



**Education and Services for People with Autism Limited**

**Driving Up Quality  
Self-Assessment Report**

## About Education and Services for People with Autism Limited (ESPA)

ESPA is a registered charity that has been supporting people on the autism spectrum since 1988. Our mission is:

***‘Enabling people across the autism spectrum to enjoy rewarding and fulfilling lives’***

We have a wide range of services across the North East of England including domiciliary and supported living services, residential services, an Independent Specialist Further Education College and day services.

Everyone we support is on the autism spectrum but the majority of people also have additional and associated needs e.g. learning disabilities, mental health conditions and behaviours that challenge. We have successfully supported many individuals to move out of hospital settings and they are now enjoying a meaningful and happy life in the community.

The Driving up Quality Code compliments and enhances our existing quality assurance systems and evidences our public commitment to offering everyone the highest quality person centred support.

### **The 5 Key Principles of the Code:**

ESPA embraces the key principles and will strive to embed its values, principles and best practice in everything we do as a Charity.

#### **The 5 Key Principles**

1. Support is focused on the person
2. The person is supported to have an ordinary and meaningful life
3. Care and support focuses on people being happy and having a good quality of life
4. A good culture is important to the organisation
5. Managers and board members lead and run the organisation well

## How we self-assessed

We established a Driving up Quality Focus Group. This included representatives from a wide range of our services and people at different levels from within the organisation. This group was led by the Chief Executive and Development Manager.

We split into groups and each group discussed the 5 key principles and under each we recorded what we believed we were doing well and areas we felt we needed to improve or develop further. We used questions within the code to stimulate open and honest conversations.

There were many common themes that emerged from the groups and some unique to specific services. All views have been summarised within our self-assessment and areas for improvement will also be reflected within the organisations strategic planning processes which are overseen by the Board of Trustees.

In addition to the focus group we also used information from other internal quality assurance tools and external inspection reports and audits. These included:

- Service User Surveys
- Parent Surveys
- Staff Surveys
- Internal Senior Management Quality Monitoring Reports
- CQC Reports
- Investors in People report
- Local Authority audits/inspections
- Compliments, concerns and complaints
- Code of Governance – Self-assessment for Trustees

These provided us with evidence and data to support our self-assessment.

In our report we have also included testimonies and case studies and CQC feedback to illustrate some of the many outcomes we have supported people to achieve. The extracts from the CQC report have been used to reinforce our judgements.

## Declaration

ESPA has signed up to the Driving up Quality Code and have started our journey towards embedding this into our quality assurance processes. We have carried out our first self-assessment which we found positive, stimulating, enjoyable and motivating. It has enabled us to identify what we believe we are good at and things we could do better. We want this to be a living document that results in positive outcomes for the people we support and the Charity as a whole. For our first self-assessment we have used a wide range of evidence already available to us but as we evolve we will more actively and directly engage with and involve the people we support, families and other stakeholders to inform our continuous quality improvement.



Lesley J Lane  
**Chief Executive.**

## **SUPPORT IS FOCUSED ON THE PERSON**

### **What we do well**

- Understanding autism and the impact on people's lives
- Person centred care and support plans and reviews
- Care and support is bespoke and flexible
- Involving people in making decisions about their life and best interest decision making
- Supporting people with behaviours that challenge to enjoy a good quality of life
- Respecting people regardless of their challenges
- Understanding people's preferred methods of communication – Communication Profiles
- Positive Behaviour Support and positive risk taking
- People accessing and being part of communities
- Being outcome focused
- Promoting independence
- Supporting people to stay safe, healthy and happy
- Values based recruitment – involving the people to be supported
- Matching staff to individuals preferences and interests
- Investment in training – 3 week taught induction, refreshers and specialist training
- Open door policy
- Positive, open and honest relationships with families – on-going consultation
- Working in partnership with other professionals
- Detailed assessments and transition plans
- Using the Spectrum Star to capture autism specific outcomes
- Service User Meetings
- Quality assurance processes to inform continuous quality improvement
- Accessibility
- Policies and procedures
- Autism specific professional support and input from our Multi-disciplinary Team.

### **Where we could do better**

- Better evidencing outcomes
- Celebrating successes
- People getting to know other householders before they move in
- Better use of social stories
- Developing profiles for prospective new members of staff based upon people's preferences e.g. personal characteristics, interests, skills and experiences
- More accessible information to support informed decision making
- Not everyone chooses who they would like to live with
- More consistent use of the Spectrum Star.

### **What CQC say**

- Care was planned and delivered in a personalised and responsive way
- Risk assessments were specific to people, their support needs and interests

- Staff clearly know the people they were supporting very well, which meant that they have professional but personalised and friendly interactions with them
- People's relatives and other professionals were involved in designing care plans to help ensure they responded to the person's needs
- Care plans were detailed, personalised and written from the perspective of the person
- Staff were knowledgeable about people's communication needs and used this information to engage with people effectively
- People received personalised support that was responsive to their support needs and preferences
- People's care plans contained personal goals of things they would like to achieve and how they were working towards these
- We observed people direct the staff to when and where they required support. One person decided to go out the following Friday and chose which staff member they wanted to accompany them and instructed the staff member what time they wanted to go.

## **Case Study**

We believe that it's down to the detailed planning, assessments and partnership working that really enables us to design and develop the right support around people.

A has autism, a learning disability and behaviours that challenge. She was living in a specialist residential placement out of area and attending a specialist College. A's parents wanted her to return to live in the family home and had become aware of the day community hub ESPA had developed in partnership with Stockton. They visited and immediately knew it was 'right' for her. Following a formal referral a comprehensive and collaborative process began. Her parents, ESPA, Social Worker and current residential and College staff worked closely together to produce a detailed person centred transition and support plan for her. At this stage everyone agreed not to involve A due to the confusion and distress this would cause her.

Our Manager and the Team Leader spent time observing her in her residential placement and College to better understand how best to support her and so we could use familiar and consistent strategies that were working well e.g. how to reassure her at times of distress. Their staff also came to visit our day provision to look at the environment and what adjustments might be needed to create space she would feel comfortable in. They also attended our staff meeting to share very helpful and practical information about A with the new team who would be supporting her. ESPA staff also spent time getting to know her in the family home. Everyone involved in the planning met regularly to refine these plans. As A really struggles with change the transition arrangements were done at her pace to minimise any stress or anxiety.

Based upon all the excellent information available we developed a comprehensive person centred plan around her needs, interests and preferences. This also informed Behaviour Support Plans and risk assessments. We looked at what a good day would look like for A, and how she preferred to be supported to actively engage in activities within the building and community. To gradually introduce her to the service her current staff who she had a good relationship with and her mother brought her to join in some taster sessions to start familiarising her to the new environment and staff.

A has since made a successful transition to the new service. She has choice over how and with who she spends her time. With our support and the range of stimulating and meaningful activities she takes part in we have seen a significant reduction in behavioural incidences and increase in quality of life.

### **What families say?**

*'It is 2 years since our mam passed away following a battle with cancer. J could see the deterioration in mam's health. Using a Social Story tool, staff and I explained to him that her body was wearing out and explained that she had moved to a hospice to be cared for. He was told that it was ok for him to be sad, which he understood and accepted that he wouldn't see her again.*

*Mam had said that she didn't want J to come to the funeral as he would not understand and would be upset. She couldn't have been more wrong! When I told staff of mam's wishes, they felt that he needed to be involved so that he would understand and be able to mourn with the rest of the family.*

*Again, using his Social Story staff, our cousin and I explained her death and the funeral. We were all upset but it was important that J was part of this. The church, crematorium and venue for the function were visited by staff to assess suitability of access and best position for J. We took him shopping, for him to choose appropriate clothing.*

*On the day of the funeral he was incredible and with staff support he even blew a kiss to mam as the curtain came around the coffin. Everyone believed he understood what was happening and this was a genuine farewell. At the wake he met friends and family he hadn't seen in years. It was right for him to be included and mam would have been the most proud of him she had ever been. I know I was. We can't thank everyone enough'.*

(Sister).

# **THE PERSON IS SUPPORTED TO HAVE AN ORDINARY AND MEANINGFUL LIFE**

## **What we do well**

- Listening to people
- Using the least restrictive and most enabling support – Positive Behaviour Support and positive risk taking
- Excellent relationships between the staff and the people they support
- People's ambitions are not limited but encouraged
- Focusing on what is important to the person and not what staff think is right
- People's decisions are respected
- Creative ways to support people to make informed choices and decisions
- Achieving a good balance between choice, rights and independence
- People being valued and respected members of their communities
- People are supported to develop and maintain friendships and relationships
- Staff receive training on quality of life and meaningful activities
- Giving people time to relax
- Decisions to opt out are respected
- Making sure people are happy and feel safe
- Allowing people to enjoy and relish their special interests
- Supporting people to move out of hospital and enjoy a good life in the community – Transforming Care
- Internal quality assurance visits focus on quality of life outcomes
- Develop good links and partnerships with other community groups, organisations and other agencies including the Police
- Encouraging people to vote
- Responding to concerns or complaints – open, honest and transparent.

## **What we could do better**

- Supporting people to have more work experience and opportunities either voluntary or paid
- Some people too risk averse
- Greater emphasis on people having a broader range of friendships and relationships
- People sharing opportunities across ESPA
- People having more meaningful contributions to their review meetings
- Directory of activities, events and opportunities on our intranet and website
- Exploring new opportunities/trying new things
- Developing new partnerships to introduce new opportunities.

## What CQC Say

- People were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible
- Risk assessments were used as tools to promote people's independence and positive risk taking
- Staff we spoke with understood the importance of promoting choice and independence to ensure people using the service could live an ordinary life as any citizen
- People were supported to maintain as much independence as possible and to maintain and enhance their independent living skills
- Staff always promote independence
- People were involved in a wide range of purposeful activities including paid and voluntary work, community based classes and leisure activities. People were engaged in meaningful occupations such as helping at Food Banks, which put something back into their community.

## What families say?

*'The staff always let D chose what he wants to do. If D fancies going bowling, they will take him bowling'.*

(Parent)

*'We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff at ESPA who have been involved with the amazing progress which our son R has made. The progress which R has made has been beyond all of our expectations. Understandably, when he left home he was extremely anxious. The change in his life was enormous. However, with the superb support from staff R developed his self-confidence and ability to socialise with others.*

*R became confident enough to walk to the nearby shop on his own, to attend cookery sessions in a local community centre, help in a shop on his own and more recently attend a luncheon club where he helps to prepare food for a meal for elderly people. All of this is amazing; the professional manner displayed by the staff has enabled R to progress to this level.*

*R and his housemate jointly plan their menu; share the responsibility of the shopping and cooking in addition to ensuring that the flat is kept clean and tidy. The encouragement and support which all of the staff have provided is quite exceptional. He progressed through initial Risk Assessments regarding independent travel and developed the confidence to travel on the bus to and from Sunderland of which he is very proud. It is wonderful for us to see the degree to which his self-confidence has developed. He also travels independently by means of a taxi, which he arranges, to attend the Luncheon Club in Seaham. He really enjoys helping to prepare meals for the older people there.*

*The progress which we have seen in R's outlook upon life and lifestyle has been exceptional. All of the staff who have worked with R have displayed a very genuine and professional approach.*

(Parents)

## **Case Study 1**

T was referred by Northumberland Council. He had been in residential settings since 7 years of age (he is now 30 years old). He has autism, learning disabilities, behaviours that challenge and severe epilepsy. His parents wanted him to move on from residential care into a single person tenancy with autism specific support to ensure he had a stable future, increase his independence and to enjoy a better quality of life. All agreed a tenancy near his previous service would offer him consistency, reduce his anxiety and enable him to maintain his familiar structured routines and relationships. His parents bought him a property to meet a highly bespoke specification. This was then leased to a housing provider who became T's landlord.

ESPA, parents, staff from his previous placement, the Local Authority, the housing provider and other health and social care professionals worked together to create very detailed transition and support plans. We spent a lot of time really getting to know T and understanding the life he would enjoy in the community. He was assessed as needing 2:1 support 24 hours a day. We recruited and trained his staff team which his parents were actively involved in. A number of staff from his previous placement chose to transition with him; their knowledge and established relationships was a real asset. T successfully moved into his new home in June 2018.

Since moving in we have supported him to see his family regularly including visits home every fortnight. He enjoys long drives and walks daily and now has a Motability car. Initially we kept his routines and locations the same to maintain consistency. However as we got to know him better we have gradually and successfully introduced new places which were introduced to him using picture cards.

T's life is already much more varied and meaningful. He accesses the community regularly and uses his local supermarket to do his shopping; he enjoys pushing the trolley while staff helps him pick his groceries. He also goes swimming every Friday where he has built up a good rapport with the lifeguards and cashier. Fortnightly T goes trampolining in a local community centre, where he loves the instructor and has a visit to McDonalds afterwards, which is something he looks forward to. This is a major achievement as until recently he couldn't have coped with a busy restaurant.

T has settled well into his new home and has more control over his environment and his obsessionality has started to reduced. He no longer watches videos day in day out; his interests and activities have broadened. He now enjoys gaming on his computer, playing on his I-pad and sometimes just relaxing with his picture book. He has even started watching TV which he had never done but we've found he has a keen interest in wildlife programmes.

This is just the start on T's journey and we are all confident that he will develop many more new skills and interests that will enhance his life and opportunities. We are planning to support him to access social events at one of ESPA's day provisions where he can take part in a wide range of events/activities, explore new interests and hopefully develop some new friendships.

## Case Study 2

Since joining ESPA in 2010 D has often said that he would like to have a partner, possibly have children one day and to have a job. D met C at College and they became a couple almost two years ago. D spoke to selected staff about wanting to have an intimate relationship. The staff team worked with D to help him understand the importance of mutual consent and staying safe. He asked that when C came to stay at his flat that staff gave them privacy and not to enter unless he asked for them, which everyone respected.

As the relationship progressed staff continued to offer sensitive and thoughtful support. D chose to spend some time with our Speech and Language Therapist talking about language and expectations in relationships and strategies he could use if he was finding some situations difficult.

AS D and C found it difficult to spend long periods of unstructured time together we supported them to find activities that they both enjoyed. D is an elected member of the Committee for the Geocaching Association of Great Britain. His enthusiasm has now rubbed off on C and they now they spend most weekends hunting caches which they really enjoy.

As D became more comfortable and confident in the relationship he began going to stay at her flat and they soon introduced each other to their families. D and C have now decided that they would like to live together and D says that one day he plans to propose to C. Although the move has not progressed as quickly as they had wished they are hoping to have a flat together in the New Year. With the right support in place we have no doubt that they will have a very happy future.

# **CARE AND SUPPORT FOCUSES ON PEOPLE BEING HAPPY AND HAVING A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE**

## **What we do well**

- Encouraging people to have ambitions for their future and respecting their choices and decisions
- Really getting to know the person and understanding what a good life looks like for them
- Staff recruited who share the organisation's values and are truly person centred
- Understanding people's communication needs and actively listening to what's important to them
- Support focuses on people's interests wishes and expectations
- Support plans are person centred and captures what makes them happy
- Excellent and respectful relationships between staff, the people they support and families
- Positive Behaviour Support and positive risk taking underpins all support planning
- Supervisions, appraisals and senior management audits focus on quality of life and feedback from the people they support
- Successfully supporting people to move out of hospital and preventative strategies that enable them to sustain a meaningful life in the community
- Extensive partnership working that harnesses everyone's expertise and roles in enabling people to enjoy a good quality of life
- Specialist and bespoke training to competently and confidently meet peoples diverse and complex needs
- Staff are encouraged to be creative and reduce barriers to enable people to achieve their aspirations
- Staff go the extra mile and provide highly flexible and responsive support often over and above what they are contracted to provide
- Supporting people to stay healthy and well, including sexual health
- Strong senior management support and leadership
- Knowledgeable and competent staff teams
- Secondments and staff working additional paid hours ensures that people's lives and routines are not disrupted
- Support and timely intervention by ESPA's Multi-Disciplinary Team

## **What we could do better**

- Capturing success stories and celebrating what people achieve
- More personalised Job Descriptions
- More training around mental health and trauma informed care
- A greater emphasis on people gaining work experience and paid employment
- Improving recruitment to attract a wider range of candidates
- Need to do more planning to ensure people still enjoy a good quality of life as they get older
- Using feedback from the people we support as part of staffs probationary period
- Specifically recruiting bank/floating staff to cover staff absences
- Being better at having honest conversations with staff when things go wrong

## What CQC Say

- People were supported to engage in activities they enjoy
- One relative told us how a person had really enjoyed an activity but then lost confidence, staff worked for months to encourage the person to resume the activity which they are now doing and enjoying
- People were happy and relaxed with the people supporting them
- People were supported to engage in activities they enjoyed
- One member of staff told us “I call this a quality of life service, because that’s what we provide to the people we support”
- Care plans also contained a Personal Statement that includes a lot of information about the person’s life history, family and other relationships, things that were important to them and their likes and dislikes. This helped staff gain a picture of the person not just one focused on their support needs
- From our observations we saw that staff treat people with kindness, respect and compassion. It was clear from our discussions with staff that they have an excellent understanding of peoples needs and this underpinned their approach to delivering support to people.

## What families say:

*My brother J, who has Down’s Syndrome and autism had some difficult times once he left school. Without the structure of school, he became very unsettled and due to his behaviour was sectioned twice, which was hugely distressing for him and our family. ESPA came in during this period to help when my parents had to make the difficult decision for him to go into independent living. Due to the commitment of both my parents and ESPA, J now lives in bungalow, with 24/7 care from ESPA, and has come on leaps and bounds in the last few years. We can now even take him on trips to the Lakes and return home fairly unscathed, something which would have caused untold drama in the past. The work ESPA have done with J is just the tip of the iceberg.*

(Brother)

*‘We couldn’t think of anywhere better. His development has been/is exceptional. We would like to thank and praise ESPA and all staff for the way in which they have enabled our son to develop. We never thought he would be so happy, satisfied with life, confident and becoming gradually independent. Thank you so much!’*

(Parent)

## Case Study

We originally got to know C when we were commissioned by Middleborough to do a very thorough and autism specific Individual Service Design (ISD), which took a number of months. His close family and everyone involved in his life at that time worked together to agree what a good life would look like for C and the support he would need to live a safe, happy and meaningful life in the community. This enabled us to really get to know him in detail, how his autism impacted on his life, his likes and dislikes, what works for him and to start understanding the meaning behind some of his behaviours and the specific strategies and support he needed to enjoy a good quality of life.

At this time after leaving school his 2 day placements (one of which was an autism specific provision) had broken down due to his behaviours and complex needs. Life at home had become extremely difficult for the family and C's life was very restricted; with minimal access to the community.

The frequent behaviours he displayed were physical aggression towards staff and others, self-induced vomiting, self-defecation of urine and faeces, spitting, slapping, inappropriate touching, property damage, shouting and swearing. He had a very disturbed sleep pattern and also has a number of health conditions that added to his pain and distress.

Following the ISD, ESPA was commissioned to deliver the support to him. A Housing Association bought a bungalow, off the open market, close to his family and that met a very detailed specification. We provide him with 2:1 support during the day and 2 sleep-in staff. All support is highly personalised, structured and consistent which really works for him. His staff team are highly skilled and competent and love working with him.

We have developed a good understanding of his communication and the meaning behind many of his behaviours. We have very detailed risk assessments, support and behaviour plans and communication profiles that are constantly being updated to capture changes. The close partnerships and joint working relationships continue and harnesses everyone's unique contribution to enabling C to remain happy and well and promoting his autonomy and independence.

In the 6 years we have been supporting C he is now achieving some excellent outcomes that have far exceeded people's expectations, especially his family. There has been a significant reduction in behaviours that challenge which has opened up his world. Through being supported to attend regular appointments his health has also improved. Although C's sleep pattern is still disturbed he no longer bangs, shouts and disturb others.

C's life is now full of activities he enjoys. He can now make informed choices about what he wants to do which is an outstanding achievement. He has a bus pass and rail card and travels around the region to places he enjoys; especially theme and amusement parks where he loves the rides. This includes going to some very busy places e.g. Lightwater Valley and Flamingo Land which he returns to every year. He goes shopping for food, clothes and CD's and visits his family every day. He likes going to the cinema, meals out, swimming and trampolining at Jump 360. He is learning to do jobs around his house and can now make his own breakfast and prepare cold drinks. He enjoys attending social events with other people ESPA supports but he also has opportunities to meet new people and make friendships through other groups and activities he attends.

# **A GOOD CULTURE IS IMPORTANT TO THE ORGANISATION**

## **What we do well**

- Our understanding of autism is embedded in everything we do
- Everyone is valued and respected as an individual
- Staff agree with and live up to the organisations mission and values: embraced by all staff irrespective of their role
- Recognising that staff are our greatest asset
- High levels of job satisfaction especially due to the difference they make to people's lives, their sense of achievement and job well done; exemplified by a low staff turnover
- Staff having the skills and knowledge to do their job well and the value they place on our training
- The culture of teams is dictated by the 6 C's in care, the Code of Conduct for Health Care Support Workers, Total Attachment Theory and compassionate care and leadership
- Safeguarding is embedded across the organisation and we employ a specialist consultant and trainer as a critical friend and to ensure best practice
- We are always striving to improve: a strong culture of continuous quality improvement and professional development
- A highly committed Board of Trustees
- As a regional provider we have extensive local knowledge and partnerships
- We embrace and value parents as part of our culture
- Supervision, appraisals and internal quality assurance processes ensure our values, culture and expectations are consistently reinforced
- ESPA encourages open, transparent, honest and professional communication
- All feedback is welcomed, formally and informally, and seen as opportunities to change or improve
- Robust procedures are in place for recording and responding to concerns, complaints and compliments
- Errors or mistakes are openly acknowledged and seen as learning opportunities, with a view to preventing future occurrences and improving practice.

## **What we could do better**

- Improved and more bespoke surveys to capture more specific feedback
- To look at further improving communication up and down the organisation
- Systems introduced to reward and recognise staff
- To make better use of social media to share and celebrate our achievements, stories and successes and to improve recruitment
- To identify change champions across the organisation that can support ESPA to proactively respond to inevitable ongoing changes and embed best practice.

## What CQC say

- During our visits to people's homes we saw numerous examples of kind and caring support being given
- People were treated with dignity and respect by staff who knew them well
- Staff were given opportunities to share best practice and discuss outcomes for people supported
- Staff spoke positively about the culture and values of the service
- People's views were regularly collected through annual surveys and quality monitoring visits and the feedback was used to make improvements to the service
- The provider works in partnership with others
- People and their families were consulted about the suitability of new staff
- Policies and procedures were in place to safeguard people from abuse
- Staff were supported with regular training and appraisals
- Relatives we spoke to said the staff at the service kept people safe and spoke highly of the staff team and provision of care they delivered
- Staff commented that they are proud to work for ESPA. The provider has embraced the 6 C's values which underpin social and nursing care; care, compassion, commitment, competence, courage and communication.

### **Investors in People Report (Silver Award) 2018**

- Staff share the same values as the organisation
- Staff have the knowledge/information to do their job well
- Strong commitment to learning and development
- Staff feel empowered to make decisions and act on them
- Staff are trusted and supported to make decisions in line with their role
- Staff are encouraged to achieve high performance
- Staff are motivated by ESPA's values, ethos and the difference they make to people's lives
- Roles are designed to enable people to progress

## **What families say:**

*'Interactions with staff couldn't be better. They are so highly trained in autism and demonstrate their understanding and empathy on a daily basis. I cannot fault my daughters care at ESPA. It is truly an outstanding organisation and under its umbrella she enjoys a happy, fulfilled and stimulating life'.*

(Parent)

*'The main thing which stands out is the training and awareness of autism as a whole. This enables staff to provide such high standards of support. They are able to see how it affects the whole family'.*

(Parent)

*'I keep intending to let you know how much I appreciate how hard you and all the staff are working to keep J happy. All your dedication and kindness and good humour is much appreciated.'*

(Mother)

*'The care and understanding of staff is outstanding, particularly as autism continues to surprise. They are so highly trained in autism and demonstrate their understanding and empathy on a daily basis'*

(Parent)

*'We know we can speak openly with staff. Our views are always respected and taken into account.' 'I certainly feel welcomed and encouraged to express my views'*

(Parents)

*'ESPA are an exceptional company. I am happy to entrust the care of my son to them'.*

(Parent)

*'The staff are fantastic and a credit to ESPA'.*

(Parent)

*'Whenever I phone and to whomever I speak, that person always knows exactly where my daughter is, what she is doing and who she is with. I find this remarkable!'*

(Parent)

## **MANAGERS AND BOARD MEMBERS LEAD AND RUN THE ORGANISATION WELL**

### **What we do well**

- Clear mission and values driven by Trustees and senior managers
- All decisions and plans focus on how we can make people's lives better
- The Board of Trustees have a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience to provide strong and passionate governance; skill mix is reviewed annually to inform recruitment
- The people we support are involved in senior managers' appointments
- The Chief Executive does bulletins 3 times a year keeping everyone up to date with what is happening across the Charity
- Robust quality assurance systems, including audits carried out by senior managers, focus on quality of life outcomes, compliance and driving up quality
- Person centred plans, staff, service user and parent surveys inform strategic planning processes; a bottom up approach to service development and quality improvement
- Managers and senior managers exemplify best practice through training, coaching, mentoring and being available and approachable
- Very supportive central teams and departments and put the people we support at the heart of their decisions
- Robust policies and procedures which are also translated into accessible versions
- The Board of Trustees and senior managers take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. Strategic Safeguarding Meetings ensure we maintain best practice and systematically review and analyse incidents to inform our continued learning. We employ a nationally recognised Consultant to act as a critical friend
- Most manager and leaders have worked their way up through the organisation therefore have first-hand experience of their team's roles and challenges
- Line managers promote an atmosphere of teamwork and value everyone's unique contribution to decision making
- Health and safety is embedded in everything we do and staff receive extensive training to understand their roles and responsibilities
- The Charity has extensive plans and systems in place to ensure it has the resources to maintain its financial security and to support its growth
- Senior management on-call arrangements.

### **What we could do better**

- To consider succession planning for management roles and Trustees
- More opportunities for staff and the people we support to meet with the Trustees
- Not everyone knows who the Trustees are so this needs to be communicated better
- To explore how we can give individuals and families an even stronger voice
- Information more consistently being cascaded down through the organisation
- Human Resources Department to host regular 'clinics'
- More advanced management training for senior managers

- Preparing our Senior Support Workers and Assistant Manager to become our managers of the future.

### **What CQC say**

- The Registered Manager, provider and Team Leaders carried out a number of quality assurance audits to monitor and improve standards at the service
- Senior staff hold regular meetings with support staff to give updates and gather feedback and suggestions to improve the service
- Staff felt supported by management and had regular opportunities to contribute to the running of the service
- Relatives talked positively about the leadership of the service
- Relatives told us staff had the knowledge and skills needed to support people
- There was a 24 hour on call service which enabled staff to contact a senior person if needed
- All staff we spoke to were complimentary of the management team and the provider

#### **Investors in People (Silver Award) 2018**

- Comprehensive Strategic Plan
- Leaders clearly communicate and act in line with ESPA's mission and values
- Leaders are ensuring there is a consistent level of trust at all levels
- Line managers promote an atmosphere of teamwork
- Leaders are passionate about delivering the organisations objectives and motivate people to deliver them
- Leaders learn from outside the organisation

### **What families say?**

*'ESPA is well governed, managed and staffed and they maintain very high standards in all areas of work'*

(Parent)

*We would like to take this opportunity to thank ESPA for the excellent support which you have provided for our son. The survey made us focus upon the work which all of the staff continue to give to T. It was very satisfying to be able to answer "Outstanding" to all of the questions.*

(Parents)