

Enter and View Report



CUBE Disability, Northampton
March 2017



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Details of the Visit

Name and address of premises visited	CUBE Disability Northampton, 63-71 Roe Road, Abington, Northampton, NN1 4PH
Name of service provider	CUBE Disability
Legal Structure of Service/Client Group/Locations	A private company registered to provide non regulated day provision for adults with learning disabilities. The service does not accept people with extremely challenging behaviour. There are three similar centres across the county in Northampton, Kettering and Daventry, as well as a Performing Arts Centre in Kingsthorpe. Opening times 9am - 4 pm (Monday to Friday)
Date of visit	8 March 2017 10am - 2pm
Healthwatch authorised representatives undertaking the visit	Sandra Bell, John Rawlings
Support Staff	Sonia Bray, Lead for Adult Services
Contact details of Healthwatch Northamptonshire	Lakeside House, 3rd Floor, The Lakes, Bedford Road, Northampton, NN4 7HD Tel: 0300 002 0010

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to thank the owner, Helena Milic and staff members of CUBE Disability, Northampton for their assistance in planning the visit and their time and support during the visit. Our thanks also to the clients who confidently and enthusiastically told us about the range of activities they are involved in and gave us their views of the service offered.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all clients and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.



About Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Healthwatch Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and Social Care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC - the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvements, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

- We have the power to “Enter and View” health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care. Our role should not be confused with the role of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) or OFSTED. CQC is the regulator and inspection of children's social care. Both organisations have a legal requirement to inspect care provision with reference to national standards and guidelines.
- We prepare reports on the Enter and View activity we conduct. We have an Enter and View policy (www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk) which sets out our process of delivering Enter and View and the process for developing our reports. Our values include openness and transparency and so all our reports are published. They will only be published on our website once the service providers have had an opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy. We will send final copies of our reports to providers and commissioners asking for their comments on our findings and a response to recommendations, which we will also publish in a summary version on our website. We will send copies of our report to our national body, Healthwatch England and to CQC. As part of our Enter and View, we explained to the people we spoke to that their comments would be non-attributable but that if we heard about possible harm to individuals then we are obliged to refer those issues to the safeguarding team at Northamptonshire County Council.
- We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered.
- We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we will find out what local people think about health and social care. We will research patient, service user and carer opinion using different methods to find out views and experiences so that the community is effectively represented.
- We will provide information and advice about health and social care services.



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- Where we don't feel the views and voices of Healthwatch Northamptonshire and the people who we strive to speak on behalf of, are being heard, we will escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations, including Healthwatch England and CQC.

Enter and View

As part of our programme Healthwatch Northamptonshire representatives carry out Enter and View visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers in hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists, pharmacies, etc. Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service, but can also occur when services have a good reputation - so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Enter and View visits are not part of a formal inspection process or audit. They are a way for Healthwatch Northamptonshire to gain a better understanding of local health and social care services by seeing them in operation. Healthwatch Enter and View Authorised Representatives are not required to have any prior in-depth knowledge about a service before they Enter and View it. The representative's role is to observe the service, talk to service users, families, other visitors and staff if appropriate, and make comments and recommendations based on their subjective observations and impressions in the form of a report. All Healthwatch Northamptonshire authorised representatives have been through a recruitment process (either as staff or volunteers), had an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Check, and received Enter and View and safeguarding training.

An Enter and View Report is aimed at outlining what we see and hear during our visits and making relevant recommendations for improvement to the service concerned. The reports may also make recommendations for providers, commissioners, regulators or for Healthwatch to explore particular issues in more detail. Unless stated otherwise, the visits are not designed to pursue the rectification of issues previously identified by regulatory agencies.

Healthwatch Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies. If at any time an authorised representative observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about



they need to inform Healthwatch Northamptonshire of their concerns, who will inform the service manager and may terminate the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

Purpose of the visit

Healthwatch Northamptonshire carried out the visit to:

- See what kind of activities were offered by this specialist private sector provision for adults with learning disabilities
- Engage with a selection of clients to find out their views of the service
- Observe clients engaging with the staff, other clients and their surroundings
- Understand how the service related to and involved families and carers, as a result of receiving some concerns from carers of clients of the service

How the visits were conducted

This was an announced Enter and View visit arranged with the owner/chief executive of the company. Prior to the visit, we asked for the opportunity to speak with some clients as part of the visit. This was agreed so consent forms for distribution to family members/carers of clients were forwarded to the centre owner.

On arrival at the centre we were asked to sign in, as well as sign a confidentiality agreement. Time was spent with a group of clients asking a range of questions, which they answered with confidence and enthusiasm.

We saw all areas of the building and observed the excellent condition in which they are kept. We had interaction with key staff members and a group of clients. The visit concluded with a wide ranging discussion with the owner of the company.



Observations and findings

Premises

The building is locked at all times for the security of the clients and there is CCTV operational. There are two entrances, but it isn't clear which to use. All visitors are required to sign in and out.

Internally the building is very much larger than the impression given from the outside. All areas within the building are well furnished and equipped, and the whole environment appeared to be kept extremely clean and well maintained. There is appropriate lighting for different areas.

The building is completely accessible by wheelchair and has the following amenities:

- Reception space
- Small gym with a selection of professional gym equipment
- Craft area
- Computer room
- Beautician/massage room
- Sensory room
- Changing Places toilet/facility
- Quiet room
- Medical room - where all drugs are securely stored
- Toilets and offices

Client profile and access to the service

The centre is able to accommodate up to 25 clients at any one time. The age range of clients is from 17/18 years and there is no upper age limit. The service is available to clients from across the whole of Northamptonshire and clients can go to any of the three centres.

The service is able to offer a good range of activities to reflect the wide range of abilities and needs of the clients. The culture is to try to enable participation. One client is non-verbal and needs to be fed by a PEG¹ feeding tube. Their mother trusts the service and staff. Everyone talks to the client as they are aware he understands. He loves the dog. The culture of the service is to assume people understand, and try to use different ways of communicating.

¹ Percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) feeding tube - PEG feeding is used where patients cannot maintain adequate nutrition with oral intake.



Many clients live with families. Others live independently and have personal budgets to employ personal assistants.

Process of introducing people to the service

The owner of the centre described how families and prospective clients wishing to find out about the service are invited in for a chat and look around the centre. An assessment of the individual's health needs, level of abilities and any specific additional or special needs is undertaken. It is important to find out accurate information about clients and undertake a risk assessment, so that they can be sure the service is appropriate to meet the client's level of need. People are shown around the centre to see the range of activities on offer. This is a full taster day for those interested in attending the centre.

There is a formal referral process undertaken before anyone starts attending the centre. This is to ensure the centre has all the necessary information about the individual and their needs to enable them to settle in quickly. If a parent is very nervous they can wait for half an hour until their son/daughter settles in. A member of staff is always allocated for the new starter to keep an eye on them, and also to act as their first point of call.

Parents and clients are also given the centre's 'Tell Us What You Think of Us' leaflet at this early stage. They are also encouraged to watch the You Tube channel 'The CUBE Disability', which shows film clips of the building and clients in sessions. Parents can visit all the centres if they wish to get a full feel of the working of the organisation.

Day to day access to the service

There is a range of ways in which clients travel to the centre each day. This includes private hire/black cabs (all have to be registered), family car and one person walks there and back. Parents and taxi drivers are asked to wait outside and there is a security process to ensure they know who is coming to pick them up.

The organisation has three cars available to transport clients to any of the centres across the county, or to other activities/events if necessary.

Duty of care and emergency contact system

The owner and staff team are very aware that carers and parents take their role of protecting their child seriously. Consequently, they have three emergency telephone numbers for each client.

The culture within the organisation is to recognise their responsibility to both protect clients and also to stimulate and open up new opportunities to them. It is recognised that sometimes there is a difference between what people do at home and at the centre - this works both ways. Everyone is given a welcome pack.

There is a system of sending messages home via the regular taxi firms, which is via a special bag which is handed over to families/carers.



Staffing and qualifications

There are 28 staff members, including office staff, employed on a permanent basis across the three centres. There are five male staff members. No male members of staff undertake personal/intimate tasks for female clients. All are non-smokers to protect clients with allergies.

All staff go to all the different centres and get to know the clients, so they can substitute if necessary.

Level of staff qualifications/expected standards

Staff undertake NVQ care training. All current staff have NVQ Level 2 as a minimum requirement and all are able to do a degree of British Sign Language, including some at Levels 2 and 3. Apprenticeships, over one year or 18 months, have also been introduced for some staff members.

There is a system in place to ensure staff have regular training updates to maintain their skills.

Statutory areas of training

All staff are required to undertake statutory training in the areas of safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act 2005 and Deprivation of Liberties, as well as in medication and lifting and hoisting.

On appointment, all staff are informed there are high standards of personal cleanliness, presentation and a strict no smoking policy at all times.

Staff appraisals are held six monthly.

Involvement of volunteers

Volunteers are also involved in the work of the centre. Currently there are two volunteers who undertake tasks such as making drinks and supporting various activities.

Some volunteers go on to become paid staff members.

The current staff/client ratio is one to four, plus volunteers.

Work experience

The centre also attracts a wide range of people who come for work experience, including school and college students, student nurses, and apprentices.

Diversity

The centre has staff from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures. This is helpful as they also have clients from a range of ethnic backgrounds and cultures. They ensure all staff can speak good English so they can communicate with everyone.

The owner gave an example of an escort not speaking English, which was fed back to Northamptonshire County Council. There have been examples of some drivers and escorts not knowing or unable to say the names of clients.



Range of activities offered by the centre

There is a flexible structure which is person-centred to reflect individual client's preferences and abilities. Discussions and plans for activities are held on a regular basis. As well as the activities listed below there is a growing number of links with local community organisations.

Activities:

In-house gym	Staff member is a trained gym instructor. Many clients like the gym, but walking and good diet are also promoted. There is space for group activities such as dance and Zumba.
Sports and wellbeing activities	These include table cricket (with involvement of a Northants cricket professional), rugby, bowling, yoga, relaxation and a weight loss programme.
Art and craft activities	There is an art and craft room, where a wide range of crafts is undertaken. Examples of artwork done by clients are on show around the centre.
Performing arts	People are encouraged to take part in singing and dancing and performances are put on regularly. There is also a regular story time.
Sensory room	This area is for clients to chill out and relax.
Daily living skills	There is a kitchen, where clients can learn daily living skills, including cooking. This is also where recycling is sorted.
Beauty room	Clients can have foot and hand massages, aromatherapy, hair and make-up. This is also used as another quiet area.
Kitchen	All clients bring packed lunches which are kept in the kitchen.
Trips/days out and holidays	Benham Centre, theatres and other locations and activities. Clients are encouraged to have a go at new things, so they can have new experiences and develop new skills. Holidays - both in this country and abroad - are organised and popular with clients.
Sewing room	A mascot has been made for the centre - this room also used as a chill out/relaxing area.



Links with the community:

- Sponsorship and links with various sports clubs (Northampton Town Football Club, Northants Cricket Club, Northampton Rugby Club)
- Links with national and local celebrities

In addition to the other two day centres, there is an arts academy which organises shows on a regular basis - the next one is scheduled for September 2017. There are other open events to which parents and friends are invited, these include an Annual Ball and Halloween Party.

Group discussion with clients

Five clients met with the three Healthwatch Northamptonshire representatives. Two of the centre's staff members were also present and observed the session, providing support and additional information where necessary. All five clients interacted well with each other and appeared happy, confident and relaxed to talk with the Healthwatch representatives.

Everyone said they liked coming to the centre. They had been coming for a range of periods - from three months to four years, and from one to five days a week. On the days they didn't attend some clients went to college and others did things in the community with a family member or personal assistant.

Activities they liked were, gym, cricket, crafts, knitting, crochet, cooking, as well as going to the cinema, sports centres, watching football, rugby and basketball. Clients said they enjoyed visiting the other CUBE centres, where some of them had friends, and Milton Keynes, Pitsford Reservoir and the Benham Sports Centre where they could try a number of different games and sports activities.

When asked how they would react to any worries or concerns, all expressed confidence in relating to staff members.

All said they had made friends at the centre. Some said they saw people with whom they used to go to school.

Towards the end of the visit, it became apparent that a young man was experiencing some difficulty, and we observed how the staff immediately recognised his behaviour and gently spoke to him - guiding him to a quiet area.

Links with families/carers

There is a system of "Tell us what you think" cards - these are given out every three months to clients, carers, parents, staff and third parties (i.e. taxi drivers).

Family members and informal carers are not encouraged to visit the centre. However, they are encouraged to attend the range of open events, parties and performances organised by the centre throughout the year. The main contact with parents and carers is via the website and regular newsletters, where they encourage everyone to come along to the regular open events and productions organised by the centre.



Parents/carers responses to the Healthwatch Northamptonshire questionnaire

A questionnaire was produced to specifically find out parent's/carer's views about the services provided by CUBE Disability Northampton and the organisation's attitude towards them as parents and carers.

13 completed response forms were returned and all were very positive in their views of the service and its value to the person for whom they cared. All said their relative looked forward to attending, enjoyed the wide range of activities and events offered and had opportunities to meet others and make friendships.

Comments included:

“Loves it”

“My child comes home every day happy and smiling, telling me about the activities”

“Great opportunity for X to catch up with old school friends and meet new people in a safe environment”

“X is very happy/more confident since attending the CUBE and a group she can relate to”

“X really enjoys his time at the Arts Academy, where he can follow his passions. He is also stimulated and stretched by the academic activities and enjoys the work experience opportunities”

Carers reported they received specific value and benefit from their relative attending The CUBE. These included:

- Having a regular break from their long term caring role
- Peace of mind they felt because they had confidence in the service and the safe and secure environment it provided for the person for whom they cared
- Feeling assured that their relative could enjoy and experience a range of activities and event

Comments included:

“Best day service in Northampton”

“X's speech and expressive language has continued to develop through the activities, as have his creative abilities and social skills”

In response to the question “As a carer do you feel there is an open culture where you can ask questions and your expertise as a parent/carer is valued? All 13 respondents answered “Yes” and the following comments were made:



“Fantastic”

“Staff are always understanding and offer me and my child support always”

“Very friendly environment”

“Speech and expressive language has continued to develop through activities, as has his creative abilities and social skills”

“We have a ‘communication’ notebook for day to day comments/questions. I have always found the staff to be open and willing to discuss any matters or ask the best way to approach certain situations with him!

“Gives me a peace of mind”

The final question we asked carers was “Would you recommend the service provided by CUBE Disabilities to another parent/carer? All said “Yes” and commented as follows:

“Yes, I have recommended to all parents I know. Lovely service and supports my child’s needs”

“I would definitely recommend the CUBE - staff are always friendly and helpful”

“Definitely - wish it would open 8 - 6 though”

“The CUBE is fantastic with X. He loved going to “Britain’s Got Talent” and watching The Saints”

“Staff make him feel valued and treat him like an equal”

“Very friendly environment”

“I would always suggest they visit themselves, but emphasis it is a positive experience for my son”

“Best place in Northampton”



Discussion with the centre owner

The owner and chief executive of the company explained how following a number of years of experience of working in disability settings, she had decided to set up her own totally independent private facility. As a result of its success, she now has three day centres and the arts centre. She expressed concern about the lack of special regulations for this type of centre and felt the introduction of regulations would help to raise general standards of service.

There was a wide ranging and open discussion regarding the policy and management of the centre. The owner explained she was initially suspicious about our visit as she has experience of frequent requests to visit the centre by people who want to see what it offers to clients, in order to set up a similar service in direct competition with The CUBE Disability.

It is clear the owner is very committed to providing a quality service which offers a wide range of experiences and opportunities for people with Learning Disabilities. As a private contractor, raising independent funds is essential to maintaining the quality and range of activities within the three centres. As a consequence, there is an ongoing programme of fund raising activities, which has been very effective in attracting financial and other support from a range of celebrities, sports men and women and other individuals, as well as a number of companies and organisations, both locally and nationally.

Recommendations

The Healthwatch Northamptonshire representatives were very impressed by what they heard and saw during the visit. Their only comment/recommendation is:

- Clearer signage on the outside of the building to enable visitors to identify the main entrance.



Service provider response

“We found the experience of Healthwatch Northamptonshire at The Cube Disability to be an important tool for all parties concerned in all areas of Health. At first, we did not wish to be reviewed, as we felt it was an invasion of our clients privacy. However, on further gathering of information and clarification we could then see that the ‘enter and view’ visit was indeed valid.

Our experience was that the whole process was independent and unbiased. The people who came did so with an open mind and all their questions were relevant. They did challenge us and this again is great as we can then step back ourselves and see what we do right (or wrong) on a daily basis. We are so busy working, that this is a way of reflecting and striving to attain high standards and keeping them.

All parties wish to achieve the same result, to strive for quality and to keep our clients stimulated and safe. We need to be ever changing and developing services for the public and the services that are on offer. So we do need to be reviewed and checked.

I would ask all providers to welcome a review of their service and then follow through any recommendations. The staff at Healthwatch Northamptonshire have a friendly approach and listen carefully. I felt I could trust them and confidentiality was upheld at all times too. Big thanks to the staff from Healthwatch who enabled the clients to have their say too.

At The Cube Disability we wish to be the ‘Best in the County’ and we will always be evolving and challenging and listening to our clients and their wishes. We are proud of our clients’ achievements and promote equality at all times. We are indeed lucky to have learning disability as part of our lives.”

Helena Milic, Owner



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