

HQIP Case study:

Service users auditing and evaluating their own services

This submission demonstrates:

- Service users developing standards
- Empowering people with learning difficulties
- Service users directly influencing residential services and commissioning.

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Changing our Lives

<http://changingourlives.org/>

Summary

Changing our Lives supports people with learning disabilities of all ages to speak up for their rights and take control of their lives. We work with anyone with a disability across the Black Country.

The key achievement has been developing a unique process whereby people with learning disabilities are directly influencing residential services and commissioning.

Our Quality of Life audit process has been recognised as national best practice.

We worked with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council to embed the Quality of Life Standards into the contracts they held with residential providers.

Alongside the standards we agreed that we would pilot an audit process. It was then agreed that a series of audits led by Auditors with learning disabilities would take place in the residential homes to ensure the providers were meeting the standards.

Since 2004 we have audited 25 residential and supported homes per year in Sandwell, working in partnership with the Contracts and Monitoring Team.

We have also used the standards to audit day services in Sandwell and Warwickshire and to carry out **'day in the life'** audits of people who have moved out of the NHS Campus's and people living in Dudley.

Background

Back in 2004 a team of self-advocates with learning disabilities wrote a set of sixteen standards called the Quality of Life Standards. The standards cover areas such as:

- **my home**
- **how I communicate**
- **things I do in my week**
- **being part of my local community.**

Aims

To improve the lives of people with learning disabilities, inform commissioning and raise the standard of residential and supported living help that people receive.



Objectives

1. To empower people with learning disabilities to audit and evaluate their own services.
2. To give commissioners and providers the perspective of the people using the services.
3. To change or put an end to bad practice by closing poor services.

Approach

The work is ongoing and has developed greatly since 2004. The audits are all led by people with learning disabilities who are supported by an officer from Changing our Lives. The Auditor spends time in the home or service talking to the people who live there and the people who support them, observing the day-to-day lives of the people and measuring their lives against the Quality of Life Standards.

As the Auditor is a person with a learning disability they tend to 'blend in' and become unnoticed so staff carry on as normal and the Auditor is able to obtain a real insight into the everyday lives of the people using the service. Also the people who use the service much prefer to speak to the Auditor rather than a contracts officer and will often tell them things that they would not disclose to a 'professional'.

Challenges

Initially providers didn't always value the process or the auditors. This led to us not being allowed access to some services or information. As the process has developed, providers have seen the value and the power of the audits and generally they now encourage an audit from Changing our Lives as it enables them to improve their practice.

Outcomes

The audits have achieved many outcomes for people these include:

- the closure of poor services and the removal of poor care staff
- the introduction of communication passports into all homes and services
- the introduction of accessible person centered care plans into all homes and services
- the development of person centered activity planning and health action plans
- improved environments in the majority of homes and services.

Quotes

"The quality auditors provide a clear message to our providers of the importance of going beyond the minimum expectations and advancing the choice and independence of the people they support."

Contracts Officer, Sandwell

"Being a quality auditor makes the lives of people 10 times better. We can try to get people out in to the community into their own homes with their own front door keys to make their lives better"

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