



Quality Checkers report – What people have said about the support provided by



August 2021

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About this Quality Check

Skills for People Quality Checkers were asked by Positive Support for You (PSFU) to carry out an independent review of support provided to people with learning disabilities and/or autism who live in Teesside and Northumberland. This was our third visit to carry out a quality check for the organisation. The Quality Check would also form part of the organisations commitment to driving up quality. The Driving Up Quality Code is a code for providers and commissioners. '*Signing up* is a commitment to driving up quality in services for people with learning disabilities'.

PSFU has been committed to driving up quality and the code for several years and carries out regular self-assessments of its practice and publishes its action plan on the Driving Up Quality website. <https://www.drivingupquality.org.uk/home>

Positive Support for You will be celebrating its tenth birthday this year and as part of the quality check they wanted to invite people supported to celebrate this event by telling us what they felt they had achieved and what they felt had gone well and not so well.

Due to COVID and the current restrictions it would not be possible to meet with people face to face. Wherever possible, we spoke to people online, using Zoom and over the telephone.

Some people would be able to communicate verbally with us, but others could not. We were also aware that some people would not be ready to meet with us as they need lots of time to build up trusting relationships. To ensure we sought the views of all the people supported we spoke with some parents, managers, and staff. On this occasion we did not speak to any other professionals.

For the purpose of the report, we would usually include all the comments from people supported as an appendix, however, as we could not speak to all the people or meet them face to face we have relied on information provided by those people who know them well. Where we have received comments, we have included them throughout this report.

By listening to the views of persons and key people who have an interest in how support services work, **Positive Support for You** hope to improve the way that support is offered to people with learning disabilities in the future.

About Positive Support for You

Positive Support for You, CIC, operates throughout the Northeast of England. It is a Community Interest Company and a domiciliary care agency registered to provide personal care to people in their own home.

Positive Support for You started supporting people in 2011, solely within the Teesside area. The organisation was called 'Positive Support in Tees Community Interest Company'. In 2016 their name changed to reflect the specialised and person-centred support they offer to people in the wider region. Positive Support for You provides supported living services. *

This Quality Check focused on supported living services for 5 people who live in Teesside and 3 people who live in Northumberland.



Our benchmark

The Checks were carried out using the updated **REACH Support for Living** Standards © Paradigm. These were initially developed by lots of people including Paradigm and Skills for People. The Standards provide a benchmark for people with learning disabilities to review and improve the support and housing they receive. <https://paradigm-uk.org/what-we-do/reach-support-for-living/>

We did not use all the REACH standards for this quality check but chose to concentrate on those standards that linked with the standards in the driving up quality code <https://www.drivingupquality.org.uk/about-the-code> and would allow us to focus on how people have been supported, kept safe, what they have been doing during Covid and the restrictions.

As Positive Support for You will be celebrating 10 years as a support provider. The Skills for People Quality Checkers were also asked to collect pictures and stories during the Quality Check of services as part of the celebration.

We asked that the people supported (with help from their staff teams) get together some visual evidence - a poster or storyboard, using photos, pictures, objects of reference, or make a video.... which tell about their lives while they have been supported by Positive Support for You.

The REACH standards used for the quality check

Standard 4: I choose who supports me and how I am supported

Standard 5: I choose my friends and my relationships

Standard 6: I get help to make changes in my life

Standard 7: I choose how to be healthy and safe

A summary of what we found out.

How well is Positive Support for You doing in meeting the above four REACH Standards in Supported Living?

The focus of the Quality Check was to find out what people feel about the support they receive and the control they have over their lives. We asked people what they felt they had achieved since being supported by Positive Support for You. We also wanted to know how Covid, lockdown and the restrictions had impacted on the lives of people supported.

Once again, we were very fortunate to meet some lovely people and their support staff who were happy to chat with us online.

The checks we did of Positive Support for You Supported Living Services and the questions we asked provided the Quality Checkers with an insight into what life was like for the people supported during these unprecedented times.

The Quality Checkers felt that the people they spoke with were still receiving good, personalised support from their staff and the organisation. People supported told us about how they were spending their time during Covid.

Most of the people we spoke to appear to be leading full lives and are being supported to do this with their staff, family, and friends.

Family remain an important part of people's lives and we were glad to have had the opportunity to speak to 2 parents to gather their views about the support their relative is receiving from Positive Support for You. We also received 1 completed questionnaire from a parent.

One parent told us they were happy with the support and care their daughter was receiving. "J is very settled and content with staff and her routine on a daily basis".

One person supported said "Since coming out of hospital I have a much better life".

One person said "I used to lock myself away in the other place. It is much quieter and peaceful where I am now"

One person said "Decreasing my alcohol use is the thing I have most achieved"

One person said, "I am looking forward to celebrating the ten-year celebration with Positive Support, it will make up for all the missed parties".

All three parents were very happy with the support their relative was receiving.

Supporting people to have full and healthy lives

People supported told us they were receiving support to keep healthy and safe and all of them knew about Covid and understood they had to keep themselves safe by following the guidelines from the government about the restrictions. Staff were helping them to do this. Some people told us they watched the news to keep up with what is going on.

End of life planning can often be seen as a difficult conversation to have with someone. The Quality Checkers were pleased to hear from one person who told us about the support they received from their staff to plan their funeral arrangements and make a will.

The Quality Checkers were pleased that Positive Support for You had also invested in the health and wellbeing of their staff and several changes had been put in place to support this. Staff receive higher rates of pay and the organisation has invested in an Employee Assistance Programme.

The Quality Checkers – who's who?

This Quality Check was carried out by a team of people from **Skills for People** (www.skillsforpeople.org.uk)

The Quality Checkers are a team of people with learning disabilities and supporters, who want to make improvements so that people are supported to live full and healthy lives in their communities. They are experts on how support should be because most of the team has first-hand experience of receiving support services. This means they can give a view which is often missing from other types of reviews.

Our aim is to enable disabled people to have an impact on how organisations develop to ensure they offer high quality, personalised support, and services.

The Quality Checkers have collective experience of:

- Working with people with learning disabilities
- Using creative ways to collect the views of people
- Helping people have a say in services that affect them
- Monitoring and evaluation

The following people helped to carry out this Quality Check:



Suzie Fothergill

Suzie lives in North Tyneside and has experience of receiving support services. Suzie works as a Quality Checker to make sure that disabled people are living happy and full lives. Suzie is good at observing, looking to see what things are really like, saying if where someone lives feels and looks like their home, or if it is like an institution.



Donna Johnston

Donna has supported people with learning disabilities for well over 25 years and in the past has managed several services for adults with learning disabilities in Newcastle upon Tyne. Donna is very passionate about her work and continues to be committed to improving services for people with a learning disability and believes that being part of the Quality Checkers Team is a great privilege.

How we did the Quality Check

This Quality Check reviewed services provided by Positive Support for You. This included five people living in the Teesside area and three people from PSFU service in Northumberland.

Everyone was contacted by Positive Support for you to ask if they would like to take part in the Quality Check. We gave people supported and their families/carers options for how they could take part and people either met with us online, spoke to us on the telephone or returned a questionnaire. One individual chose not to speak with us or meet online.

It was not possible to meet with the individuals in the Northumberland service due to their complex histories and the need to spend considerable time building relationships with them. We spoke to two parents on the telephone.

We did not receive any completed questionnaires from the Northumberland services. However, we spent time speaking to two senior managers of the service.

We did not speak to any support staff on the day as they were busy supporting people with their daily lives.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was sent to all families/carers inviting them to comment on the support they receive. We asked them what was good and not so good about the support and what they felt could be better. Only one parent from the Teeside service completed a questionnaire.

During our online meetings we noted down people's answers and the information provided to us by support staff and managers.



The questionnaire was based on four of the updated REACH Support for Living standards.

Standard 4: I choose who supports me and how I am supported.

Standard 5: I choose my friends and my relationships.

Standard 6: I get help to make changes in my life.

Standard 7: I choose how to be healthy and safe.

Home visits

Due to COVID and the restrictions we did not carry out any home visits.

Information from Support Workers and Service Managers

The Quality Checkers spoke to support staff, team leaders and managers during the online meetings to find out about how they supported people and how things have been for people during COVID and the restrictions.

Relatives and other professionals involved.

The Quality Checkers spoke on the telephone with two parents and received one completed questionnaire from a parent.

Our observations gather some of the emerging themes we noted. They are based on what people said in the questionnaire or during online meetings, and on our impressions from talking to people supported and their support workers, team leaders and managers.

The information presented is, therefore only that which the Quality Checkers heard or what people said. The Quality Checkers cannot guarantee its factual accuracy, as on occasions we are reporting the views and observations of others.

Quality Checkers

Observations

Standard 4
I choose who supports me
and how I am supported

We found these things are going well....

- 👍 We could see during our online meetings that people had good relationships with their staff, which is crucial considering that during this period they were the only people they had most contact with.
- 👍 Three parents told us they appreciated the managers and staff and the efforts they had made to encourage their family member to stay safe at home and to try new activities to keep them occupied and alleviate the boredom which some people had experienced.
- 👍 Some people had been involved in recruiting their staff team. Two people told us they had sat in on the interviews and enjoyed this. They hoped to do this again.
- 👍 In Teeside there had been some staff changes over time, but most people were still receiving support from the same staff members.
- 👍 Most of the staff we spoke to in Teeside services told us they had supported the same individual for a long time.
- 👍 One team manager from a Teeside service told us that the staff team had not changed in over two years.
- 👍 The managers and staff we spoke with told us they try very hard to work flexibly to fit around the times people need support.
- 👍 Two parents told us that staff and managers always spoke well about their family members and always focussed on the positive.
- 👍 One manager told us that rotas and staffing have been difficult during COVID as some people they support are clinically vulnerable and have been shielding. It was important not to mix staff members around to avoid cross infection.
- 👍 Managers told us that staff have received increased pay and conditions. This helped with recruitment issues in some areas.
- 👍 Everyone we spoke with told us they like their staff and get on well with them.
- 👍 Most people told us they were choosing to go out for walks and at least going to their local shops.

- 👍 One person told us they had complained about a staff member and this was dealt with quickly by the team manager.
- 👍 All the people supported told us they felt they were listened to, and changes are made to support if they are not happy.
- 👍 Again, we were impressed by the attitude and commitment of the staff and managers we met. We liked how staff knew how to rephrase our questions in a way that was easier for the person to follow.
- 👍 Most people told us they did not want to change anything about their support and were happy with the support they were receiving.
- 👍 Everyone we spoke with told us they receive easy read information about things that are going to happen or change.
- 👍 Most people we spoke with told us they received easy read information about Covid.
- 👍 One person told us they do not like easy read information and prefers to receive ordinary written information. The team manager and staff know this and ensure this happens.

We found out these things are not going well....

- 👎 Two people told us they would like to continue to be involved in interviewing staff as they enjoyed this but felt they did not always get asked to do this.
- 👎 Two parents told us they were not involved in staff recruitment and would consider being part of this.

Quality Checkers

Observations

Standard 5
I choose my friends and relationships.

We found these things are going well....

- 👍 During COVID most people told us they have been keeping in touch with family and friends via the telephone or in some cases using Facetime or WhatsApp.
- 👍 Due to COVID one parent told us they meet with their daughter (facetime) a couple of times a week and felt her daughter enjoyed this.
- 👍 One person told us they have joined Slimming World online and really like this as it keeps them busy and is helping them to lose weight and eat healthily and get to meet new people.
- 👍 One person told us about the Covid diary they have been writing. This was their own idea and helps them to understand about the virus. They do not share this with others and like to keep it to themselves.
- 👍 Most people told us they still keep in touch with friends by telephone or by text and that staff supported them to do this.
- 👍 As restrictions have lifted two people told us they are still in contact with their fathers and visit them as often as possible. One person with help from his staff has also been supporting Dad through some difficult health issues.

We found out these things are not going well....

- 👎 Most people found that not being able to see friends and families and do the activities they enjoyed before Covid was what they missed most.
- 👎 Most people we spoke to told us they were fed up with Covid and wished things were back to normal.

We found these things are going well....

- 👍 One person told us they talk about the future with their staff, this has led to the person making a funeral plan and a will.
- 👍 Most people we spoke with told us they can change things when they want, staff help them to do this.
- 👍 Managers told us of one person who was frightened of birds but with good support to build confidence will go and feed them in the garden. The person also has access to other animals and loves spending time with them.
- 👍 Everyone we spoke with told us about all the things they have been doing at home to keep busy. One person told us they built a shed in the garden and added a canopy to the shed.
- 👍 One person showed us some of the models they had been making. They also told us about playing the guitar and helping to teach staff how to play. We could tell from speaking with this person how proud they were of this.
- 👍 Three people told us they often change their activities around depending on how they feel.
- 👍 Three people told us that they decide what they want to do and when. Staff support them with information and making choices.
- 👍 One person would like to spend time with their family on their own without staff support. Staff told us it would be nice to see them become more independent.
- 👍 One person told us that they used to work for the NHS but the work has stopped for now. They told us they are now a Director of Positive Support for You and really enjoyed this.
- 👍 We heard from all the managers we spoke with how flexible the staff teams are and will often change their rotas and hours worked to accommodate people's wishes. Staff have worked flat out during the virus ensuring people supported received enough support at the right times.
- 👍 All the people we spoke with told us they have regular meetings and activities are discussed can be changed at the meetings.
- 👍 Two people in shared housing told us they have regular house meetings to discuss issues and sort out any concerns.

- 👍 Most people have been making plans with staff and families for when restrictions end.
- 👍 One person told us they have been planning a holiday for September with their staff.
- 👍 Three people told us they were planning when to meet outside with family and friends.

We found out these things are not going well....

- 👎 Two people supported told us they have not had any contact with their Social Worker and one person supported thinks the social worker left and are now waiting for another one.
- 👎 One parent told us they often suggested changes or things for their relative to try but never knew if these suggestions had been tried.
- 👎 One parent told us they had never been to any reviews for their relative but had initially been invited but found the early morning meeting time was not convenient.
- 👎 One parent told us they felt the management team should not have moved off site and felt that the service ran smoother when managers were present.

Quality Checkers

Observations

Standard 7
I choose how to be
healthy and safe.

We found these things are going well....

- 👍 Most people we spoke to understood about the Covid rules and how to keep safe.
- 👍 Most people had received one vaccination and were waiting for the second one. Everyone we spoke to knew about wearing masks and why they had to do this.
- 👍 Most people were still attending medical appointments.
- 👍 Some people had received their annual health checks and others told us they were waiting for these to take place.
- 👍 Everyone told us they were attending appointments and staff were supporting them to look after their health.
- 👍 Three people told us they understood what their medication was for and why they took it.
- 👍 Three people told us they had easy read information about their medication.
- 👍 One person told us they are responsible for taking their own medication and can do this safely.
- 👍 All staff have received medication training and understand how to support people with this.
- 👍 People told us that staff help them to keep safe and think about risks. One person told us they are not going to the pub for now as they want to make sure they do not get the virus.
- 👍 All 3 parents told us they were happy with the service and support their family member was receiving and felt they were well looked after and kept safe by the staff especially during Covid.
- 👍 A lot of staff we talked to have a good understanding about how to support people who experience anxiety or periods of mental ill health. This was very important particularly during Covid as all the people supported told us they have found coping with lockdown and the restrictions difficult. Despite all this people were coping really well and were receiving much valued emotional support from their support staff
- 👍 One person told us they were receiving very good support and help from their staff to manage their anxieties. They were fed up and struggling to cope with the virus and wanted it to be over.
- 👍 One person told us they were having difficulty with the Pharmacy who deals with their medication. The person prefers their medication to be delivered in

Medi packs, but this had not been happening. The person and Team Leader were in the process of sorting this with the Pharmacy.

We found out these things are not going well.

- 👉 Two parents we spoke with told us they had concerns about the high staff turnover at the Northumberland services.
- 👉 One parent was very concerned that there had been six changes of team leader in the two years their family member had lived there. The parent was frustrated about constantly having to discuss their family member with different staff.
- 👉 Two parents did not know if their family member had fewer incidents of behaviour that challenges since moving to the Northumberland service and felt this would be helpful to know as it is a useful indicator of how their family members life was improving and becoming more settled since leaving hospital.
- 👉 Two parents told us they had tried joint meetings with other parents, but this did not work.
- 👉 Two parents would like to have the choice of face-to-face meetings rather than telephone calls with managers and would consider doing this online.
- 👉 Two parents would like more choice of times offered to chat with managers and felt that early morning meetings was not always convenient.
- 👉 One parent was very unhappy about the location of their family members home and feels it is very isolated.
- 👉 One parent told us that there is no community or activities for their family member to join in due to the location of the service.
- 👉 One parent told us they were concerned about the property their relative lived in. They said there were lots of maintenance issues and that the property was not fit for purpose. They were worried that doors need replaced, some doors are hanging off and this they felt was dangerous, some doors are not able to be used and they must make detour in property to go in and visit their relative.
- 👉 One parent told us they had observed holes in the doors of the property their family member lived in. This made them worry about incidents of aggression their relative may be experiencing.
- 👉 One parent was very concerned about the amount of time managers and staff were having to spend trying to sort out the faults with the building and felt that this was not their job. They told us that chasing repairs all the time detracted from the support needs of their family member.
- 👉 One parent said they were pleased that PSFU had not signed off on the buildings as there are too many faults requiring attention.

Quality Checkers Observations – What would help to make support better for everyone.

In the future it would help if....

- ☞ The pandemic has changed how we all work. Lots of us have moved to meeting with others online. This offers us the chance to still have face to face contact and has removed any unnecessary travel constraints.
- ☞ Consider asking people supported if they would want to participate in interviewing new staff by joining some of the interview online. This would enable them to see and speak with potential new staff and offer an opportunity to ask them some pre prepared questions.
- ☞ Positive Support for You considers asking families if they want to be involved in recruitment for their family member.
- ☞ Considering any travel restraints or health issues people supported or parents may have, joining the interview online offers opportunities for everyone to have a say and feel included.
- ☞ Families are kept fully up to date on changes to staffing and any plans the organisation and services have regarding recruitment and retention.
- ☞ Think about supporting one person to manage the risks to be able to spend time alone with family safely without support staff present. This will increase their independence and ensure they are not being over supported.
- ☞ Very few people were attending groups online. Whilst appreciating not everyone enjoys being online. Quality Checkers wondered if this is something which could be explored more, encouraged, and tried. This would enable people to connect more with others and feel less isolated, especially during Covid and restrictions.
- ☞ Ensure suggestions from parents regarding experiencing new activities and different things are explored and tried and feedback to the parents about how things went.
- ☞ Keep parents fully updated on any building and maintenance work and reasons for any delays.

What will happen now?

We will meet with Positive Support for You, persons, service managers, support staff and anyone who took part, to tell them what we found out during our checks.

The Quality Checkers want to thank all the people supported by Positive Support for You and all the staff and managers who spoke with us to complete the quality check.

We really appreciated everyone's input.

A big thank you to all the staff and managers who supported people to put together information and share their stories for the ten-year celebration.

We have received lots of photos and videos which we will make into a short film to be shared at the next Quality and Celebration Day on

27th September 2021

Positive Support for You CIC Response

We have a person we support recently join the board of directors who attends interviews as a representative of those people we support across the company.

We do invite parents to interview for their own family member however due to Covid this has been difficult over the past 18 months and all families were asked to contribute via a questionnaire.

There has been a high turnover of staff throughout social care during the pandemic and we have also experienced this. We have significantly increased pay and improved terms and conditions to encourage recruitment and retention.

Although the Team Leaders have changed due to leaving there has always been consistent Management with the Area Manager, PBS Lead and Senior Managers who have not changed. Families have been given regular updates and we will continue to do so.

Our PBS lead offers updates and data is available regarding incidents and progression of the people we support.

Photographs, in-depth reviews and updates it provide a range of evidence as to how well people are doing.

As the lockdown restrictions ease we can explore more regular face to face meetings with family members.

Managers are available to chat most days and evenings through each week.

All the people we support have an activity plan to which again is evidenced by photographs where the attend regular activities in the community.

We have managers on site every day, but as the service is a supported living scheme and not residential care we have an off-site office at Ashington where Senior Managers are based. This is in line with best practice and reflects the design of the scheme as it was commissioned by Northumberland County Council.

The service is a supported living service and as such our role is as care provider and the housing association as landlord deals with property issues. We have supported tenants in getting property issues resolved.

Positive Support for You CIC welcomes the positive feedback and constructive criticism in this report. We understand it's important to get feedback, listen to it and improve where we need to. We have experienced an extremely difficult period during the pandemic and everyone has worked very hard to maintain everyone's safety and ensure good outcomes for the people we support.

Our Board will discuss this report and we will oversee an action plan to address areas for improvement.

As we see the restrictions easing in the weeks and months ahead we are working to reinstate the face-to-face activity and engagement that has been limited. We are investing in new care digital recording systems which will help staff work smarter and better capture the daily outcomes that people achieve.

Thanks to the Quality Checkers team from Skills for People for their work on this.

Dave Barras, CEO.

Get in touch with us

If you:

- have any questions or comments about this report.
- have any concerns about Quality Checking.
- want to know more about our organisation.

How to contact us



You can:

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