



# Quality Checkers Pilot Project— Evaluation

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# Background

In the autumn of 2014 Healthwatch Wiltshire (HWW) asked Wiltshire People First (WPF), a user led organisation that empowers people with learning difficulties, to deliver a pilot project which would provide suitably trained and supported volunteers, with a Learning Difficulty (LD), the opportunity to participate in HWW's Enter and View Programme. It also provided HWW with the opportunity to test an inclusive approach to its volunteering and engagement approach.

The project provided people with LD the opportunity to check the quality of residential care services, with a particular focus on services providing support to people with a LD and dementia.

Services were identified as being suitable for 'quality checking' through the pilot. The 'quality checkers' were able to focus on the following areas:

- is the service accessible to people with LD?
- are the staff friendly and understand the need of users with a learning disability?
- is information displayed in a format that is accessible?
- does the service treat people with LD with dignity and respect and like all other people and give them the power to exercise their own rights?

All volunteers were interviewed, undertook a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, trained, and supported in their involvement. WPF carried out the training with involvement from HWW.

Healthwatch Wiltshire is an independent organisation which has an important role in assessing the quality of health and social care services today and influencing the design of services for tomorrow.



The Quality Checkers with Sara Nelson from Healthwatch Wiltshire

# Outcomes

From a HWW point of view the purpose of the pilot was to help fulfil its responsibilities to provide people with the opportunity to engage with services and provide feedback to highlight good practice and recommend areas for improvement. The outcomes of the project are:

- Local health and social care services are more responsive to the needs and wishes of people.
- HWW understands the experiences of people with LD who use services because there has been real and meaningful engagement through the project.
- More people are aware of HWW and how their involvement can influence and shape health and social care services for the future.
- Expansion of the skills and knowledge within the organisation of HWW of the health and social care issues experienced by people with LD.
- Quality Checker reports will provide useful qualitative auditing evidence as part of any CQC or other inspection visit.

## Summary of Quality Checker Visits

Quality Checkers carried out visits to 11 residential care homes and overall felt it had been a positive experience. The teams received warm welcomes from staff and residents alike.

A small number of recommendations were made to improve services for residents, but in the main, based upon the observations of a short visit, all of the homes appeared to be providing a good service. All the homes appeared to be treating people well and respecting their needs preferences and wishes.



# Recommendations from the visits

- Improve internal mechanisms for communication so everyone is clear on lines of responsibility and passing on messages - e.g. Regional managers/depts. to support staff and vice versa, in some of the larger services.
- All residential homes to be accessible - with level or ramped access into buildings and around the home, doors wide enough for those using mobility aids.
- More information for residents - and in easy read formats e.g. display menus using words and pictures or symbols, notice board activities etc.
- Some homes appeared to be much better than others in regard to information - it would be good to have a set standard.

The individual visit reports are available on the HWW website. Hard copies are available on request.

## Lessons Learnt

When planning and undertaking any project it is important to be realistic about timescales and budgets. This project overran and extra expense was incurred due to a number of unanticipated factors, outside of either organisation's control.

Firstly, the DBS check process:

- People with LD don't always have the necessary documentation required to undergo the check, e.g. they might live with parents or in a group home and won't have a utility bill to prove their residence, and many people with LD don't have driving licences or passports.
- Because DBS certificates are sent directly to the applicant and some people with LD don't always open their post or are able to read it, considerable amounts of prompting and checking had to be done to find out if the certificate had arrived.

We wondered whether a DBS would be required for the future as the visits are "one off", the Quality Checkers would be supported throughout, and a risk assessment would be carried out. However, people with LD want to be treated as equal citizens and as such, it was important for them to undergo the check like anyone else taking part in an Enter and View process. This in itself prolonged delays in the timescales planned for the project and as a result visits were delayed.

Secondly, arranging the visits themselves. HWW sent a letter to each of the providers identified for a Quality Checker visit to introduce the project. WPF then followed up with a telephone call to arrange the visit date itself. Most providers were very accommodating and able to set a date and time for visit straight away. A couple were less helpful. Communication between head office staff and home managers or staff on the ground was poor, in one instance a total of 8 telephone calls were needed to get hold of the correct person to arrange one visit.

## Next Steps

HWW will share the outcomes of this pilot project with health and social care commissioners, and other Healthwatch organisations across the country through Healthwatch England to highlight the importance of involving people with LD in quality monitoring and how it could be replicated across other health or social care areas.

There are a number of opportunities for WPF to expand the Quality Checker service now, these might include working with HWW to quality check:

- **Equipment services:** Quality Checkers could undertake mystery shopping of the equipment providers on preferred lists held with the council and CCG.
- **Domiciliary Care:** A scheme to find out what service users think about home care support providers could be developed.
- **Primary Care:** Quality Checkers could check the accessibility of primary care services for their patients with LD.

## Acknowledgements

HWW would like to thank those involved with making this pilot project possible, all the staff and supporters at Wiltshire People First, the staff and residents at all the residential care homes where Quality Checkers carried out visits and of course the Quality Checkers themselves whose enthusiasm to engage and take part as Quality Checkers was the main driving force.

## Thank you!



The Quality Checker Team

## Why not get involved?

**Visit our website:** [www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk)

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