

Private and Confidential

Written report for Hammersmith and Fulham Mencap's
My Life: Out and About Service
Following a Quality Check by Expect The Best

Date(s) of Quality Check:	24 January 2018
Time of Quality Check:	9:30am
Type of Service:	Day Activity Service and Centre and Short Breaks Service
Number of Quality Checks completed:	Service users: 7 Parents/Carers:9 Staff: 7 Total: 23
Total Number of Service Users at service:	109 in total, around 30 per day
Quality Checking Tools used:	V5
Date of verbal feedback:	6 March 2018
Feedback Delivered to:	Dean Ashby

Dear Dean,

Thank you for allowing Expect The Best access to My Life: Out and About Service to deliver a Quality Check. Expect the Best is a peer to peer Quality Checking Service overseen by the North West London Mencap Consortium.

This report aims to bring together our quality checking team's observational findings as well as feedback and information gathered from discussions and questionnaires completed with your service users, their parents/carers, and staff.

We hope that this report and its recommendations are viewed as positive, constructive and helpful, and are used to support the ongoing development of the service. We look forward to receiving your feedback on this report.

Kind Regards,

The Expect the Best Team

21 February 2018

SECTION 1: Introduction to the service

My Life: Out and About is a service run by Hammersmith and Fulham (H&F) Mencap and offers a bespoke support service and activity centre for adults with Learning Disabilities. In addition, the service offers a Short Breaks programme throughout the year. The service has grown over the last 3 years and now supports 109 service users in total and on a daily basis around 30 service users access the service. The service currently receives referrals from Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, Ealing and Hounslow with a growing number of children's referrals, which currently sits at around 30. The aspiration is to be able to offer services to people from all London boroughs.

The service operates with 23 Support Workers in total, with around 10-15 per day and the support needs of each service user ranges greatly, some receive 1:1 support, some with 2:1 support and others in a group support ratio of 5:1. All levels of need and ability are included and supported with services users with high levels of independence through to people with more complex needs and physical needs.

As such the communication needs of the users also varies greatly including people who communicate verbally, people who use Makaton and non-verbal clients. The service uses a range of communication aids according to individual needs such as communication boards, story boards and personal communication aids such as eye gaze equipment.

SECTION 2: Expect the Best Quality Check Process

Expect The Best were commissioned by Hammersmith and Fulham Council to carry out a Quality Check at this service.

Stacey McNelis contacted Teresa McGinn, the CEO of H&F Mencap, who provided the direct contact details for Dean Ashby who is the Operations Manager of the service. Stacey and Dean communicated via email to set up a suitable date and time for the check. Dean completed the Service Provider pre-visit form to provide details about the service users' communication needs, behaviours and any risks associated.

The management of the service welcomed the opportunity to take part in a Quality Check as they do not fit the criteria to be inspected by CQC and, while they feel that they are doing a good job, they welcomed the process for external and service user led feedback on what is going well or could be improved.

Stacey McNelis and two Quality Checkers who both have a Learning Disability carried out the Quality Check. This included interviews with service users and staff, a tour and explanation from the Operations Manager and looking at evidence of policies and procedures and individual service user files.

Expect The Best were introduced to many of the service users who were within the centre that day and were able to seek feedback from seven service users, some were supported by staff to do so.

The Quality Check also consisted of the Team's observations during our time at the service, of the building and facilities, and of staff interactions with one another and with service users.

Expect The Best asked the service to seek consent from relatives to be contacted to gather their views and feedback and seven parents consented for us to contact them.

SECTION 3: Observational Check:

Environment (observations):

What the service did well:

H&F Mencap is situated within easy reach of a main road with local amenities and excellent public transport links. The building was easy to locate and the Quality Checkers found it **“helpful to see the Mencap sign”** on the outside of the building.

The front entrance was accessed via a staircase with a handrail for support for those who need it. We were greeted by a receptionist on the front desk who was expecting us and then by Dean Ashby who was also welcoming and friendly. Dean had arranged the use of a quiet room on the ground floor, which belonged to a neighbouring organisation as the building is shared with other organisations.

The My Life service is set on the first floor of the building, accessed by an internal staircase and there is currently wheelchair access via a lift at the rear of the building. Our Quality Checkers thought that the pink paint on the pillar and the lower half of the wall on the staircase leading to the service was **“nice and bright”** and we noticed it reflected the colours of the H&F Mencap logo.

H&F Mencap utilise the building which was formerly a laboratory for a range of their projects. The My Life service uses a large open plan space on the left side of the building which contains a number of round tables and chairs, some benches with computers and a keyboard and a range of large and low level seating. One side of the room has windows along it so there is lots of natural light. Expect The Best were pleased to see large framed photographs of flowers that had been taken by service users and previously used within an exhibition of work, some of which had been sold and those on display remained for sale.

Off the main space there is an art room which has windows to enable a view through to the main space. Some of the walls had been decorated by service users with a painted mural of a rainbow and sunshine, with more white wall space to work on. The service has a communal kitchen which contained all the necessary equipment to support cooking with service users. Consideration had been given to the needs of wheelchair users and they have created a lower work surface to enable access and we were told that the service is looking at adjustable worktops. Outside the art room and kitchen is a bookcase with various leaflets with information that could be of interest to service users, this included booklets of leaflets from Carers UK, SeeAbility, Mencap’s Advocacy service, Tips on how to complain and a Dance class flyer.

At the far end of the main room there is another ‘time out’ room where service users can go to watch TV, listen to music and take time out from the main space which can be intense for some people.

The office is also situated on this floor and is used by the CEO of H&F Mencap, the Operations Manager and two Co-Ordinators of the service.

A staff photo board was on display in the hallway with photographs and names of the entire staff team as well as the Board of Trustees, which was a recent addition that Dean explained was to encourage service users to get to know Board members, to ensure a more transparent and cohesive way of working and to enable service users' feedback to Board members. Dean commented that **“it is important that everyone is accountable”** and the Quality Checking Team felt the promotion of the Board was a positive step.

The Quality Checking Team were also pleased to see a photo display of some of the trips from the Short Breaks Service, namely of a trip to Thorpe Park and to Paris in 2017. Information about clubs and a diary of events was also on display.

Expect The Best were also shown a room upstairs on the second floor which is currently used to house two rabbits that belong to the service. The Quality Checking Team felt that there was a relaxed atmosphere within the service and one Quality Checker remarked that it was **“a comfortable place”**. Throughout our visit service users were coming and going, we observed people taking part in activities within groups and with one to one support and staff and service users alike welcomed us.

The service has two Changing Places toilets, one of which we viewed and it contained an adjustable bed and a hoist along with lockers which contained general supplies and equipment such as gloves and aprons as well as marked lockers for individual service users as a space for them to keep any items needed for personal care. Expect The Best were pleased to see how privacy and dignity are promoted with use of shower curtains and screens within this facility.

We were told that there is currently just one service user who requires use of a hoist and so the second Changing Places facility has the same equipment but without a hoist in that room.

Areas for improvement:

The lift at the front of the building has been broken for some time. Dean advised that they have quoted its' repair at £20,000 and they are looking at more cost effective alternatives, such as a stair climber at a cost of £7,000. As a disability led organisation, the management recognise that the limited access is “not ideal” and they do not wish to present any negative feeling for those who require lift access by sending them around the back of the building.

They further recognise that the building is not ideally suited for use by H&F Mencap and its users but have made changes as they are able to adapt it. They see it **“as a means to an end”** as when the use of the current site ends, the Council will have to provide H&F Mencap with a building suited to its needs and they are very much looking forward to this.

As visitors who were unfamiliar with the building, it was not clear what the alternative arrangements were for the lift and Expect The Best would suggest that this is made clearer with signage to redirect any visitors requiring access via a lift accordingly.

It was also felt that additional signs to direct people to the right part of the building would have been helpful on the plinth and staircase, to compliment the pink paintwork as leading you to the service.

Staff (observations):

What the service did well:

The My Life Service appears to be adequately staffed and consideration given to the needs of the intensity or ratio of support provided. The service employs 16 full time and 7 part time Support Workers. Expect The Best were pleased to hear that the service does not use agency staff at all, offering a consistent service from a permanent staff team.

Dean explained **“it is paramount we find good people, staff who are as passionate as us”** and adds that it is important to the service that they have a diverse staff base as their client group is multi cultured. The service wishes to reflect the same mix within the staff team so that service users feel that there are staff they can relate too and that **“staff are representative so clients feel they have got someone to talk to, especially where it is sensitive”**.

We were told that staff receive an online package of training comprising of 17 courses that are mandatory and staff are paid for the time to complete this. The service closes for 4 days throughout the year for group training in First Aid, Safeguarding, Positive Behaviour Management, Epilepsy and Medication and Manual Handling. Training is updated annually.

Dean supervises all staff and holds individual supervision meetings on a monthly basis. Team Meetings take place every 3 months and all My Life staff attend including Support Workers, Management and the Senior Manager. The service uses an online rota and booking system for staff called Quinyx which details staff allocation to support service users, the timings, address of the service user and emergency contact details. This enables the service to make last minute changes where there are cancellations and allows staff to access up to date information, as well as managers being able to track the large daily operation and logistics of support packages.

During our visit, the Quality Checking Team observed a number of interactions between staff and service users and our Quality Checkers commented that they felt staff were **“very friendly and seemed genuine”** and were **“lovely and they look after the service users, they help them”**. Staff were observed to support individuals with a range of activities, it appeared that they knew them well and felt very comfortable in each other’s company. For example there was music playing in the background and one Support Worker was dancing with a service user and their interactions were light hearted and fun.

A service user with more complex needs was supported with feeding in a discreet manner, whilst remaining included with the overall group and we were told that service users with more independence show interest and care towards others who need more support which creates a very nurturing environment.

When staff spoke to Expect The Best present with service users, they were respectful in asking for permission to prompt them or explain certain information on their behalf before doing so. At other times they actively sat back so as to encourage service users to converse with us more freely. We observed a service user who became upset and staff handled this in a “**calm**” and confident manner. It was also evident that although at an Operations Manager level, Dean knew the service users very well as he interacted with many of them while he gave us a tour.

Each service user has their own individual file in the staff office and Expect The Best saw a small sample of these. The documents they included were a Support Plan which is based on the wants and wishes of the service user and written often together with service users and parents at the point of referral. Information was detailed about health and medication including an example of PRN medication protocol explaining the signs and symptoms that indicate the service user is in need of the medication.

Individual communication needs and methods were documented along with information about eating and drinking and any dietary needs, personal care support needs and their levels of independence. In one file, details of behaviours that challenge and how to support the person were evident as well as their likes and dislikes. A care plan from the referring Local Authority was also in place with further details of the assessed needs of the service user.

In one file we saw evidence of a Client Support Review with an easy read feedback sheet completed by the user. Expect The Best were told that every 3 months the service calls the family members to discuss how things are going and offer a review meeting every 6 months, but that “**most people don’t want it**” where things are going well. Staff from the My Life service attend annual review meetings that are chaired by the Local Authority.

The service communicates with parents and carers additionally at review meetings, via communication books, a feedback group and via text, email and telephone. The service also uses social media to communicate with the wider audience about what is being offered by posting updates and photographs of the activities they are taking part in and commented that parents can find this reassuring to see. The service seeks feedback from the service users during group and 1:1 meetings, via surveys and online forms.

Individual risk assessments were also evidenced that covered a range of issues personalised to the individual including health, diet, behaviours that challenge, personal care and travel. Summaries of incidents were filed where appropriate. Both the individual support plans and risk assessments are kept online as well as the paper copies. Daily support records are written for each service user which are emailed to the Managers.

Policies and procedures are kept on file in the staff office and key policies are in a file that Expect The Best looked at. Those policies included Induction, Data Protection, Lone Working, Vulnerable Adults, Capacity, Safeguarding Adults and Children, Child Protection, Confidentiality, Record Keeping, Positive Behaviour Management, Complaints, Flexible Working, Harassment and Grievance. Employees each receive an Employee Handbook which also contains key policies relating to their roles.

Dean explained that the service is in process of revising all policies and procedures and creating easy read versions of those that are appropriate.

The service told Expect The Best that they **“have a really positive relationship with parents”** and that they have a lot of contact with parents or carers which enables transparency, **“they can see what happens here”** and it can reduce any anxiety parents or carers have about their relative attending the service.

Areas for improvement:

One of the files sampled did not include a photograph of the service user, which Expect The Best felt would be helpful.

One support plan and risk assessment had become due for revision in May 2017 and no further updated information was evident. Expect The Best would like to clarify what system is in place for monitoring the review dates for service user support plans and risk assessments.

Expect The Best would support the need for easy read policies, particularly in relation to Safeguarding and Complaints to be developed and displayed for service users and visitors to become more aware of their rights and what to do if they have concerns.

Dean acknowledged that the services **“biggest battle”** is to find staff that are suitable and **“this takes time and staff go on trial and we utilise the probation period”** to assess this. It may be beneficial to consider how to identify these desired traits at the early recruitment stages with targeted interview questions, or the use of psychometric tests to further assess candidates.

Safety (observations):

What the service did well:

On arrival, the Quality Checking Team were asked to sign into the visitors sheet specifically for H&F Mencap. Access to their part of the building was secure and required use of an electronic fob key for both entry and exit and the Team Manager for Expect The Best was provided with this key to enable good access to the service throughout our visit. Dean explained that this is not in place with a wish to restrict service users unnecessarily as there is a big emphasis on support in the community and service users are free to come and go but where staff provide access they can be up to date with those who are in the building.

Expect The Best saw evidence of safeguarding information for staff and volunteers on display in the main corridor. There was also a flow chart for reporting concerns and safeguarding information in the main room with photos of responsible staff included.

In terms of fire safety, the team saw clear fire exit signage throughout the building as well as fire blankets and extinguishers in place. First aid boxes were also observed within the service.

Cleaning chemicals were marked to be stored in a in a locked cupboard in the kitchen where the team also noticed a specific handwashing sink with signage as prompts.

Personal protective equipment such as gloves were available for staff in the Changing Places Toilet.

As mentioned earlier, every service user has an individual support plan and risk assessment tailored to their needs and to promote their safety and well-being.

Expect The Best felt that the My Life service takes a positive risk taking approach which expands on individuals' life experiences, offering a wide range of activities and an inclusive approach for all abilities. The short breaks service is also available to service users with a wide range of needs and includes trips for 2018 that include camping in the countryside, a narrow boat adventure break and a theme park trip.

Areas for improvement:

Expect The Best did not see any emergency evacuation chairs in place in case that the one working lift becomes out of order, or for evacuation in case of a fire

Expect The Best were not made aware of personal emergency evacuation plans for service users and would suggest that these are developed, if they are not already in place, along with an emergency grab bag which as an example contains emergency contact numbers, basic personal information for service users, building floor plans, emergency related policies and practical equipment such as torches, foil blankets, emergency water and foods.

When the Quality Checking Team left the building we could not find the sign in sheet which we had completed in order to sign out. Reception staff assured us it would be ok but it would be advisable to keep all sign in sheets from every day together until the end of business hours to ensure all visitors can be accounted for.

Activities (observations):

What the service did well:

The My Life service has expanded hugely in the last 2-3 years taking it from a handful of service users to the current service user group of 109 service users and they are proud that they have not had any service users leave to date.

Activities are offered which span four headings which then specify a range of activities which are matched to carefully considered outcomes. The headings are currently Life Skills and Education, Health, Wellbeing and Fitness, Arts and Culture Activities and Social and Community Inclusion Events.

An example of what is on offer in relation to Life Skills and Education are:

- ‘Cook and Taste sessions’ to explore different cultures and build independent living skills
- ‘Baking’ and learning about healthy alternatives
- ‘Skills’ Activities to develop maths, English and independent living skills
- ‘Animal Education’ to learn about animal welfare, build confidence and enjoy the therapeutic effects of caring for animals.

Outcomes for the above set of activities are identified as:

- Enhancing memory, concentration and motor skills
- Develop educational skills, increase self-esteem and confidence, self-expression
- Build on independent living skills through travel training, food preparation, shopping and money management, healthy eating and cultural awareness
- Improved communication and social engagement through building relationships

Expect The Best felt that the activities are well considered and their outcomes have a meaningful effect and enable development for those taking part. Activities also promote independence, confidence, understanding of healthy lifestyles, promotion of positive mental health, knowledge of local services, exploration of the senses, coordination and motor skills, community inclusion and building and maintaining relationships.

The Quality Checking Team were shown the room upstairs where the resident rabbits, Blousey and Tallulah, live. There were easy read posters on display about the rabbits and how to care for them and staff and service users work in rotation, where they wish to be involved, to take part in cleaning, feeding and petting and caring for the rabbits. We were told that this came as a result of some service users not being able to keep pets at their home, but having a desire to do so.

One service user was observed to enjoy this during our visit, she said she **“comes up here when I’m feeling anxious”** and it was visible to see her enjoyment from petting the rabbits. One of the Quality Checkers also remarked that they found it **“peaceful”**.

My Life has a Diary of Activities for the year which is displayed on a colour A3 fold out easy read poster. Dean described this as a “blue print” for what is offered but advised that it is flexible to meet the wishes of individuals where they want to take part in something different. An example given was on the day of the Quality Check the service users had planned to visit an art gallery and one participant said that they would like to go to Westfield shopping centre. The team worked flexibly to offer this second activity to others attending and were able to provide both options.

Other activities observed to be taking place during the Quality Check were art, cooking, using computers, listening to music and a group dance session.

Dean advised that there are floating support staff working every day and that **“90% of the time most clients are able to do what they choose”**. Within group activities there is negotiation between individuals and those with **“1:1 support have full autonomy”**. He explained that activities offered are based on feedback from service users at forums and those that work well they keep or tweak to improve, or remove them where appropriate. He advised that in 2017 they did quite a lot of art activities but they have wanted to focus this more in the 2018 diary so have reduced it to one full art session with an Art Therapist.

Activities are offered both within the centre and in the community. The timetable lists between 3-5 activities within the centre each day and one or two community options per day. Expect The Best were pleased to see that activities were offered into the evening, with Bingo running until 7pm, Film Night until 8pm and Football until 9pm which offers service users more flexibility than regular day opportunities services.

Support is also available on Saturdays and Sundays and, apart from Yoga on a Saturday, there is no planned activity timetable but service users are encouraged to create their own support using the range of resources within the centre. One Quality Checker commented **“it’s a really good thing; it’s good for people to get out and at the weekends too”**.

The ‘Big Trip’ which is offered on Wednesdays and Fridays are unique to that week and options taken from Time Out magazine, some are free and others at a cost. Plans for the current and following month are advertised on H&F Mencap’s website and for February and March 2018 include: London Fashion Week at the V&A Museum, Chinese New Year meal, Gunnersbury Triangle Nature Reserve and Mini Golf.

The Short Breaks Service began 2 years ago with an activity holiday to Kent and has developed to offer 12 breaks spread throughout 2018 offering 10-15 places on each trip. The weekend prior to our Quality Check a group had been to Dublin, Ireland via airplane which our Quality Checkers were impressed by.

Dean described this service as **“an alternative to respite care”** and a chance for service users to experience **“adventures with their friends and expand their horizons”** so that the respite break doesn’t feel like a negative for people where their traditional options may be very limited. These breaks also strengthen friendships through shared experience.

Areas for improvement:

Expect The Best have seen best practice within other services where they have developed activities based on service users’ interests by an exercise ‘activity mapping’ where an initial interest is identified and ideas are shared about activities that link with this that could be introduced or considered.

Expect The Best feel that there are further opportunities to expand the range of activities and specific suggestions are detailed in the Action Plan.

Resources (observations):

What the service did well:

Overall the Quality Checking Team felt that the service was well resourced in terms of staffing and equipment within the centre. We saw that the art room was well stocked with various mediums – paint, pencils, coloured paper, stickers, clay, ribbons and glitter for example.

The communal kitchen appeared to be well resourced with kitchen equipment and appliances including a double oven. In the main room we observed several desktop computers being used by service users and a printer which was also in use on the day by service users who like to print out images for their artwork. A stereo was in use to play music of people's choice and we saw a keyboard on one of the benches.

The service recently bought an interactive whiteboard which can be used to communicate on, to draw on, play games with and use educational apps with.

A variety of seating was available to meet the different needs of service users and to enable them to sit comfortably for activities. In the 'chill out' room there were sofa's, bean bags and crash mats available which can be used by service users with physical needs who wish to move out of their wheelchairs. There was a TV, a range of DVD's and CD's, drums, games, books, puzzles and bubble tubes.

We were told that recently the service had cleared out all broken and unused items and the resources seen appeared in good order and appropriate for the range of needs people accessing the service have.

Areas for improvement:

The Quality Checking Team observed some sensory equipment, but felt that this is an area that could be developed further. If the service is not already aware, there is a state of the art sensory room at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. Group sessions could be held there and there is overhead tracking in place and a changing places toilet on site. This could also be a beneficial indoor resource during colder months of the year for a group activity.

One suggestion for the development of the art room would be to explore textiles as an art form this could include cross stitch, pom-pom making, knitting or crocheting, textile mosaics and textile printing.

SECTION 4: Staff Feedback

During the Quality Check Expect The Best spoke to three Support Workers in addition to the Operations Manager using the privacy of a downstairs meeting room. A further four Support Workers were interviewed over the phone following the visit

We spoke to both full time and part time staff who had worked at the service between 3 months and 4 years.

What the service did well:

All staff interviewed told Expect The Best that they feel the service meets the needs of the service users who access it; comments added included **“I can see the service follows the person centred approach very well, they value each client and member of staff”**.

Staff gave lots of examples of how they promote independence for those they support including travelling independently, buying lunch when out for activities, food preparation and cooking and with their personal care. Staff said **“we support service users with different needs and we try to know them as much as we can and promote the skills they have”** and **“we encourage people to do as much as possible”**. Staff said they break down tasks, prompt and encourage service users, ask them to take responsibility for planning the route and checking when the bus is due for example. Staff also recognised that skills and independence developed within the service enables the service users in the wider sense of their life at home or within the community.

Staff told Expect The Best how they offer choice to service users in a variety of ways depending on their level of needs and communication. One staff who has worked at the service for 3 months explained that when supporting a service user who is nonverbal, they speak to other staff and the parent to better understand the person's needs and use visual prompts to communicate and offer choice. Other staff also referred to using communication boards and pictorial aids with service users as well as closely observing the body language and expression of service users who are nonverbal to gauge their reaction to activities.

Staff explained that they offer choice of activities according to the daily plan, but that they work flexibly around the wishes of the service users. One staff said **“we always ask what they want to do according to the weather, the day and the time. If they don't give clear answers, I suggest options taking into account their likes and dislikes”**

Another Support Worker gave an example where some people wanted to go to buy some clothes from the nearby high street and the service was able to support them to do this with others joining for a small group activity.

Staff explained that they follow support plans and risk assessments for individual risk assessments which contain information about **“their level of needs, medical conditions and medication, allergies, level of independence and specific support needs, likes and dislikes, communication needs and travel needs”**. Staff said that they read these in advance and regularly to give them a **“better understanding”** and commented that they are **“very helpful”**. Another staff said **“we know a lot about our service users”** and another said **“we discover new things every day”** which Expect The Best felt demonstrated an active interest in service users and not becoming complacent about knowing service users and their needs.

Staff told Expect The Best that they had received sufficient training around the needs of the service users including a 3 day Induction and a period of shadowing trained and experienced staff which one staff said helped **“getting to know the little things about service users”** and **“was really good”**. Staff referred to mandatory training face to face and the range of online training. One Support Worker said **“we always learn new things, it’s important to do new things even when you feel competent”**. Staff referred to training that had been arranged in use of a hoist and PEG feeds in order to meet the needs of service users.

All staff told Expect The Best that they feel well supported by the managers, describing them as **“very proactive”** and **“always open and work to find a solution”**. Staff also described good team working with (and)? their colleagues within the service. One of the longest serving staff said **“it’s a really good team at the moment, we all get on really well”** and reflected the improvement within the staff was because **“management really make an effort with who they hire”**.

Expect The Best heard that staff receive monthly supervision which some staff described as **“a quick catch up”** but when asked said they felt they had enough time to discuss any issues. Staff also mentioned the opportunity to talk to the ‘on floor supervisor’ on a daily basis and others said they raise issues within Team Meetings and feel able to approach managers as needed saying **“you can speak to them anytime, they are always available”**.

All seven staff said that they feel able to raise a complaint or an issue and they would speak to, or email, their Line Manager, Dean or Teresa as the CEO. They said that if they did not get a response they would **“go higher”** and all staff answered that they feel they would be listened too. One staff said they had raised a complaint before and that it wasn’t resolved in the way they wanted it to be, but the managers did give an explanation which helped them to understand this.

All staff told Expect The Best that they feel service users are safe, one added **“everything is safe, we take due diligence”**.

Areas for improvement:

One Support Worker said they **“would like to see more for people who need extra support”** and suggested the service could develop a chill out space and sensory room.

Three Support Workers identified that they would benefit from training around the communication needs of the service users, suggesting Makaton training.

Two Support Workers highlighted the issue of the lift not working and the **“back lift is unreliable”** and is aware this is something management are working on and that they have an emergency plan. Staff said that they had to be out of the centre for a few days when the lift was not working and, as a result had to google public toilets that were suitable for service users with personal care needs. They mentioned that they have supported service users to use the accessible toilets within Charing Cross Hospital next door.

They also suggested an idea of developing a secondary activity centre in recognition of the growth of the service and that the open plan and sometimes noisy environment is not suited to everyone, seconding the suggestion for a sensory room. One Support Worker explained that some service users do not like going out in large groups and suggests that offering activities in smaller groups of 3-4 people would be better and could more specifically offer activities of interest to them.

One Support Worker said that due to the time of year, they are struggling to go out as much and it **“can feel a bit locked in the centre”**.

SECTION 5: Parent and Carer Feedback

Expect The Best were given contact details for nine parents of service users. They were contacted by telephone following the visit and we were able to obtain views from all nine parents or carers.

What the service did well:

A large majority told Expect The Best that their relative is happy at the service. Comments included he/she **“loves it and loves going down there”** and they are **“always excited to go there”**. Another parent said **“If my son is happy, then I am happy”**.

All parents spoke positively of the staff, telling us **“I can’t speak highly enough of the staff”**. Three parents said that it was positive that their sons/daughters who require 1:1 support are supported by a combination of staff rather than just one regular Support Worker.

One parent said that her daughter **“doesn’t have one member of staff looking after her but different staff members so that there are no attachment issues”**.

Another parent wrote **“Thank all of you for working hard. Mencap’s work is most valuable”** and added **“that it contributes to a quality family life”**.

There were lots of positive comments about communication with the service, including a parent who remarked that staff are aware of her relative’s needs e.g. accessing appropriate IT programmes

Another said **“staff understand him as he can be difficult sometimes”**

Another parent felt his **“son is well looked after”** and explained that if he has a seizure then staff ring him to inform. Another recent example of good care and communication was where a service user cut his finger and staff informed his father straight away and took him to Charing Cross Hospital.

Those parents spoken to told Expect The Best that they are happy with range of activities offered at H&F Mencap. Activities accessed by their relatives included: drawing, computer sessions and cooking. Where a service user is unable to participate actively in cooking sessions i.e. cutting, chopping a parent said that she **“enjoys observing”**.

Another parent said that they **“are delighted with our son’s computer skills, which staff are helping him to develop and to bring his skills back into the home environment”**

Another parent said **“Staff really good at enabling my daughter to access IT programmes”**

Community activities that were mentioned by parents included: bingo, bowling, swimming, go karting, going for walks and shopping. One parent said that their son was going out to the football tonight at White City and highlighted trips to London Eye, Chessington Zoo and Oxford Street.

One parent said **“My Daughter enjoys going shopping on the bus and swimming at Fulham pools”**

One parent told Expect The Best that their son accesses the Short Breaks service and has got 3 days in Brighton planned in March, 3 days in Bognor in August and 3 days in Blackpool in November.

Parents agreed that the service promotes independence for their relatives and gave some examples of this as follows. One service user needs support to walk, staff help her to access activities and travel on bus. Other examples of supporting independent travel were heard as well as service users being encouraged to mix more socially in groups and with people in the community.

Another parent advised that her Daughter is vulnerable and needs support. She felt that the service offer good support to go out to therapy appointments at White City.

Generally parents of people using the service told Expect The Best that the service offers their relatives choice. One parent said their son has choice around activities and that information is given to them in advance.

In terms of planning for the needs of their relatives, Expect The Best heard from one parent that they go to all the review meetings and another said that there are annual reviews.

One parent said that they **“let the service plan as they know what my daughter would like to do”** and another parent echoed this confidence in the service’s knowledge of their relative, that they are happy for them to plan for them.

If parents had any complaints or issues, the majority answered that they would talk to Dean or Amanda. One parent said they **“would speak to any member of staff as they are all very good”**. Another parent said **“staff would always come to me first if any issues”**, demonstrating confidence in the staff’s transparency.

One parent commented **“Dean is very nice and I would approach him if there are any issues, but on a simple issue I would raise it with the carer who brings my daughter home”**. Parents advised that they feel they would be listened too if they raised issues.

All parents said that their son/daughter was safe at the service and out with staff in the community. One parent commented that her **“daughter is too trustworthy and**

easily led but she is safe with staff at service". Another explained that their Son is supported not to talk to strangers as he can be **"over friendly"**.

One parent told Expect The Best **"the service provides (my daughter with) a respite from being with the family and enables my daughter to meet other people her own age"**.

Another parent said **"the Mencap service is convenient for us as it is walking distance unlike Options which is two bus rides away"**

Another parent told us **"generally speaking, if Mencap continues to be open and very flexible in customers' needs, they would become the best in London. I am holding a lot of expectation from them, because I have seen by working hard, systematically and collaboratively, they have achieved a lot. They are doing great."**

Areas for improvement:

One parent commented about the toilet access within the service, stating there is **"no access to toilets downstairs any more. The girls are having to pop into Charing Cross Hospital to use the loos"**

Another parent commented **"If (the service) wants to promote independence then they need to have a push button on the toilet door"**

Two parents highlighted the reduced wheelchair access at the service and explained **"the (remaining) lift has broken on occasions and staff have had to carry services users downstairs which is not safe for them or for staff"**. Parents advised that this has happened quite frequently in the last year. They were aware that mobility stair climbing aids have been suggested but are not in place and feel that they should be.

A relative said that staff are very good but she appreciates that there can be a turnover when working in the field of disability

The parent who mentioned their Daughter enjoying swimming at Fulham mentioned that they are not currently attending as **"support staff left"**. They would like to see this activity reinstated.

Another parent said yes daughter does have a choice around activities but it is difficult for the service to offer a wide choice as daughter is in a wheelchair.

SECTION 6: Service users Questionnaires

Expect The Best were able to speak with seven service users on the day of the Quality Check. This took place in the privacy of a room downstairs or in the art room. The majority of service users were supported by Support Workers from the My Life service, some of whom asked more prompting questions in support of our questionnaire and some service users were able to answer independently without any prompts.

What the service did well:

All seven service users told our Quality Checkers that they like being at the service. Two service users said that the best things about being at the service were **“seeing friends”** and **“spending time with friends and having lunch with them”**. Two service users said they enjoyed **“going out”** the best and three service users referred to the type of activities they take part in **“dancing”, “having fun”, “colouring”, “cooking and music”, “printing pictures (for artwork)”** and **“celebrating my birthday”**. One person said the best thing about the service is **“the people and the staff”**.

When asked what the service users did not enjoy about the service, four people answered that there is **“nothing”** and they **“can’t think of anything”** they don’t like.

All seven service users told our Quality Checkers that they enjoy the activities they do at My Life and three people told us they enjoy dancing, one person **said “I’m looking forward to it today”**. Others mentioned watching films, using the computer, playing games, bowling, the trampoline, trips out, short breaks and going to a football match. Four people mentioned cooking, two mentioned swimming and four people told us they do art and colouring.

Three service users told us that they do most of their activities within the service and four said it was a mixture of being at the service and out in the community. Out of those, two people said they preferred to stay at the service for activities, one said they prefer going out, three enjoy both staying in and going out and one did not answer.

Six people told us that they choose what activities they do and one person did not answer this question. They explained how they decide what activities they do and their answers included **“I decide the day before”, “look at the timetable”, “it depends on what everyone is up to, it’s good to ask”, “have a talk with staff”** and a Support Worker explained that sometimes this person will come to the centre with ingredients ready indicating they want to cook. One person explained that they always drop in for the same activity.

One person shared their experience of attending a short break with the service. They **said “I faced my fears when I went away and went on the zipline. Afterwards I felt good. At the top I froze but being with my friends and staff encouragement helped, they said ‘you can do it’”**.

All seven service users told our Quality Checkers that staff at the service are nice to them, that they receive enough support and that their views are taken seriously. The majority of five people said that they have meeting with staff to decide what support they need and two people said that they have a support plan.

Four service users said that information from the service was easy to understand, others had not answered.

The majority of five service users answered that the staff at My Life service help them to be more independent and gave examples of this **including “they open the doors, I prefer to wheel myself in the wheelchair”, “I go and get my own lunch and make a cup of tea and make cakes”, “going to the shops by myself”, “by saying don’t talk to strangers”, “they help me get to my classes”, “making trips on the bus or tube, planning my way and doing things for myself at swimming”**. One person explained that they make breakfast for everyone on Saturdays and staff **“help in the kitchen when I need it”**.

All seven service users told our Quality Checkers that they have friends at the service, some said **“yes, loads!”** and that they feel an important member of the community at H&F Mencap.

All seven service users told us that they feel safe at the service, with staff and with other people using the service. One person said **“it’s safe, quiet and calm, I have a nice time here”** and another mentioned that they do fire tests. Everyone told us that they are not left alone for a long time while at the service.

Three service users told us that they had seen an easy read copy of the safeguarding policy. Five people said they know how to make a complaint if they are not happy and told us that they would **“speak to Amanda or Dean”, “go and tell someone”** and **“talk to any of the staff”**. They all said that they feel they would be listened too if they complained.

Four service users told the Quality Checkers that staff ask them how the service could be better and the majority answered that the My Life service meets their needs. One person added **“I like it, I’ve been coming here for years”** and another said they had been with H&F Mencap at their old building and thought **“there’s more space to do things here at Riverside”**.

Six of the seven service users we spoke with look after their own money while at the service and told us they can decide how to spend it, although often it’s money for lunch. In one case the Support Worker explained that the parent gives money to the staff who support the individual to buy lunch.

Areas for improvement:

Service users were asked if there are any other activities they would like to do at the service and they answered: **“go out and see a football ground or Twickenham”, “go to a racecourse”, “horse riding”, “go to football matches”, “bike riding”** and **“more games – board games and some outside games”**.

When asked what they would like to change about the service, one person answered that they **“don’t like dancing”, “when people get nasty or upset at me”** and another answered **“a lot more trips”** but we understood the last answer referring to something the service user would like to do more of.

One service user said that information was sometimes easy to understand and said that it can be hard to see, sometimes small in print and that pictures are easier than reading words.

Three service users said that they would like staff to support them to become more independent and mentioned areas of **“how not to upset people”** and **“how to travel by myself”**.

The majority of service users asked said that they would like to make new friends at the service and outside of the service.

Four service users had not seen an easy read copy of the safeguarding policy, or did not know if they had seen it. Two people told us they do not know how to make a complaint if they are not happy with something at the service. A Support Worker explained that there is a shelf with leaflets, including how to complain in the service but they don't know if people take them.

Six out of seven service users said that they would like more support on how to use money, specifically they said **“I find money confusing”** and identified things they would like to learn more about **“saving money”**, **“buying lunch or drinks”**, **“more about (the different) coins”** and **“counting money”**.

SECTION 7 - ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan below looks at areas, which could be improved to benefit all of those people who use this service:

Environment

1. Expect The Best fully support the plans to repair, or offer an alternative, to the broken down lift to ensure reliable and equal access for wheelchair users at all times.
2. Expect The Best would like to see clearer signage about the broken lift and information for visitors about the lift at the back of the building.
3. Expect The Best suggest that additional signs directing visitors to the service would be helpful in the communal corridor and at the bottom of the staircase.

Staff

4. Expect The Best would like to see photographs of service users in every individual service user file.
5. The Support plan and risk assessment due for revision in May 2017 needs to be updated. Expect The Best would like to clarify what system is in place for monitoring the review dates for service user support plans and risk assessments.
6. Expect The Best would support the need for easy read policies, particularly in relation to Safeguarding and Complaints to be developed and displayed for service users and visitors to become more aware of their rights and what to do if they have concerns.
7. Expect The Best suggest that the service considers how to identify desired traits from new staff at the early recruitment stages with targeted interview questions, or the use of psychometric tests to further assess candidates.

Safety

8. The service should have emergency evacuation chairs in case of the lift breaking down and in case of a fire.
9. If the service does not already have them in place, My Life should develop personal emergency evacuation plans for each service user.
10. The service should also create an emergency grab bag to be used in case of emergency evacuation.
11. Expect The Best suggest that all visitors sign in sheets should be kept together until the end of business hours to ensure all visitors can be accounted for.

Activities

12. Expect The Best would like to make some suggestions to expand on the current activity programme as follows:

Health and Wellbeing Activities:

Sessions around understanding service users rights to reasonable adjustments within healthcare.

Promotion of Annual Health Checks

Exploration of Hospital Passports and Communication Passports

Links to current health campaigns for further exploration of health issues e.g.

Diabetes, Cancer Screening, STOMP (Stopping the Over Medication of People with Learning Disabilities and or Autism), sexual health

Partnership working with health professionals – LD Nurse, specific health charities e.g. Jo's Trust

Understanding the work of the Learning Disabilities Mortality Review

How to make complaints within the NHS, materials and support available

Relaxation techniques and Mindfulness

Life Skills and Education Activities:

Employment skills, CV writing, interview skills, work experience

Visits to social enterprise schemes run by disability led organisations

'Come Dine With Me' style cooking activity

Arts and Culture Activities:

Utilising a multi faith calendar to identify events and activities that can be linked across the sensory, dance and art activities offered.

Social and Community Inclusion Events:

Develop links with local faith groups or community organisations. A directory of such was found at:

<http://sobus.org.uk/>

Resources

13. Expect The Best would like to see further development of sensory equipment and perhaps a dedicated space for sensory use and relaxation.
14. Expect The Best suggest that the art facilities could also be expanded to explore textiles as a medium.

Staff Feedback

15. Some staff have not had training in communication methods such as Makaton and Intensive Interaction which would benefit the service users and the consistency of support offered.
16. Staff suggest offering activities in smaller groups of 3-4 services users and targeting activities to individual interest.
17. In response to the feedback from staff that service users are more limited in outdoor activities during winter months, the service could consult service users and staff about other suggestions for indoor places of interest to visit.

Parent and Carer Feedback

18. Expect The Best suggest that the service looks to reinstate the swimming activity and communicate updates or progress with affected service users and their parents.
19. A parent's comment implied that their daughter, who is a wheelchair user, may have limited access to activities. Expect The Best understood that the service strives to include people of all abilities and this could be further promoted with parents, or particular restrictions according to individual need, discussed.
20. Parents suggest having push buttons in place to automatically open doors to toilets which would further enable independence for service users.
21. A parent noted that the lack of access to toilets downstairs leaves service users using the toilets at Charing Cross Hospital.
22. There is concern about the safety of service users and staff in the instance of the remaining lift breaking down and how service users are supported to move downstairs.

Service User Feedback

23. Service users suggested a range of activities they would like to try which were: Visiting football grounds, visiting Twickenham stadium, visiting a racecourse, horse riding, going to football matches, bike riding and more indoor and outdoor games.
Expect The Best is aware of an accessible cycling organisation as follows:
<http://cyclingforall.org/about-us/>
24. Expect The Best would recommend that My Life produces materials in large print as well as easy read to meet the communication needs of all service users.
25. When easy read Safeguarding and Complaints policies or key information have been developed, Expect The Best suggest that these are issued to all service users, displayed for service users and visitors to see and discussed at group or 1:1 meetings.
26. A large majority of service users asked told Expect The Best that they would like more support with money, specifically with: saving money, counting money, understanding coins and using money to buy things.

SECTION 8 REPORT SUMMARY

Expect The Best were pleased to see how the My Life Service has grown and expanded in line with the wishes of those who use the service and commends its inclusive approach to activities both within the centre, in the community and on the short breaks.

The wider benefits for those attending the service is well considered and the Quality Checking Team were glad to hear examples of how people using the service have progressed and developed. Overall the Managers and staff team show commitment and passion in delivering a personalised and aspirational service.

Both our Quality Checkers said that the My Life service is one they would feel happy to use themselves; one added **“yes definitely, they’ve got a wide variety and choice of activities”**.

Expect the Best would like to thank Dean Ashby and the managers and staff team at H&F Mencap’s My Life Service for supporting with this Quality Check and we hope that the recommendations included in the Action Plan are used to support the ongoing development of the service.

We look forward to receiving feedback on this report which will be added to the final section below.

Best Regards



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21 February 2018

SECTION 9: Service Provider Feedback:

Verbal feedback was provided by Dean Ashby on 6th March by telephone appointment.

Dean said that he felt the report was accurate, that it reads well and generally shows that the service is well received by service users, parents and carers and staff. He felt that the recommendations from Expect The Best were poignant and many they are already working towards.

Specific feedback on the content of the report and Action Plan follows. Where there is no comment, the service accepts this as an action to work towards.

Environment

Dean acknowledged that the lift being out of use as a priority and an area that they have been raising for over a year. The Board of Trustees at H&F Mencap have

since agreed that the cost of a new lift will be covered by the service and hopes that this will be complete within 3 months' time.

Staff

Dean advised that since the Quality Check, the service has transferred service user information from paper files to digital records and these include photographs of each service user.

Safety

Dean explained that the service does have emergency evacuation chairs on each floor.

The service is currently implementing individual emergency evacuation plans for each service user.

Activities

Dean explained that the service holds a Health and Hygiene Workshop every Tuesday afternoon which has covered some of the recommended areas such as dental hygiene and sexual health. They have also previously linked with the Learning Disabilities Nurse for sessions.

The service also already accesses cycling sessions, as suggested by service users, but acknowledges that this is possibly something they want more opportunity to take part in.

In regard to CV writing and employment skills, the service is focussing on understanding the current groups. They have only covered education when this is identified as a desired outcome for an individual. However, this is something that can be considered for the future.

Dean said that as a service they would always want to provide more activities but there are limits to what is possible to offer on a daily basis.

Parent and Carer Feedback

In response to the comment to put in place push buttons for toilet doors, Dean explained that this is something they would wish to do but at a cost of £15000 to install, it is not something that can easily be done.

Staff Feedback

Dean explained that there was an opportunity for staff to take part in a 16 week British Sign Language course, which also covered Makaton which was funded by St Quintin's, but that no support staff took up the offer.

A Makaton class runs for service users and staff are welcome to join this, but there is little take up.

Stacey suggested that as this was raised by several staff, it would be worthwhile addressing this as it may be welcomed by newer members of the team.