



Enter and View Visit Report

10 January 2011

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Service Visited

CAMHS Learning Disability Short Break Service

Tees, Esk, and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust

Sites Visited

The Holly Unit

2 Heathways

West Park

Parkside

Darlington

Seaham

DL2 2TS

SR7 7UH

Dates of Visits

Friday 17 December 2010

Thursday 6 January 2011



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CAMHS Learning Disability Short Break Services

1. Introduction

The Tees, Esk, and Wear Valley's NHS Foundation Trust offers a respite care service to the families of children and young people (up to 18 years) who have severe learning disabilities and associated complex health care needs. The current facility, Heathways is based in Seaham. However, the building is not vested in the Trust's portfolio of properties and management has been given notice to vacate the premises by the end of the financial year.

The plan is to relocate the service to the Holly Unit at West Park Hospital in Darlington. The proposed change is planned to take place by the end of February 2011.

2. Purpose of Visit

The original terms of reference for this visit were to provide a comparative evaluation of the two facilities. However, the LINK Enter and View representative made a judgement while visiting that a more useful evaluation would be gained by focusing on the service users needs rather than merely comparing one building with another.

3. Limitations

The content in this report was formulated by the Enter and View representative from observation and discussion with David Kerr, Project Manager and Diane James, Service Manager who are both employed by the Trust and leading the relocation project. There was not the opportunity to speak to those who use the service or their carers.

However, the LINK website has posted a request for those having a vested interest to get in touch.

4. Service Users Needs

The young people who are eligible for this service all have severe learning disabilities and additional health challenges. These challenges may be complex physical and/or behavioural/emotional. The wide variation in needs and age requires careful consideration when planning admission to ensure similar social groups are integrated.

The aim of respite care is to give both the family/carers and the service users a break. Because the service users' needs are substantial and complex, changing carers to enable respite care can only be successful if those delivering the care are not only well briefed on each user's needs but also knowledgeable and experienced in this specialist area of care.

Although many of the service users do enjoy accessing mainstream public facilities, promoting overall quality of life within the facility to achieved optimum physical, social and psychological wellbeing is the major challenge.

5. The Service

- There are currently 25 families benefiting from this respite service.
- Periods of respite are from 1-5 days.
- It is a countywide service, though the contract does not include residents within the Borough of Darlington.

- The funded service level agreement is defined in occupied bed days and equates to 3 x 365 per annum.
- Open 5 days a week, though limitations in current funding requires a number of scheduled days closed each month.
- The staff group manage the facility as a domestic setting, mirroring all the activities within a family i.e. cooking, laundry, cleaning as well as meeting the care needs of the residents.
- The service also has a dedicated minibus

6. Heathways

6.1 Site

Shares site with another two ex police houses which are not occupied. There is a large garden to the rear.

6.2 Situation

Situated in Seaham on an ex council house estate.

6.3 Access

Well placed for those living close. The A19 makes access from the South of the county fairly easy by car.

6.4 Facilities

- Domestic in character, though cramped throughout. Because of very steep and narrow stairs access to the first storey is prohibitive for most service users. However, the fourth bedroom is on this level.

- The ground floor comprises of three bedrooms with handbasins.
- One bathroom with one toilet.
- A very small kitchen which is just large enough to have one person in at a time.
- Small combined lounge and dining area.
- There is a sensory stimulation room adjacent to the lounge/diner.

7. The Holly Unit

7.1 Site

Sited at West Park, Darlington. It is a stand alone unit, with enclosed secure gardens.

7.2 Situation

The unit is located near to other trust resources and a range of private homes. The town centre is approximately one mile away.

7.3 Access

As a countywide facility it is well placed being close to the motorway, making fairly easy access for those living near and those travelling from the North of the county by car.

7.4 Facilities

- Purpose built as care facility.
- Single Storey.

- Contemporary standards throughout.
- 7 ensuite bedrooms, 2 of which have wet rooms.
- Bathroom to meet needs of physically disabled people.
- Wide doorways for wheelchair access.
- Range of small/large rooms.
- Secure entrance.
- Secure garden with southerly aspect.
- Herb garden.

8. Staffing

There are about 15 staff employed to manage the service. Rostering requires three staff to be on duty throughout the day and two during the night. There is always one qualified nurse on duty. There are exceptions to this when there is increased demand or planned special events.

It is a well established, settled team with all but one moving to the new location. The one member of the team who isn't moving because of travelling difficulties will be relocated to another trust facility.

9. Considerations

9.1 Comparison of facilities

There is no doubt that the exchange of respite facilities is a change which offers a more contemporary standard for this client group.

The current facility is cramped and offers little flexibility to meet the wide range of care needs of the residents.

9.2 Location

Because the service covers most of County Durham, the change of location will benefit those living in the south of the county. However, those who live near to Seaham may have a longer journey time. I was informed that most of the current client group will generally have a shorter distance to travel.

9.3 Viability

Although funding for this service isn't an issue for the LINK to consider, it does raise a question in relation to long term viability of this valuable service. The Holly Unit is a large facility and designed for a larger care group than currently accessing Heathways. As it stands the occupancy levels will fall way short of its capacity.

9.4 Domestic Environment

Although the Holly Unit is comparatively new, well maintained and provides a warm, comfortable environment, it could not be described as "domestic" in character.

Because of the special needs of the client group the design and accessibility should far outweigh the benefits people perceive from the current domestic setting. It would be difficult to imagine the current staff team doing all the housework needed for this unit and meeting the care needs of the residents.

10. Conclusion

From the perspective of accommodation the Holly Unit offers a much more spacious contemporary environment for meeting the needs of this client group. Maintaining the existing staff team as care workers will ensure continuity of care, which is perhaps the most important aspect of the proposed move. Because the unit is much bigger in comparison to the existing domestic setting, the current arrangement of the staff doing all the cleaning would take too much time away from residents. This has been recognised by the project team who are planning to introduce a domestic service.

No doubt the change in location to the outskirts of Darlington will create increased travel time for some and less for others. However, I have been informed that a review of those currently accessing the service shows overall the time travelling will be less for most service users.

The financial consequences to the Trust of this service being in a larger facility will increase revenue costs. Although funding arrangements are not a matter for LINK it does raise a question regarding sustainability of this essential health care service. There is currently a review being led by Durham Primary Care Trust on the longer term arrangements.

11. Recommendations

Because this report does not include a range of views from those who access the service these are tentative recommendations which may need to be reviewed subject to comments received via the LINK website.

- As it stands it is the opinion of the Enter and View representative that the move should be supported. The benefits of the new arrangement as outlined in this report far outweigh the current arrangement which cannot continue.

