a number of years. This meant that staff had built strong relationships with them and their families. Interactions between staff and the people they supported were kind, thoughtful and respectful. Staff clearly understood people's communication and behaviours well and could anticipate stressful situations. This helped people to be calm and enjoy the activities they were engaged in. We saw that people were at ease in the company of staff and responded positively to their support, guidance and conversations. Everyone worked well together to identify and achieve positive outcomes for people. This helped people to develop new interests or follow known hobbies and activities.

People were supported by staff who had a particularly strong focus on promoting people's rights to an interesting life, with choice, and independence. Staff played a role in advocating on people's behalf, whilst having a clear understanding of their role in keeping people safe from harm. Staff supported people to take positive steps to build on existing family connections. We heard that this was important to people and their family.

A family member told us: "I am happy with the support from Autisms Initiatives. My relative's shift pattern has recently been changed. This is working out really well and not only does it allow my relative their own independence, it is also a great help to me."

Family members felt involved in people's lives. They took an active part in support planning, review meetings, and were kept informed of their relative's wellbeing. Family members appreciated the level of communication and felt reassured that their relative was well supported.

Where people were supported with their medication, this was done safely with systems to minimise errors. Equally good arrangements were in place to support people with their finances. This ensured that their interests were protected.

Staff were proactive in supporting people to maintain good health with attention to their diet, mouth hygiene, podiatry and mobility. There was evidence of positive working relationships with other professionals. This meant that staff had the guidance and knowledge they needed to support individual's particular and changing health needs.

A health professional told us: "My experience of working with Autisms Initiative has been positive. They support a complex young person within the community who struggles with change. They have introduced effective and creative ways of trying to improve health, diet, exercise etc that has worked well for this individual. They have also supported them to health appointments etc and put the person at the centre."

Staff had a very good understanding of their role in protecting people from harm. This meant that they took appropriate actions where they were concerned about people's wellbeing. They were active partners in multi disciplinary meetings where protection concerns were discussed. They worked closely with people to consider the least restrictive options to remaining safe.

Staff made commendable efforts to support people through change, for instance moving house or joining a new staff team. As a result, people had the opportunity to adjust to their new surroundings and build relationships with new staff at a pace that suited them.

The leadership team had very good oversight of the service people received. This was evident from the ongoing internal programme of internal audits that contributed to improvements in the service.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated the performance of the service under this key question as very good. We found significant strengths regarding the staffing of the service and how this supported positive outcomes.

People were supported by a core staff team who worked closely together. This meant that they built strong trusting relationships with the people they supported. This contributed to staff members having a good understanding of what was important to each individual, and supporting them in decision making, planning and initiating activities of their choice.

A family member told us: "Some staff go above and beyond. They really look after (my relative) and never forgot appointments and are never late."

Another family member said: "My relative is very fond of the team that works with them and management go out of their way to be helpful."

Staff expressed a strong value base of supporting people to enjoy life, have meaningful relationships and achieve their goals. They were excited about supporting people to try new activities or take steps to increase their independence. They were keen to support people through change and to celebrate achievements. This meant that they used an enabling approach when supporting people.

A member of staff commented: "This service supports, encourages and helps people and staff grow and learn together."

There were very good systems in place to promote positive communication between staff members. This included daily handover sheets, team meetings, communication books, diaries, and individual contact between staff members. This meant that members of staff were well informed about people's wellbeing and supported people very well during periods of change.

A member of staff told us: "I feel we communicate well with each other as a team, we have regular team meetings that are well attended."

Where staff supported people in sharing living accommodation, there was clear information about who was being supported when. This offered people certainty. We saw that staffing arrangements could be flexible to meet people's needs and wishes.

Staff spoke positively about their participation in team meetings. During team meetings staff reflected on their practice in the context of the Health and Social Care Standards. Staff appreciated regular supervision with a member of the leadership team. They felt able to share concerns and discuss their practice. Staff also used annual appraisals to identify their strengths and make plans to improve practice further. There was a rolling programme of training opportunities to support staff in their role. Training was well attended. There was strong evidence of an organisational commitment to promoting staff professional development.

Staff felt valued for their contribution to people's positive outcomes. They appreciated the attention that was placed on their personal wellbeing. We were told: "The regular checking on us about how we feel at work makes us feel safe , protected , welcomed and a team ."

How well is our care and support planned?

4 - Good

We evaluated the performance of the service under this key question as good. We found several strengths in the way in which care and support planning had a positive impact on outcomes for people and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

People and their families were actively involved in developing their support plans. It was clear that there was ongoing positive collaboration with family members and other professionals to find the best ways to support people. Support plans included clear information about people's capacity and about who supported decision making or had the legal capacity to make decisions on their behalf. Communication with family members was strong and they told us they felt well informed of their family member's ongoing wellbeing. Support plans included short term goals that were reviewed every six months. This helped focus support on achievable outcomes that were celebrated.

People's support plans provided staff with very good guidance about how to build on each individual's skills and abilities. There was a strong focus on people's experience of living with Autism and how this affected their behaviours, perceptions and communications. This gave staff the information they needed to communicate effectively with people. We saw that staff understood people very well. Support plans were extremely strength based.

The complex impact of Autism for each individual was well described. However, at times it could be difficult to identify key information within the lengthy support plan. A one page profile could be helpful for staff in the initial stages of getting to know people they support. The leadership team and staff members were excited to implement a new on line recording system soon. The transfer of information to the new system could provide an opportunity to review and simplify existing support plans. This will ensure all information is current and easier to use on a day to day basis.

The leadership team shared learning gained from quality assuring support plans with staff members. This showed that there was a strong culture of continual improvement.

Complaints

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

Detailed evaluations

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
1.3 People's health and wellbeing benefits from their care and support	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
3.3 Staffing arrangements are right and staff work well together	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good
5.1 Assessment and personal planning reflects people's outcomes and wishes	4 - Good

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